



# Anaconda Mine

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9 • San Francisco, CA • February 2012

Yerington, Nevada

## Community Update Meeting

EPA invites the public to a community meeting to learn more about the Arimetco Feasibility Study and the status of other cleanup work at the Anaconda Mine. The meeting will be held on February 29, 2012 at the Yerington High School Multi-purpose Room, 114 Pearl Street, Yerington, NV from 6:30p.m. to 8:30p.m.

### Arimetco (OU8) Status

The Draft Feasibility Study (“Feasibility Study for Arimetco Facilities Operable Unit 8 Heap Leach Pads and Drain-down Fluids”) was released to the public on July 21, 2011.

The purpose of the Draft Feasibility Study is to develop and evaluate cleanup alternatives for portions of the former Arimetco facilities located on site, specifically the heap leach pads and fluid management system.

The Arimetco operation involved building heap leach pads using a combination of new ore and formerly processed ore and applying an acidic solution over the surface. This solution collected copper as it percolated through the heap leach pads. The solution was collected in ponds at the bases of the heaps then piped to the copper recovery facility located on site known as the solvent extraction electro-winning plant (SX-EW Plant).

Further study and possible additional cleanup actions may be necessary in future for the SX-EW Plant, historical spill locations, and groundwater in connection with Arimetco OU-8.

However, EPA believes its studies have collected enough data to develop and evaluate cleanup alternatives for the heap leach pads and fluid management system, as presented in the Draft Feasibility Study. This approach is consistent with Superfund law (known as CERCLA), Superfund regulations (referred to as the National Contingency Plan or the NCP), and EPA guidance, wherein EPA may develop a feasibility study to address a specific site problem or the entire site.

Originally, the comment period for the Draft Feasibility Study was scheduled to close on September 6. However, in response to requests for an extension from multiple stakeholders, the comment period was extended through October 31. EPA held a community meeting on September 15 to present the Draft Feasibility Study.

EPA received a total of eight sets of comments on the Draft Feasibility Study from (in the order received): one private citizen; Yerington Community Action Group; Mason Valley Environmental Committee; Yerington Paiute Tribe; Singatse Peak Services;

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection; Atlantic Richfield Company; and Great Basin Resource Watch.

EPA is presently reviewing the comments received. EPA will prepare a response to all comments received, and some of the comments will likely result in changes to the Feasibility Study. EPA’s goal is to release the Final Feasibility Study by June 2012. According to the Superfund process, the next step after the release of the Final Feasibility Study would be to develop a Proposed Plan, in which EPA would present to the community



**Community Meeting**

**February 29, 2012**  
6:30p.m. to 8:30p.m

Yerington High School  
Multi-purpose Room  
114 Pearl Street Yerington, NV

The Anaconda Mine investigation and cleanup has been divided into a number of smaller portions, which EPA calls Operable Units or OUs (see below).

### Anaconda Mine Operable Unit Names

<b>OU1</b>	Site-wide Groundwater
<b>OU2</b>	Pit Lake
<b>OU3</b>	Mine Process Areas
<b>OU4</b>	Evaporation Ponds/Sulfide Tailings
<b>OU5</b>	Waste Rock Area
<b>OU6</b>	Oxide Tailings
<b>OU7</b>	Wabuska Drain
<b>OU8</b>	Arimetco Operations

and stakeholders its preferred cleanup alternative. The Proposed Plan would be subject to public comment, after which EPA would select a cleanup alternative and document that selection in a Record of Decision.

In the interim we are working with Atlantic Richfield Company and Singatse Peak Services on short term improvements to the Arimetco fluids management system.

