



ATLAS ASBESTOS MINE SUPERFUND SITE

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY • REGION 9 • SAN FRANCISCO, CA • OCTOBER 1999

EPA Superfund Update

This fact sheet provides information on site activities at the Atlas Asbestos Mine Superfund Site. It includes an update on the Atlas Asbestos Mine Operable Unit, the City of Coalinga Operable Unit (City Unit), and the Arroyo Pasajero and Clear Creek Management study areas.

Coalinga Asbestos Mine and the City of Coalinga Operable Unit Deleted from National Priorities List (NPL)

The Coalinga Asbestos Mine Superfund site clean up was completed in 1993 and included two operable units: Coalinga Asbestos Mine and the

City of Coalinga Operable Unit (City Unit). The City Unit is a shared cleanup responsibility for both the Atlas and Coalinga Asbestos Superfund sites. During the operation time of both the Atlas and Coalinga Asbestos Mines, milling and mining products were transported to the City of Coalinga. The City Unit was made up of several properties that operated as an asbestos milling, manufacturing, storage and transportation center.

On November 21, 1997, the EPA published in the Federal Registry a Notice of Intent to Delete the Coalinga Asbestos Mine Superfund site from the National Priorities List (NPL). Removing the site from the NPL, called a deletion, also included a closure report, agreement from the State of California, a formal 30-day comment period, publication of the Notice of Intent in the local paper and a fact sheet sent to community residents. On April 29,

