



Klau / Buena Vista Mines Superfund Site

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Region 9

San Francisco, CA

San Luis Obispo County, California

November 2011

Update on Site Activities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been involved in three different investigations of the Klau/Buena Vista (KBV) Mines Superfund site. The results from these investigations will be documented in three Remedial Investigation (RI) Reports which will present the nature and extent of contamination at the site, what kinds of health risks it may pose to humans and the environment and how contaminants may have moved off site. This fact sheet, an update to our April 2011 newsletter, will explain what we have been looking at since that time and where we are going with each investigation and the overall project. The three areas we have examined are:

- KBV property itself—the source of the contamination
- Las Tablas Creek—where contamination from the mine was transported and deposited downstream
- Lake Nacimiento—where contamination from the mine was deposited

Community Meeting

EPA will hold a community meeting to discuss the KBV investigations and upcoming activities. Please come...your questions and input are appreciated!

**Thursday,
November 17, 2011
7:00 pm**

George Flamson Middle School
(Multi-Purpose Room)
2405 Spring Street
Paso Robles

Klau/Buena Vista Mines Property (Operable Unit 1)

As mentioned in our last fact sheet, heavy winter rains in early 2011 resulted in the slope failure of capped tailings on the Buena Vista Mine in the valley east of Cypress Mountain Road. We tried to stabilize this area in summer 2010 and made additional efforts since the tailings were first capped in 2000. This past August, EPA tried once again to better understand how the slide formed as well as the source and movement of water within the slide. Seven test pits ranging from 6 to 15 feet were excavated which showed that the lower eastern portion of the slide was saturated with water while the top portions were dry.

Evaluation by an engineering geologist experienced in slope failures helped us conclude that further efforts to stabilize the slope, such as installing drains, would probably not be successful. Since these capped tailings will be included in the cleanup planned for the site over the next couple of years (after the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study for OU1 is complete), EPA has decided to continue monitoring the slope rather than attempt stabilization. If significant movement occurs during the upcoming winter rains, EPA will evaluate whether interim repairs are needed in summer 2012.

The Remedial Investigation Report for the mine property will be completed by the end of this year.

Las Tablas Creek (Operable Unit 2)

The draft Remedial Investigation Report for the 6.5 miles of Las Tablas Creek from the mine site to Harcourt Reservoir has been completed. It was submitted to the regulatory agencies on September 14, 2011 for a 60-day review period. The document presents the results of our sampling of water, soil, sediment and aquatic life along the creek and was conducted in both wet and dry seasons. Seasonal assessments were necessary to understand how weather affects the transport of mercury and the formation of methyl mercury. The investigation concluded that the mercury found in Las Tablas Creek was the dominant contaminant and most likely from the mine (rather than from the floodplains along the watershed). The largest amounts of mercury were found in the sediments of Harcourt Reservoir. This suggests that contamination from the mine was flushed through Las Tablas Creek during both normal flow and winter storms, with a significant amount trapped in Harcourt Reservoir.

Risk to humans and the environment from mine contamination was also assessed in the RI Report. The human health risk assessment found that the soil, sediments and water do not pose a significant risk. The investigation confirmed that the consumption of fish from the watershed, in particular from Harcourt Reservoir, is not advised for children and women of child-bearing age due to methyl mercury contamination. The baseline ecological risk assessment found that the concentrations of mercury and methyl mercury present in the plants and animals do pose an ecological risk. These risks will need to be further assessed when looking at potential cleanup options in the Feasibility Study (FS).

Before moving into the FS to assess cleanup options, we will most likely need to 1) better refine volume estimates of the contaminated sediments in Harcourt Reservoir; 2) conduct a sediment erosion and deposition assessment of the system; and 3) determine the mass loading of methyl mercury in the watershed.

Lake Nacimiento (Operable Unit 3)

A framework for the upcoming investigation of Lake Nacimiento was submitted by EPA to the regulatory agencies on August 3, 2011, which will be incorporated into a sampling and analysis plan later this year. This technical memo provides a brief description of the lake, summarizes previous relevant mercury studies of Lake Nacimiento and outlines an approach for the investigation. EPA plans to hold a series of technical meetings with fellow regulatory agencies, along with stakeholder meetings involving local residents and interested groups. These meetings will determine the concerns of stakeholders and gather the data needed in the investigation to potentially address those concerns. EPA anticipates beginning these meetings later this year and during the first part of next year.

