Klau / Buena Vista Mine Superfund Site

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency $ Region 9 $ San Francisco, CA

San Luis Obispo County August 2009

Update on Activities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed this fact sheet to update the community on recent and upcoming activities associated with the Klau/ Buena Vista Mine Superfund site. The abandoned mine site is located approximately 12 miles west of Paso Robles and is comprised of 317 acres, with multiple areas of mining waste. This waste contains mercury and other heavy metals such as arsenic, thallium and chromium. EPA's job is to investigate the nature and extent of contamination in soils, surface water and acid mine drainage coming from the site and ensure it is not a threat to people or the environment. This Remedial Investigation (RI) of site conditions will give us the data necessary to enable us to determine the risk and look at options for containment and cleanup of problem areas.

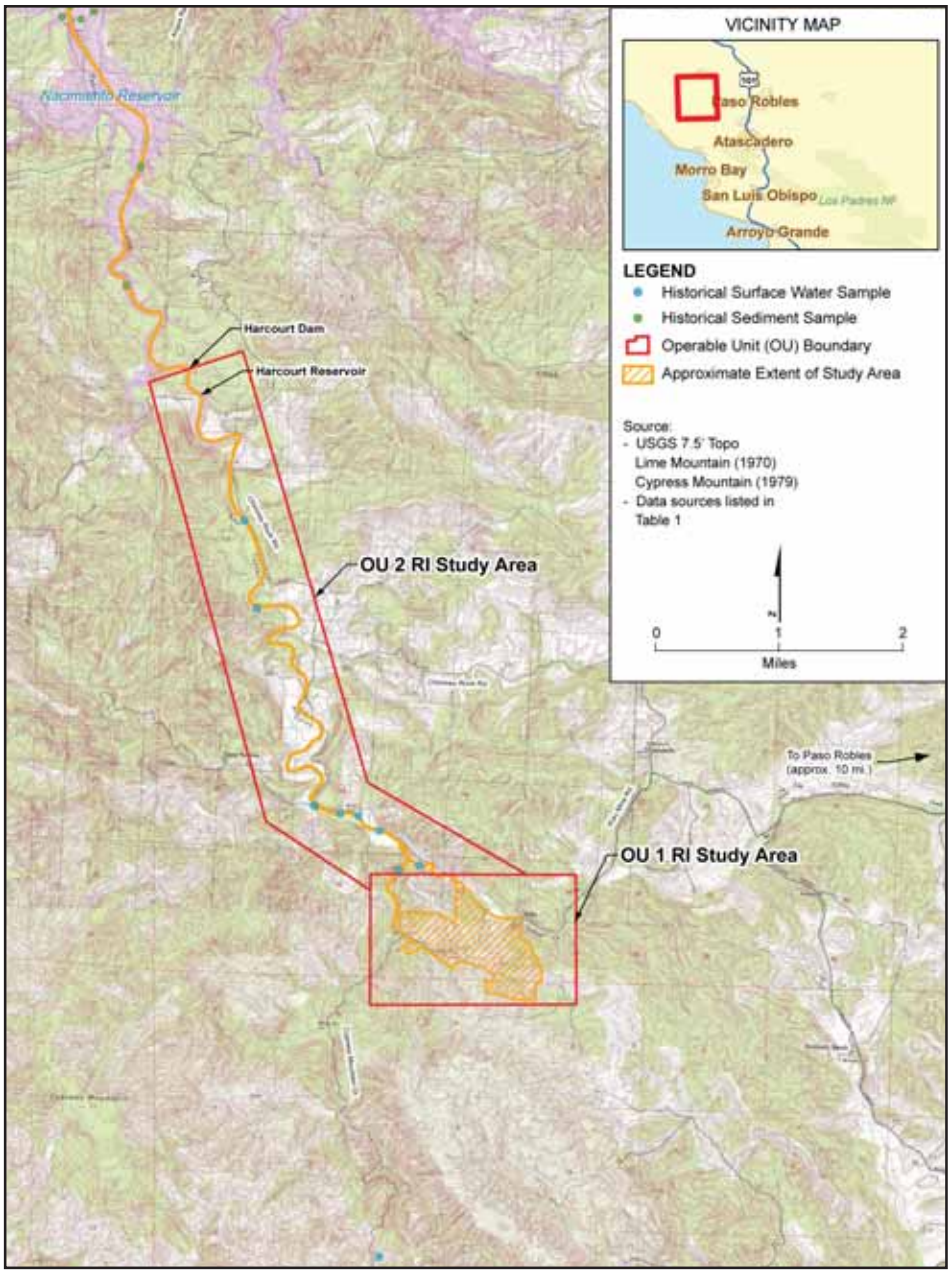

Figure 1: *Klau/Buena Vista Mine Study Areas, Operable Units 1 and 2*

Gathering Information

Following removal actions that stabilized the most vulnerable areas of the site, EPA gathered a significant amount of data that tells us what the contaminants are and where they are. Data from these efforts come from Operable Unit 1 (OU1), the mine site itself (see Figure 1). This information helped us develop two risk assessments, human health and ecological.

These risk assessments give a picture of who and/or what could be impacted by site contaminants and how those "receptors" could become exposed. With this understanding of potential site impacts, we can better focus on those areas of greatest concern. Both risk assessments looked at exposure routes such as ingestion, dermal (skin) contact, dust inhalation, fish consumption and gardening. They also looked at who or what could be exposed to site-associated contamination: people working on site, recreational users, nearby residents, fish, other wildlife and plants.

The results of the risk assessments are consistent with earlier interpretations of how site contamination can impact receptors. Soil, surface water and sediments contain elevated levels of heavy metals to which humans, wildlife and plants could be exposed. EPA's ecological risk assessment was a very basic look at possible impacts. The results indicate that a more comprehensive ecological risk assessment should be performed due to the levels of contamination found that exceed the screening levels. This will be done over the next year.

