Iron King Mine / Humboldt Smelter Superfund Site

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9 • San Francisco, CA • October 2014

EPA Sampling Activities

» EPA has completed arsenic and lead sampling in residential yards that may have been affected by the mine and smelter, and will send information packets with results and next steps to residents

» EPA has completed sampling at the mine, smelter, and Chaparral Gulch area and will share findings with the community

The Iron King Mine and Humboldt Smelter is a Superfund site located in the Town of Dewey-Humboldt. The Iron King Mine was active from 1906 to 1970, extracting lead, gold, silver, zinc, and copper during its operations. Currently a large tailings pile remains at the mine site, and mine tailings have also flowed into the Chaparral Gulch following a blowout in 1964. The mine tailings contain high levels of arsenic and lead.

The Humboldt Smelter purified copper from mine ores between 1906 and 1937, and continued smaller operations in the 1950s and 1960s. Currently a smelter tailings swale, aluminum dross, and slag pile remain on the smelter site. Smelter tailings have mixed with mine tailings, and are held back by a 25-foot concrete dam downstream of the former smelter.

In addition to contamination remaining on and near the Iron King Mine and Humboldt Smelter sites, some soils in residential yards have elevated levels of arsenic and lead as a result of the mine and smelter. EPA has focused our efforts both on contamination in residential yards and in non-residential areas.

Update on Residential Soil Sampling:

EPA has identified residential areas in the Town of Dewey-Humboldt that may have been affected by the mine and smelter, and in 2014 EPA completed arsenic and lead sampling in these areas. EPA is currently preparing information packets for residents that will share results from recent sampling and next steps. These information packets will also discuss whether there are levels of lead or arsenic in yards that may affect the health of residents, and if so, where such levels are located.

EPA has also been investigating the type of arsenic present in contamination from the Superfund site, to understand how it is processed by the human body. EPA is able to determine how much arsenic from these tailings would actually remain in the body if ingested, then use this information to determine a cleanup level that is protective of human health. EPA will keep the community updated on our findings.

Update on Non-Residential Sampling:

EPA has finished additional sampling at the Iron King Mine site, Humboldt Smelter site, and Chaparral Gulch area. EPA will share our findings with the community, and will also summarize results in a report called a Remedial Investigation. We will use this information to evaluate and compare options for cleaning up the contamination on and near the mine and smelter sites, if it is determined cleanup is necessary. EPA values community input as we consider cleanup options, and we will engage the community throughout the process. If you would like to be added to the EPA mailing list, please contact EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator Amanda Pease. Additionally, community members can contact the Community Coalition of Dewey-Humboldt, EPA's Technical Assistance Grant recipient, and the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). Contact information is provided below.

Contacts

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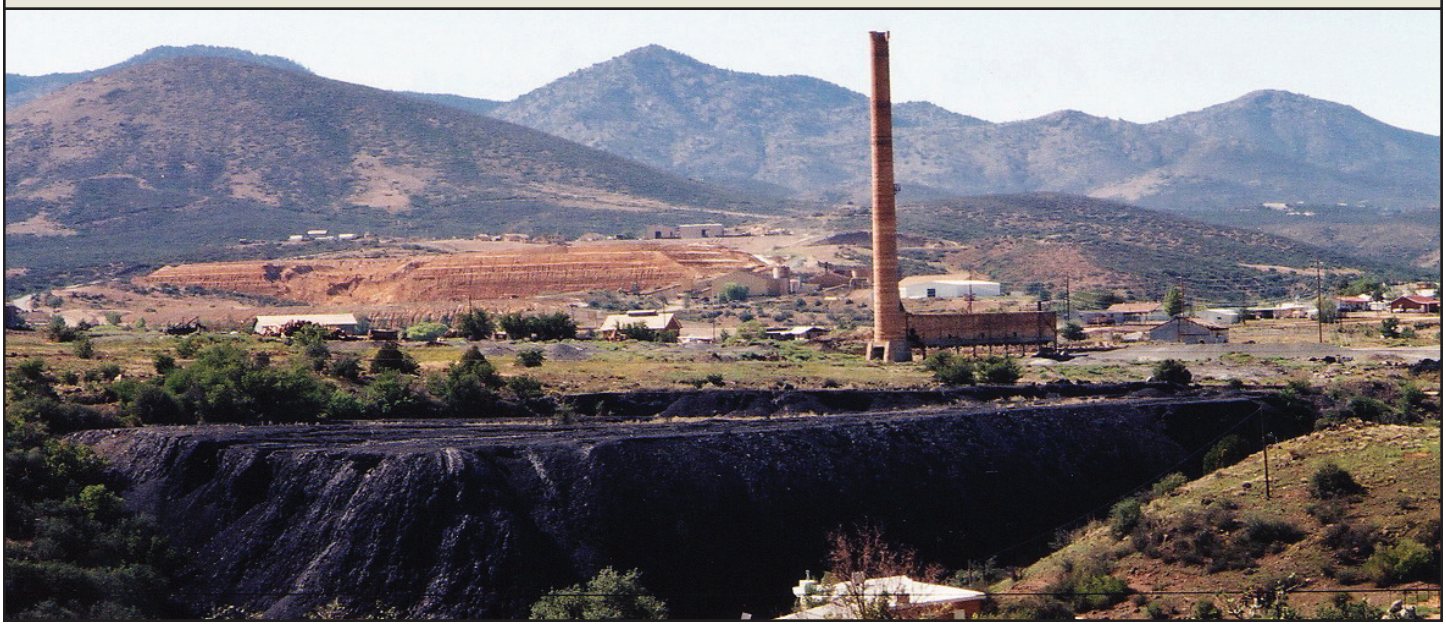
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