Information Repositories

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

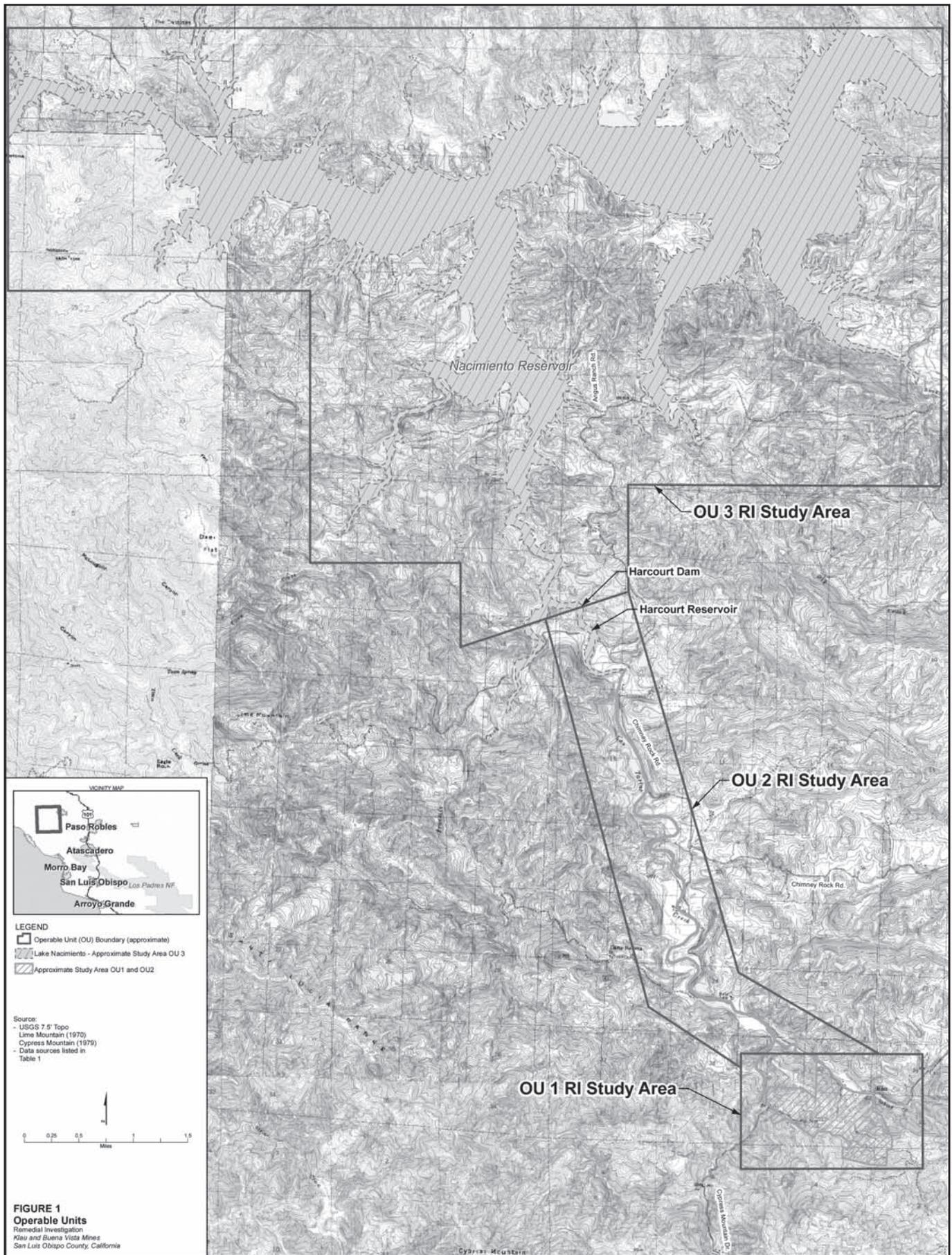
Paso Robles Public Library

1000 Spring St.
Paso Robles, CA 93445
(805) 237-3870
Mon – Fri 10 am to 8 pm
Saturday 10 am to 5 pm

EPA Superfund Records Center

95 Hawthorne St., Suite 403S
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 820-4700
Mon – Fri 8 am to 5 pm







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For More Information

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

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U.S. EPA

75 Hawthorne St.
San Francisco, CA 94105

Both Jim and Vicki can be reached toll-free at (800) 231-3075. This is a message line only...your call will be returned.



EPA website for KBV site:

<http://www.epa.gov/region09/klaubuenavista>



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Attn: Vicki Rosen (KBV 11/11)

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