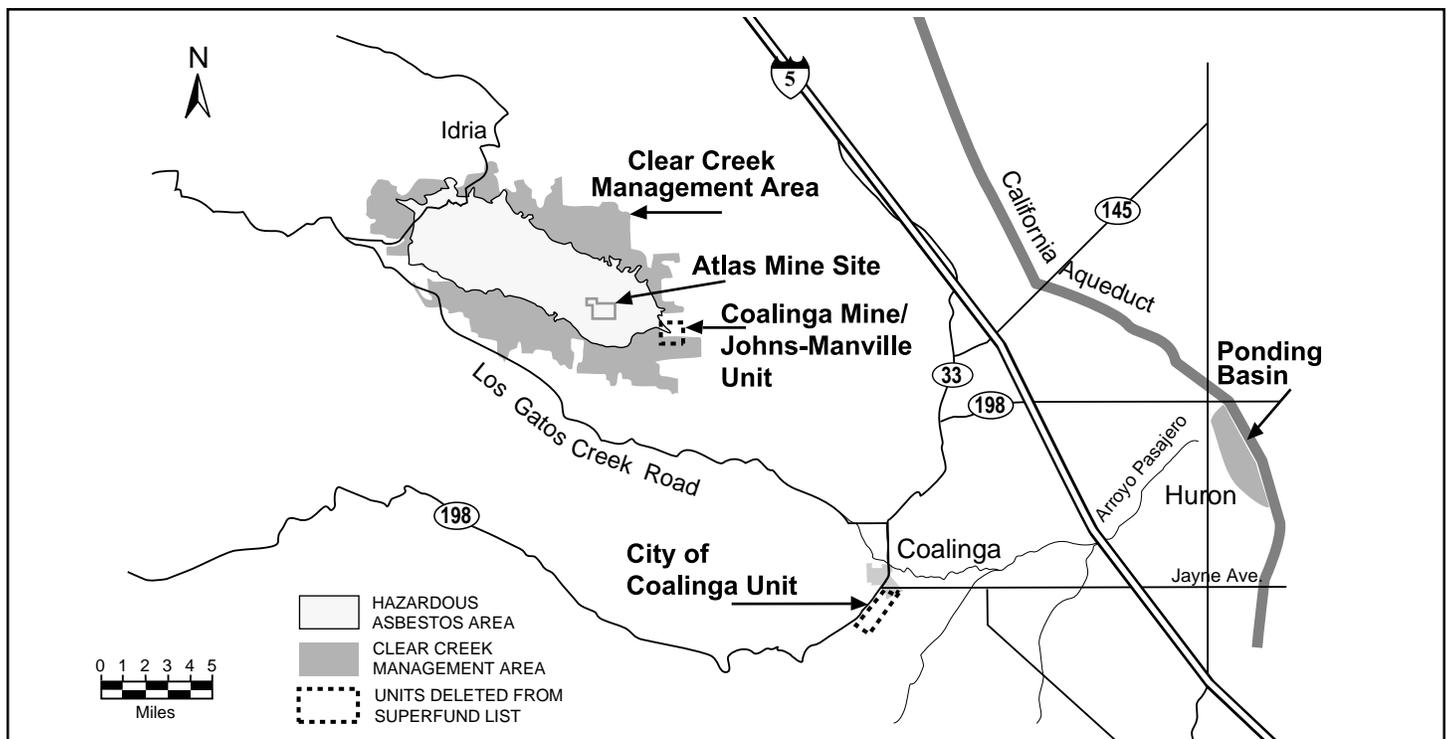


Figure 1: Atlas Asbestos Mine Superfund Site

1998, the EPA formally removed the Coalinga Asbestos Superfund site from the NPL because the cleanup actions at the site were complete. Any site deleted from NPL remains eligible for Superfund cleanup action in the future, if necessary. Both the Coalinga Asbestos Mine Site including the City Unit will continue to be monitored through the site's operation and maintenance agreement. A review of the site remedy's effectiveness will be conducted every five years to ensure that it continues to be protective.

Atlas Asbestos Mine Operable Unit

The Atlas Asbestos Mine Operable Unit (OU) cleanup included: 1) run-on/run-off controls - a system of two-stream diversion channels and six sediment trapping dams to minimize the amount of asbestos released into local drainage during storms; 2) fencing to prevent vehicular disturbance of the disturbed area and deed restrictions in

the affected parcels; 3) revegetation of the disturbed area with native plants to increase stability of the tailing piles and decrease erosion and 4) road maintenance - paving of the road through the mine areas using a double chip seal that reduces airborne asbestos emission caused by vehicles. BLM will operate and maintain these elements of the remedy to insure the integrity of the remedy over the long term.

Operation and Maintenance

Under a separate agreement between the responsible parties and BLM, BLM will be responsible for site inspections, reporting, and operation and maintenance (O&M) including emergencies. O&M activities also consist of ensuring the integrity of stream diversions, engineering systems, sediment retention structures, access restrictions and revegetation. The Department of Toxic Substances Control has oversight authority of O&M for the site.

Since the completion of the remedy

and as a result of adverse weather conditions, several site maintenance activities have occurred that affected a portion of the site remedy.

Diversion Channel B and Road Repairs

In November 1998, BLM covered the main road with a 2-inch compact, imported road base that extended from the lower site gate to the upper site gate (see Figure 2). This base was to cover the contaminated road and temporarily help reduce vehicle erosion of the area while the issue continued to be studied. With oversight by EPA and DTSC, TRW Inc., the responsible party's site project manager, developed a design plan to improve Diversion Channel B. The construction has been completed and it included extending Diversion Channel B by 75 feet, installing six more utility poles to improve the sediment measurement system and repaving the road with a double chip seal. As a contingency measure, a design plan was developed for a sediment trap.

Site Description and Background

The Atlas Asbestos Mine Superfund Site consists of four geographically separate elements or operable units: 1) an inactive surface asbestos mine and mill, designated the Atlas Mine Operable Unit located 18 miles northwest of City of Coalinga; 2) a ponding basin near the California Aqueduct where asbestos has been carried by surface streams that are part of the Arroyo Pasajero study area; 3) a 107-acre area in Coalinga, California that contains asbestos contaminated soil, milled asbestos products and asbestos contaminated structures called the City of Coalinga Operable Unit (City Unit); and 4) the Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA), an approximately 48 square mile area of serpentine that contains naturally occurring chrysotile asbestos and numerous mines and other disturbed areas (See Figure #1, Site Map). The CCMA is owned and managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The Atlas mining facility operated from 1967 to 1979 on leased land owned by BLM. The facility was once privately-owned by the Atlas Corporation and Vinnell Mining/Mineral Corporation and is now managed by TRW, Inc. In 1980, the Metropolitan Water District (WMD) detected asbestos in water samples from the California Aqueduct, a major water source for Southern California area. The Atlas site, recognized as a source of the contamination, was placed on the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1984. A Record of Decision (ROD) describing the cleanup remedy for the Atlas Asbestos Mine Superfund site was signed in February 1991, and through a Consent Decree the responsible parties agreed to construct the remedy.

