CLMCF
2.1

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Van Stone Mine Site

Toxics Cleanup Program Fact Sheet **August 2011**

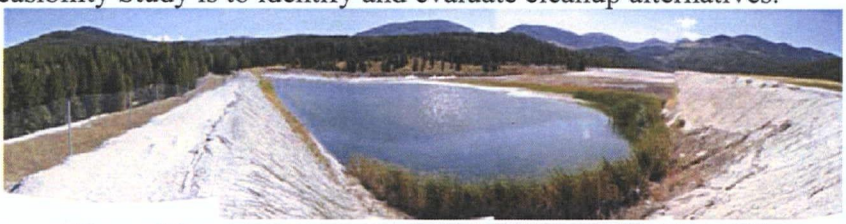
Ecology Proposes Investigation of Metals Contamination at Site

Public Meeting on August 17, 2011

The Washington Department of Ecology will hold a public meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 17, 2011 at the Onion Creek School District to explain the proposed investigation of metals contamination at the Van Stone Mine Site. The Washington Department of Health also will attend the meeting (see meeting details below).

Ecology proposes to enter into an Agreed Order with Vaagen Brothers Lumber Co., Inc. The Order requires Vaagen to give Ecology access to property that lies within the Van Stone Mine site so a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study may be conducted. The site is located 24 miles northeast of the city of Colville off Van Stone Road in Stevens County, Washington (see Fig.1).

Ecology plans to use a contractor to conduct the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study. You may see people at the site conducting investigations and sampling in late summer. The purpose of the Remedial Investigation is to gather more information to clearly define the contaminants and where they are located. The purpose of the Feasibility Study is to identify and evaluate cleanup alternatives.



View of the east impoundment on the Lower Tailings Pile

You are invited to:

- **Attend** the **public meeting** at **7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 17, 2011 at the Onion Creek School District, 2006 Lotze Creek Road** (**Note**: the physical meeting location is near the site even though it is a Colville, Washington address).
- **Review** the Agreed Order and the associated documents which include a Scope of Work, Work Plan, and a Public Participation Plan. The Scope of Work provides an outline of work to be completed, and the Work Plan provides further details about how the work will be accomplished. The Public Participation Plan outlines ways Ecology will involve and inform the public about cleanup at the site.

Take Precautions If You Are Near the Site

The Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study will provide information about the site, including possible health risks. Until we have study results, we recommend the following precautions:

- Do not go on or near the tailings piles or the mill site. This includes hiking, bicycling, ATV use, horseback riding, or other recreational activities.
- Do not swim in Onion Creek or the tributaries near the site until there is more information about the water quality.
- Take measures to keep the dust minimized inside your home and outside on your property if you live near the site. (see the Dirt Alert brochure on Ecology's Website listed in the box on page three of this fact sheet.)

If you have health-related questions, please contact Rhonda Kaetzel at the WA Department of Health (see contact information on page three).

Property Sampling

If you have knowledge of mine-related materials being disposed of on your property and would like Ecology to sample it, please contact Brendan Dowling. His contact information is in the box on page three of this fact sheet.

USEPA SF
1453562

- **Send** your comments to Ecology for consideration. Comments will be accepted until **5 p.m. September 12, 2011**. See the shaded box on page three for details about where to review documents and submit comments.

Site Overview

Lead and zinc mining explorations began as early as 1926 at the site and stopped in 1993. Several companies were affiliated with mining activities at the site over the years. As a result of their ownership, operations, and contribution of contaminants at the site, they are responsible for cleanup and are known as potentially liable persons (PLPs). The PLPs for this site are American Smelting and Refining Company (Asarco), Callahan Mining Corp., Sundown Holdings, Ltd., Equinox Resources (Wash.) Inc., and Vaagen Brothers.

Vaagen Brothers owns a parcel of land which is part of the site. They are currently the only PLP participating in the Agreed Order. Vaagen's main role at this time is to provide access so Ecology's contractors may conduct investigations to determine the various contaminants and where they are located. Details of Vaagen's responsibilities may be reviewed in the Agreed Order.

Equinox also has been legally identified as a responsible party for the cleanup but has declined to participate. Ecology is pursuing legal remedies to gain access to Equinox's property, which is another parcel of land identified as part of the site. Access will allow Ecology to conduct the same type of investigations as on the Vaagen parcel.