## Operable Unit 1 – Site-wide Groundwater

### Groundwater Investigation

By August 2011, there were 237 wells in the groundwater monitoring network. Additional wells have been installed and added since then, bringing the total wells to be monitored in 2012 close to 265. The information from the monitoring wells will be central to making a determination of the movement and magnitude of the groundwater contamination that has resulted from site activities. The monitoring data is integral to other groundwater investigation activities:

- In late November, Atlantic Richfield conducted an aquifer pump test to determine the sphere of influence from pumping the now-closed agricultural well located immediately north of the site. Water pumped from the

## Site Background

The Anaconda Copper Mine Site is a former open-pit, low-grade copper mine that covers more than 3,400 acres in the Mason Valley and is located about one-mile west of the city of Yerington, Nevada. The Anaconda Mining Company operated the mine from 1952 through 1978.

Anaconda processed oxide and sulfide ores extracted from an open pit on the site, which resulted in liquid and solid wastes, including tailings piles, evaporation ponds, and waste rock piles. The Atlantic Richfield Company (ARC) bought the Anaconda Mining Company, including the Site, in 1977, and is therefore responsible for cleaning up the contamination from former Anaconda mining activities at the Site.

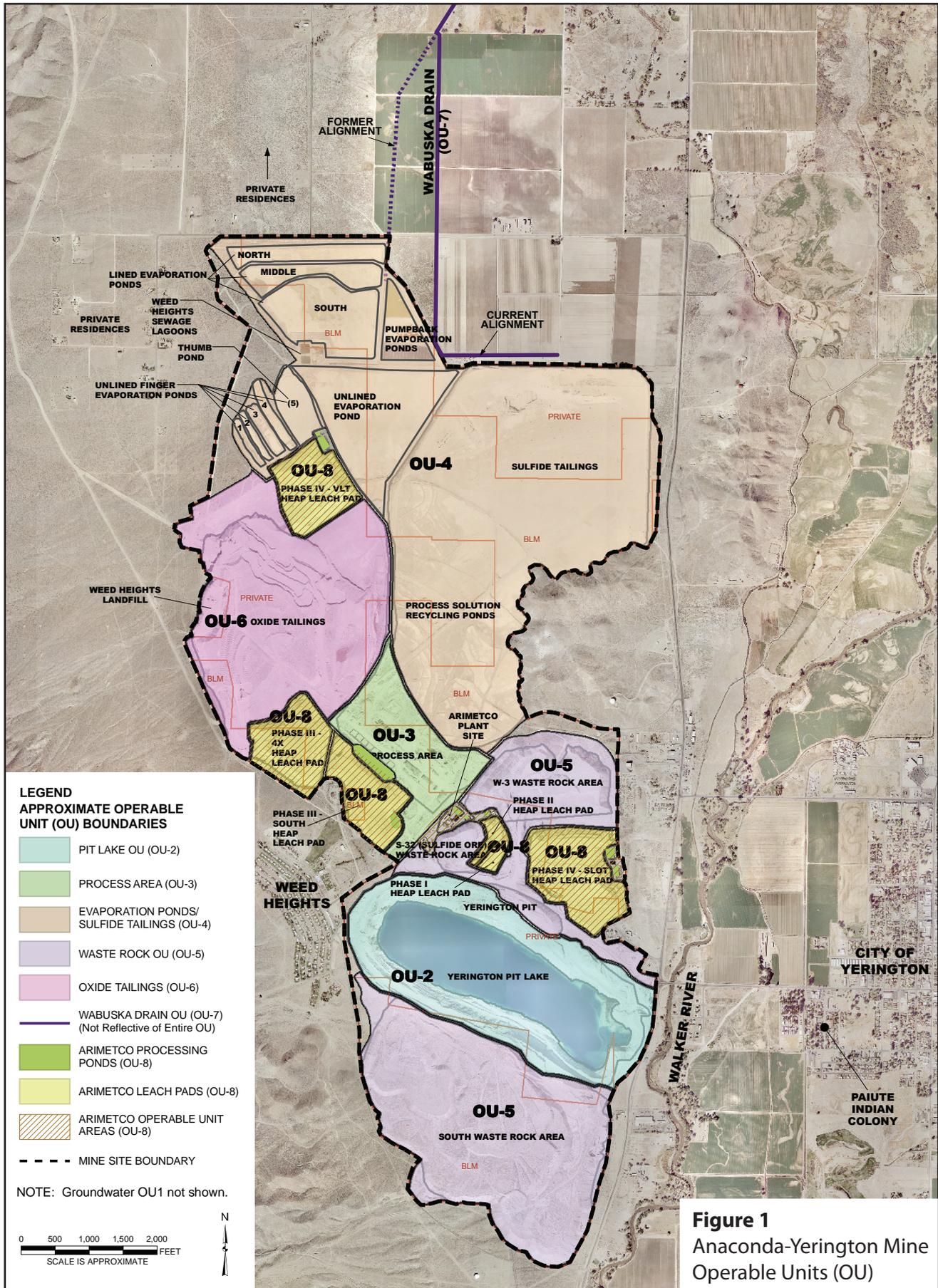
ARC sold the Site to Mr. Don Tibbals in 1982. Mr. Tibbals conducted some operations and leased portions of the Site to companies that extracted copper from the tailings and waste rock piles and conducted metal salvage and transformer recycling. Mr. Tibbals sold the property to Arizona Metals Company (Arimetco) in 1989.