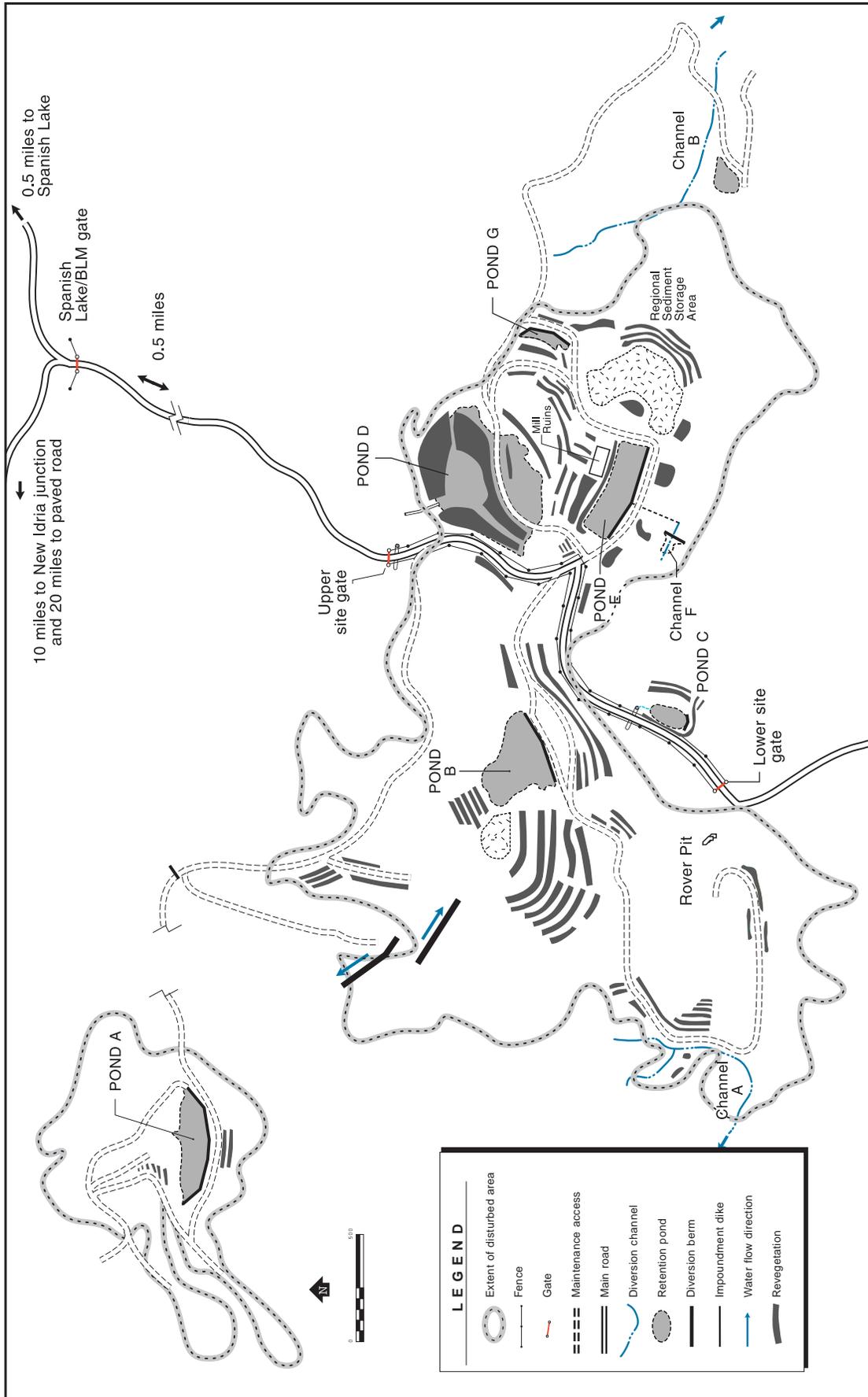


Figure 2: Overview of Revegetated Areas at Atlas Asbestos Mine Superfund Site

Revegetation Effort

A revegetation study was conducted to evaluate whether native vegetation could be established on disturbed areas of the site. Revegetation will slow the movement of asbestos-rich soil and sediment from mine tailings due to erosion from wind and water. When in full effect, the revegetation will create a windbreak effect and create an on-site deterrent of airborne asbestos fibers.

Studies were conducted to evaluate the most likely native plant species and soil amendments that would promote revegetation in this disturbed environment. A field trial was also conducted. The full-scale three phased planting has been implemented (Phase I in 1996, Phase II in 1997 and Phase III in 1998). A total of 27.8 acres were treated, planted and seeded. There were more than 10,000 individual plants planted (see Figure 2, page 3).

In June 1999, an evaluation was conducted to learn the relative success of the revegetation effort at the site. Overall, each successive phase of planting was increasingly successful because the results of the previous year's planting identified the more efficient plant species and soil amendments to apply to the next planting phase. Currently, approximately 75 percent of the vegetation from the three planting and seedling phases is living and potentially viable. The current survival rate is encouraging, but the results remain inconclusive. Typically two to five years of plant survival without human intervention is required to confirm revegetation success; consequently, it is still too early to predict whether the revegetated areas will continue to thrive at the site.