Where We Are Now

Field activities will continue for the rest of this year with much of the focus on groundwater. Seven groundwater monitoring wells will be installed on site to evaluate possible connections between flooded mine workings and surface waters such as Las Tablas Creek and the Klau Branch of the South Fork of Las Tablas Creek (see Figure 2). We will also take an inventory of surrounding domestic wells and evaluate their vulnerability to contaminated mine drainage.

Apart from groundwater, EPA will begin its investigation of Operable Unit 2, the Las Tablas Creek watershed from the mine site to Lake Nacimiento (see Figure 1). As with OU1, this study of OU2 will tell us about the nature and extent of contamination from past releases from mining operations--a major concern expressed by the community and regulatory agencies when the site was proposed for the Superfund list. We will also evaluate mercury-containing mineral salts that appear on the site to better understand how they occur and spread and potential risks associated with them.

Reports on Investigations

Several reports on our studies of OU1 will be coming out over the next year and a half. We currently have a draft RI Report that includes the two risk assessments discussed above and information on where and how we sampled along with analytical results. A final RI Report will be submitted over the next few months. Following completion of the groundwater monitoring, domestic well study and comprehensive ecological risk assessment, an Addendum to the RI Report containing this information will be released mid to late 2010. This will be followed by a Feasibility Study which evaluates options for taking care of the contamination problems.

Information Repositories

Documents related to the Klau/Buena Vista Mine site can be found at the following locations:

Paso Robles Public Library
1000 Spring St.
Paso Robles, CA 93446
(805) 237-3870
Hours:
Mon-Fri 10 am to 8 pm
Saturday 10 am to 5 pm

EPA Superfund Records Center
95 Hawthorne St., 4th floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 536-2000
Hours:
Mon-Fri 8 am to 5 pm

