



LAVA CAP MINE SUPERFUND SITE

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9 • San Francisco, CA
Nevada City, CA

May 2006

EPA Begins Major Cleanup at Lava Cap Mine

This fact sheet is to inform Nevada City community members and residents near the Lava Cap Mine of upcoming construction at the mine site. Beginning in May 2006 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will conduct a major portion of the cleanup at the mine. Work is expected to continue into the fall.

This part of the cleanup will address most of the contamination left behind by historic mining operations. EPA will install an engineered containment system over a large area of arsenic-contaminated mine tailings, install drainage channels to route clean surface water flows around the contaminated areas, replace a weakened log dam with a stronger buttress, decontaminate mine buildings, and excavate contaminated soil from along areas of Little Clipper Creek, which flows through the mine property.

Site History

The Lava Cap Mine Superfund Site operated as a gold and silver mine until 1943. The processing of ore to extract gold and silver at the mine produced finely ground tailings containing naturally-occurring arsenic and trace metals. The tailings were disposed in the Little Clipper Creek drainage adjacent to the mine's ore processing buildings. The tailings were held in place by a log dam constructed across Little Clipper Creek. During a major storm in January 1997, the log dam partially collapsed and flood waters spread arsenic-laden tailings downstream.

EPA designated these tailings a health and environmental threat because they are highly toxic and exposure to these tailings would present a significant risk. The site was placed on the Federal National Priorities List (NPL or Superfund) in 1999.

EPA Progress to Date

The Lava Cap site is large and complex. Not only were waste tailings stored on the historic mine property, they were released into Little Clipper Creek, where they traveled as far as three miles downstream.

In order to facilitate cleanup, EPA divided the project into four smaller parts called operable units: the Mine Area Operable Unit (OU1); the Groundwater Operable Unit (OU2); the Lost Lake Operable Unit (OU3); and the Mine Area Residence Operable Unit (OU4).

Cleanup activities at each Operable Unit are outlined below:

OU1/Mine Area: Studies conducted by EPA found unacceptable levels of arsenic and other trace metals in soil and surface water at the mine. EPA selected a clean-up plan in the Record of Decision (ROD) dated September 2004. The clean-up is scheduled to begin in May 2006.

OU2/Groundwater: Since residents living near the mine rely on groundwater wells for their water supply, EPA has put in place a program to monitor arsenic in those wells. Most of the wells tested to date are free of arsenic. A few wells have shown slightly elevated levels of arsenic and have had treatment systems installed. EPA is currently conducting a study to determine whether more wells might become contaminated by arsenic in the future. The studies are planned for completion in 2008.

OU3/Lost Lake: Studies conducted by EPA found unacceptable levels of arsenic and other trace metals in soil and surface water in the Lost Lake area downstream of the mine. EPA is currently preparing a number of cleanup options to present to local citizens. EPA expects to hold a public meeting to present the options in 2007.

OU4/Mine Area Residences: EPA also selected the cleanup for this part of the site in the ROD dated September 2004. The cleanup was constructed in fall 2005.