Arroyo Pasajero Flood Control Management

During heavy rains, asbestos-bearing sediments are washed down from the creeks draining from the Atlas and Coalinga Asbestos mines. Waters are eventually carried through the Arroyo Pasajero and deposited in the ponding basin adjacent to the California Aqueduct. In March 1995, the Arroyo Pasajero watershed was drenched with record rainfall. The intense rainfall triggered a series of events: an interstate five highway bridge collapsed causing the death of seven people; an oil pipeline burst contaminating land and crops; and waters from the storm breached the California Aqueduct's protective embankment near the City of Huron.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), in cooperation with the Department of Water Resources (DWR), completed a feasibility study that led to the development of a draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS). The study proposed two long-term alternative solutions to control flooding and asbestos waste in

the Arroyo Pasajero: 1) build a dam on the Arroyo called the Pasajero Gap or 2) enlarge the retention basin west of the California Aqueduct. USACE and DWR completed a series of community meetings as part of a Multi-Agency Forum to keep stakeholders informed about the study's progress. DWR also held a public meeting on April 8, 1999 in Coalinga, CA and recorded specific comments concerning the seismic activity of the area and endangered species issues. The USACE and DWR are presently reviewing all public comments received and will address them in the final EIR/EIS.

For further information, please contact Richard Buchan, Arroyo Pasajero Project Manager, Department of Water Resources, (916) 653-8066.

Clear Creek Management Area

The Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) is approximately 30,000 acres of federally-owned land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It is located on one of the largest naturally-occurring asbestos deposits in the world. The CCMA, in addition to natural asbestos, includes the Atlas Asbestos site, touches the Coalinga Asbestos site and surrounds the KCAC mine, the only active asbestos mine in California. Most of the CCMA area is designated an asbestos hazard area and warning signs are posted at entry points and on bulletin boards. Rand McNally has incorporated an asbestos hazard warning in their road atlas. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation and racing have been allowed in the CCMA for many years.

The EPA was concerned that the casual public visitor to the CCMA did not receive an adequate and clear warning on the risks of cancer due to inhaling asbestos fibers at the CCMA and fibers that remain on vehicles. Recently the EPA with BLM, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and California Department of Health Services-Environmental Health Investigations Branch developed and published a pamphlet specifically for visitors at the CCMA. The pamphlet describes asbestos, why it is at the CCMA, how it enters the environment and affects your health and describes precautions to take when visiting and leaving the CCMA. To obtain a copy of this pamphlet, please call (831) 630-5000. A hotline number is listed at the end of the pamphlet. The hotline plays a daily recorded message that gives callers the concentration level of airborne asbestos at the CCMA and the weather conditions. The CCMA area condition hotline number is (831) 630-5060.

For further specific information regarding the CCMA, contact Robert Beehler, Field Area Manager with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, at (831) 630-5010. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you did not receive this fact sheet in the mail and would like to be added to the site mailing list or if you have questions and would like more information on the Atlas Asbestos Mine Superfund site, please contact:

Jacqueline Lane (SFD-3)
Community Involvement Coordinator
(415) 744-2267

Richard Procnier (SFD-7-2)
Superfund Project Manager
(415) 744-2219

U.S. EPA
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

You may leave a message on EPA's Toll-Free Information Line: (800) 231-3075 and we will return your call.

Information about the Superfund program is available on the Internet at:

Region 9 Web site: www.epa.gov/region09
EPA Superfund Program Web site: www.epa.gov/superfund



MAILING LIST COUPON

If you would like to be included on the mailing list to receive future mailings about the Atlas Asbestos Mine Superfund Site, please fill out the coupon below and return to:

Jacqueline Lane, Community Involvement Specialist
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9
75 Hawthorne Street (SFD-3)
San Francisco, CA 94105

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

*PHONE: _____

*FAX: _____

*E-MAIL: _____

*ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION: _____

(*Optional items)

You may also provide the above information via e-mail to: Lane.Jackie@epa.gov



SITE INFORMATION REPOSITORIES

The EPA maintains site information repositories at the locations listed below. These site repositories contain project documents, fact sheets and other reference materials for the site.

Coalinga District Library

305 N. 4th Street
Coalinga, CA 93210
(559) 935-1676
Hours: Mon.-Thurs., 10am-8pm



Huron City Hall

36311 Lassen Avenue
Huron, CA 93234
(559) 945-2241
Mon.-Fri., 8AM-5PM

Kings County Library

Hansford Branch
401 North Douty
Hanford, CA 93230
(559) 582-0261
Hours: Mon., Tues.& Wed., 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thurs., 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Fri. & Sat., 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Printed on 30% postconsumer  recycled /recyclable paper

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9
75 Hawthorne Street (SFD-3)
San Francisco, CA 94105
Attn: Jacqueline Lane

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use, \$300
Address Correction Requested

<p>FIRST CLASS MAIL POSTAGE & FEES PAID U.S. EPA Permit No. G-35</p>
