Red Devil Mine

Environmental Investigation Update

December 2013

Red Devil Mine ore processing facility, 1943

This newsletter provides updates on the environmental project at the Red Devil Mine, an abandoned cinnabar mine and mercury production facility on the Kuskokwim River. A complete record of documents for this investigation, including previous newsletters, is available at www.blm.gov/ak/red_devil_mine.

Since late 2009, BLM has investigated the Red Devil Mine site to better understand contaminants left by past mining activity and how those contaminants interact with the local soil, water and sediment to create potential risk to humans and the environment.

The results of this investigation, known as a Remedial Investigation, show that large piles of tailings near Red Devil Creek contain high concentrations of mercury, arsenic and antimony. The results also show that the tailings are releasing these metals into the soil and water. As BLM was finishing the investigation, we began work on a Feasibility Study to evaluate different ways to remediate, or reduce, the environmental risk posed by the tailings.

BLM is working in coordination with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Alaska departments of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Natural Resources, and Health and Social Services. These agencies are currently reviewing the draft Feasibility Study. BLM plans to finalize this report by summer 2014.

Early Action

The May 2013 Red Devil Mine newsletter discussed the possibility of BLM conducting an early action at the site. One key finding of the Remedial Investigation was confirmation that contaminated tailings are migrating down Red Devil Creek and into the Kuskokwim River. BLM is considering an early action in 2014 to prevent further migration of this contamination down Red Devil Creek.

BLM is developing an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis for an early action that outlines three alternatives for preventing the tailings from migrating:

1. Lining the section of Red Devil Creek nearest the tailings pile with concrete cloth.
2. Installing culvert pipe in the section of Red Devil Creek nearest the tailings.
3. Excavating a new channel in the section of Red Devil Creek nearest the tailings, and moving the tailings pile back from the creek.

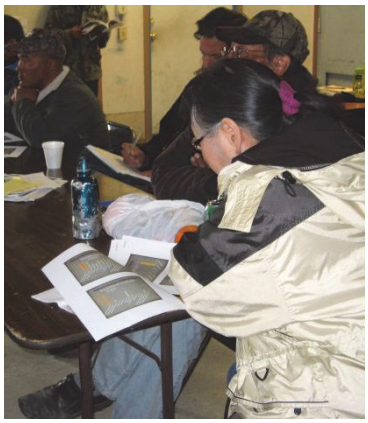
Each alternative is evaluated based on how effective it is in preventing tailings migration, how well it can be done (or accomplished), and cost.

PHOTOS: Red Devil Mine ore processing facility, 1943 (top), and mine tailings at Red Devil Creek, 2013 (center).

BLM

Anchorage Field Office

Fish Telemetry Study



The fish tissue study report completed last year uses fish tissue and movement data to show concentrations of metals and where fish, primarily pike and lush (burbot), spend time. That report, titled, "Mercury, Arsenic, and Antimony in Aquatic Biota from the Middle Kuskokwim River Region, Alaska, 2010-2011," is available at **www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/fisheries/rdm_fish.html.**

The project team has finished collecting tissue data, but is still tracking fish movement over time. An updated report will include an analysis of fish species movement, tissue concentrations of mercury, and watershed characteristics. The updated report is expected in spring of 2014, and the final report is projected for 2015.

Next Steps

BLM will host an information session about the Red Devil Mine project on Feb. 3 during the 2014 Alaska Forum on the Environment, held in Anchorage. The session will outline the early action alternatives being considered for the site.

In January, BLM will contact communities and tribes along the Kuskokwim River to schedule community meetings and tribal consultations in February and March. At those meetings and consultations, we will ask for comments and answer questions about the three alternatives for early action. We will consider input from the communities and tribes, plus input from the EPA, ADEC, and other state agencies before choosing one of the three alternatives. At the meetings, we will also update the communities and tribes on the status of planning site-wide remediation as included in the Feasibility Study.

BLM remains committed to consulting with all interested communities and tribes throughout the Red Devil Mine project.

If you have concerns, comments or questions, please use the contact information at the bottom of this newsletter to reach us. Let's talk!

PHOTOS: Residents of Lower Kalskag (top), Kalskag, and Akiak (left) attend community meetings about the Red Devil Mine project.

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