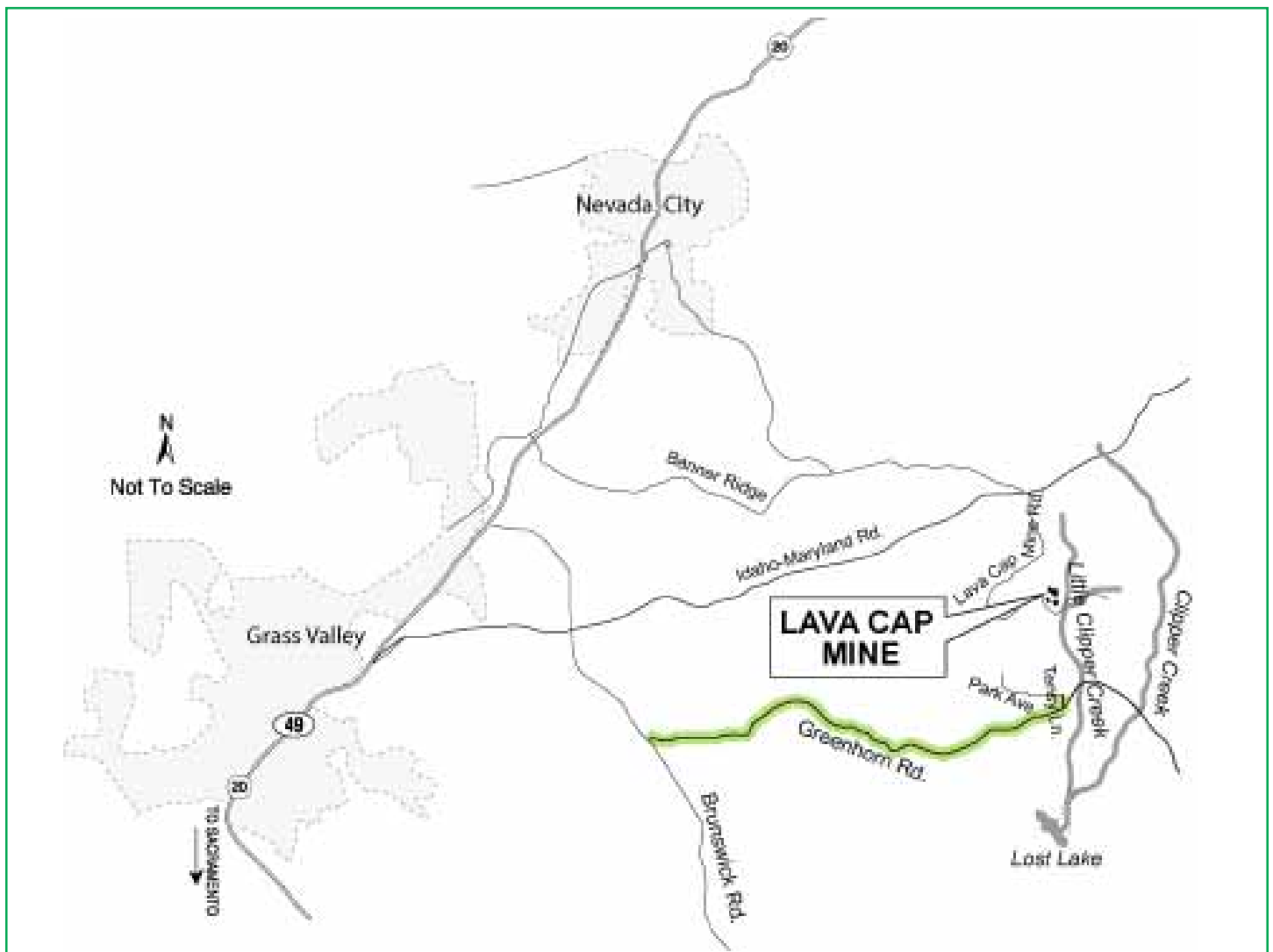
Potential Community Impacts

Lava Cap Mine is relatively remote yet construction may be audible for neighboring residences. Traffic may also result from construction trucks working at

the site. The main access route for construction-related truck traffic will be along Tensy Lane, located off Greenhorn Road. Materials such as pipes, soil and rock, will be brought onto the Site at various phases of the project from May through October 2006.

Except when absolutely necessary, work will take place between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Work may continue on Saturdays if necessary to meet the fall completion deadline for the work. However, truck traffic will be kept to a minimum on Saturdays.

Complaints related to noise, construction or any other site related questions and concerns should be directed to the EPA contacts listed on the back of this fact sheet.



Proposed Truck Route

Documents related to Lava Cap Mine site are located at:

Nevada County Library

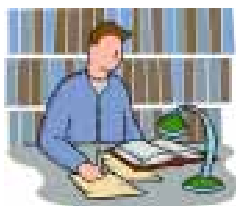
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If you are not already on the Lava Cap Mine mailing list and would like to be, please fill out the coupon below and return to:

Lauren Berkman, Community Involvement Coordinator
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(*Optional items)

You may also provide the above information via e-mail to: berkman.lauren@epa.gov

EPA Begins Major Cleanup at Lava Cap Mine

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
75 Hawthorne Street (SFD-3)
San Francisco, CA 94105-1309

EPA toll-free number

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