

ABANDONED MINE SAFETY

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In the interest of public safety, the Bureau of Land Management is working to seal and clean up abandoned mines. There is an estimated 100 to 500 thousand sites in the country to be assessed for closure, one is in Bannock County. Bryan Latham has more.

East of Pocatello and back up in the hills, the BLM is closing up the entry to an abandoned mine.

Kyle Free, BLM Mining Engineer: "We have concerns about public safety. Curious public getting into the mine opening, and there's a lot potential hazards in those areas."

"We have a list of a lot of sites like this and we prioritize those sites that are most threat to the public. This being close to Pocatello we get a lot of high school kids up here."

The tunnel is part of the Moonlight Mine, records indicate it's been here at least since the 1940's, and while records suggest no precious metals were ever extracted from here it's being closed off as part of a national program.

Jeff Cundick, BLM Minerals Branch Chief: "The Forest Service the dept of lands and the BLM are working together with the resources we have in working the sites, identifying which sites have hazardous or water problems that create pollution to local streams, and go in together working co-operatively and reclaim those sites and make sure we alleviate these problems."

Problems in the form of those seen and unseen.

"Rocks could collapse or fall on their head; poisonous gas could accumulate in there. More common than that is lack of oxygen -- someone could walk in exploring the tunnels and they could become deprived of oxygen, fall to the floor and suffocate of lack of oxygen. It's a good habitat for poisonous insects, reptiles, rattlesnakes, black widows -- and that's a very real threat."

In this case the natural habitat is taken into consideration.

Richard Buster, BLM Environmental Protection: "This mine this particular adit has water coming out of it, so we put a (unrecognizable word) in, and then we placed a culvert in with batt grates to allow wildlife bats especially to enter and leave the adit."

Most importantly keeping people out.

The BLM says there are thousands of abandoned mines throughout the state and if you come across one to let them know about it.