Arimetco constructed an electrowinning plant and five heap leach pads to extract residual copper from tailings material and from new ore. The heap leach pads cover approximately 250 acres and produce acidic heap leach solutions that are collected in ponds. Arimetco filed for bankruptcy in 1997 and ceased operations at the Site in 2000.

In April 2011, Singatse Peak Services completed its purchase of the former

Arimetco property for the purpose of conducting mineral exploration on site. EPA plans to work with Singatse to ensure these efforts do not conflict with cleanup activities at the site.

After Arimetco abandoned the site, the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) worked to control the acidic waste solution in the heap leach pads and to stabilize the site. EPA assumed the regulatory lead for the Site in 2004. EPA and ARC have conducted several removal actions to address immediate concerns. EPA, in coordination with NDEP, continues to move forward with investigations to determine the extent of contamination and identify cleanup options for the Site.



agricultural well was placed in the Pumpback Well ponds located on the northern edge of the site. A report on the pump test is expected in the next few months.

- Atlantic Richfield has submitted a Background Groundwater Quality Assessment Workplan to characterize background groundwater quality and differentiate background water from groundwater that has been affected by mining activity, agricultural activity, and other man-made influences. The background information will help to define the nature and extent of groundwater contamination resulting from mine activities and also help develop cleanup standards for the site.
- Atlantic Richfield has also prepared documents, including a proposal for bedrock characterization activities, that will provide information and a path forward to develop the Groundwater Remedial Investigation Workplan which is scheduled to be submitted in draft during spring 2012. The Remedial Investigation Workplan will identify the information gaps that need to be filled to identify and evaluate alternatives for groundwater cleanup.

### **Domestic Well Program**

Atlantic Richfield is currently sampling about 152 wells as part of the Domestic Well Sampling Program.

Approximately 80 households are receiving bottled water because their domestic well water was found to contain uranium above 25 micrograms/liter at some point during the sampling program.

A recent evaluation of domestic well sampling data found no clear trends in contaminant location or concentration. Some wells have had their concentrations increase over time, some have had concentrations decrease.

EPA will release a fact sheet on the Domestic Well program at the end of February. Copies of the fact sheet will be placed in the Lyon County Library and on the EPA Anaconda Mine website at: [www.epa.gov/region09/anaconda](http://www.epa.gov/region09/anaconda).

## **Operable Unit 3 – Anaconda Process Areas**

Atlantic Richfield is continuing the geophysical evaluation of the OU3 to identify subsurface utilities and operations and conveyance features. EPA is completing the draft workplan for the OU3 Remedial Investigation and expects to have the workplan out for review and comment in the next few months. The workplan will be implemented by Atlantic Richfield and will focus on identifying and characterizing areas where Anaconda ore processing operations may have released contamination into the environment.