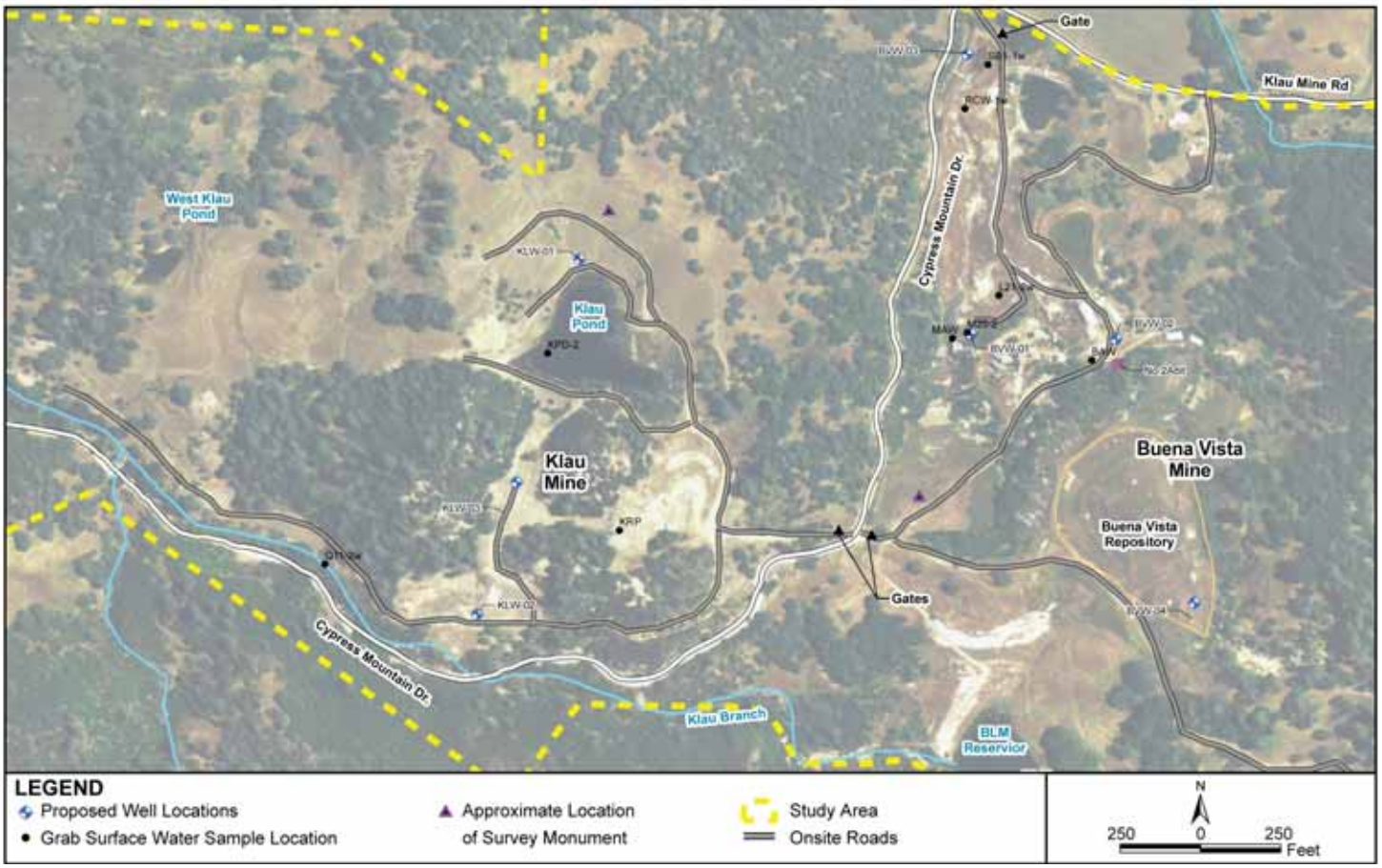

Figure 2: *Proposed Monitoring Well Locations*

For More Information

If you have questions or concerns regarding the Klau/Buena Vista Mine site, please contact:

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Both Jim and Vicki can be reached toll-free at (800) 231-3075. Please leave a message and your call will be returned.

EPA website for Klau/Buena Vista site: **http://www.epa.gov/region09/klaubuenavista**

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