## **Anaconda Mine and Mason Valley Agriculture**

EPA has no evidence that contamination from the Anaconda Mine has affected any agricultural products in the Yerington Area. Crops grown and livestock raised in the vicinity of the mine should not be considered contaminated by virtue of their proximity to the site. Crops grown and livestock raised in the Yerington Area should be considered safe for consumption.

To be affected by contamination from the Anaconda Mine site, an agricultural product would have to

come into contact with elevated levels of site contaminants. By their nature, pathways that may transport contaminants tend to be very localized and directional. Just being near the mine site is not a reason to assume or otherwise conclude an impact to the safety or quality of an agricultural product.

In 2007, EPA conducted tests of onions grown adjacent to the Anaconda site and irrigated from a supply well located just north of the site boundary. The onions were selected from random areas of the field and were not washed

or trimmed prior to analysis. The onions were analyzed for uranium, a primary site contaminant. The results showed that the uranium levels in the onions were low, and below levels typically found naturally in onions from other areas of the United States. Accordingly, EPA concluded that the test results showed that the Anaconda mine did not elevate uranium levels in local onions.



## Relationship to Activities of Singatse Peak Services

As many people know, Singatse Peak Services (SPS) acquired the Arimetco holdings at the site in April 2011 and has initiated mine exploration activities. EPA and ARC have been talking to SPS about the company's exploration and development plans for the site. SPS is operating under permits from NDEP, and those permits require SPS to conduct activities in a responsible manner both during and after exploration.

If there are opportunities for SPS activities to address some of the site problems, EPA would consider that possibility. However, EPA plans to continue with site characterization and cleanup activities.

Singatse's ownership does not relieve ARC of its responsibility to cleanup the contamination left by the Anaconda operation.

## Community Involvement Program

The purpose of EPA's Community Involvement program is to help the public understand and become involved in the cleanup decision-making process.

EPA has a number of ways for the public to learn about the site. We've placed site documents in our Information Repository at the Lyon Library and on EPA's web site (see information below). In addition, EPA holds public meetings in the community every few months, and also holds technical meetings which the public can attend. If you have questions about the site, you can call EPA staff using their direct line or EPA's toll-free line (800-231-3075). The direct lines are listed on the back.

### Information Repository

For site documents, please visit the Information Repository at:

#### Lyon County Library

20 Nevin Way  
Yerington, NV 89447  
(775) 577-5042

Hours: Mon, Wed., Fri – 9:00am to 6:00pm  
Tues, Thurs – 9:00am to 7:00pm  
Saturday – 9:00am to 4:00pm

Please visit the Anaconda / Yerington Mine website at: <http://www.epa.gov/region09/anaconda>



### Mailing List Coupon

If you are not already on EPA's mailing list for the Anaconda Mine Site, please send an e-mail or return the coupon below to David Cooper (contact info on back).

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Telephone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

# Anaconda Mine

— Community Meeting on February 29, 2012 —

## EPA Contacts

**Jere Johnson**

Project Manager

(415) 972-3094

*johnson.jere@epa.gov*

**David Seter**

Project Manager

(415) 972-3250

*seter.david@epa.gov*

**Tom Dunkelman**

On Scene Coordinator

(775) 687-9480

*dunkelman.tom@epa.gov*

**David Cooper**

Community Involvement

Coordinator

(415) 972-3245

toll free (800) 231-3075

*cooper.david@epa.gov*

**Greg Lovato, P.E.**

Bureau Chief

NDEP Bureau of Corrective Actions

(775) 687-9373 (phone)

(775) 687-8335 (fax)

*glovato@ndep.nv.gov*

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United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9  
75 Hawthorne Street (SFD-6-3)  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
Attn: David Cooper (Anaconda 2/12)

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