Asarco filed for bankruptcy in 2005. Ecology filed a claim against Asarco for cleanup of environmental damages in Washington State. A settlement was reached and Ecology received $3.5 million toward cleanup of the Van Stone Mine site.

The site is made up of the following four areas:

- The location of the former milling facility (now dismantled) and offices.
- Waste rock piles and the mine workings area, including what are now pit lakes.
- The Upper Tailings Pile.
- The Lower Tailings Pile.

During Asarco's operations at the site, the milling complex and mine infrastructure was built. Close to three million tons of ore was produced by Asarco and Equinox. A fine-grained material called tailings were produced during ore processing and metal extraction.

The tailings were moved downhill as a slurry from the milling facility and stored in an area nearly 10 acres in size that was called the Upper Tailings Pile. The tailings pile is near a tributary of Onion Creek that flows past the Onion Creek School.

In 1961 the dam holding the tailings in place failed and flooded a tributary of Onion Creek. The tailings traveled downstream as far as the Onion Creek School damaging property and structures.

As a result of the failure of the Upper Tailings Pile, a Lower Tailings Pile was constructed and used until 1993. This pile is nearly 40 acres. This pile is near another tributary of Onion Creek.

The Department of Natural Resources required limited reclamation activities at the site. Completed activities include taking the mill apart, removing the tailings pond and disposing of lines used for slurried tailings.

Contaminants of Concern

Contamination at the site is a result of past mining operations. Past sampling showed soil contains arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, and zinc at levels that exceed state standards. Groundwater also exceeds state standards for arsenic, cadmium, and lead.

The Cleanup Process

The following is a general outline of how the cleanup process works. There may be variables at a site that require additional steps. Sometimes steps are combined, if appropriate, to move the cleanup forward more quickly.

This fact sheet focuses on the Agreed Order to conduct a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study. This begins the formal phase of cleanup and the first 30-day comment period. Ecology will answer comments and modify the documents if necessary.

Next, reports from the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study are made available for a 30-day comment period. After the documents become final, if no interim actions are necessary to protect the public and environment, a draft Cleanup Action Plan (DCAP) is prepared and put out for public comment. The DCAP gives details about how cleanup will be implemented. Environmental impacts of the project are considered and a State Environmental Policy Act determination is made available for public review along with the DCAP.

Next, a Consent Decree is developed. It is a legal agreement between Ecology and the PLPs and ensures all applicable laws and regulations will be followed during the cleanup. It also goes through public comment.

After the Consent Decree is finalized engineering design plans are completed and the cleanup is implemented.

What Happens Next?

You may review the Agreed Order, Scope of Work, Work Plan, and Public Participation Plan, and send your comments to **Ecology by September 12, 2011**. Ecology will review the comments. If the comments improve the plans for investigation Ecology will change the documents.

Comments Accepted

August 12 through September 12, 2011

Submit Comments and Technical Questions
Brendan Dowling
WA Department of Ecology
Toxics Cleanup Program
4601 N. Monroe, Spokane WA 99205-1295
509/329-3611 or e-mail Brendan.dowling@ecy.wa.gov

Public Involvement Questions
Carol Bergin
WA Department of Ecology
509/329-3546 or Carol.bergin@ecy.wa.gov

Health Related Questions
Rhonda Kaetzel, Ph.D., DABT
WA Department of Health
Environmental Health Assessments
PO Box 47846, Olympia, WA 98504-7846
360/236-3357 or Rhonda.kaetzel@doh.wa.gov

Dirt Alert Website
http://www.tpchd.org/DirtAlert click on dirt alert free presentations, then click on Healthy Actions

Facility Site ID No. 5418085
Cleanup Site ID No. 461

Document Review Locations

WA Department of Ecology
Kari Johnson, Public Disclosure
4601 N. Monroe, Spokane, WA 99205-1295
Call for an appointment 509/329-3415

Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Website
https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=461

Onion Creek School District
2006 Lotze Creek Road
Colville, WA 99114-8602 Phone: 509/732-4240

Onion Creek General Store/Library
2191 Onion Creek Road
Colville, WA 99114 Phone: 509/732-6648

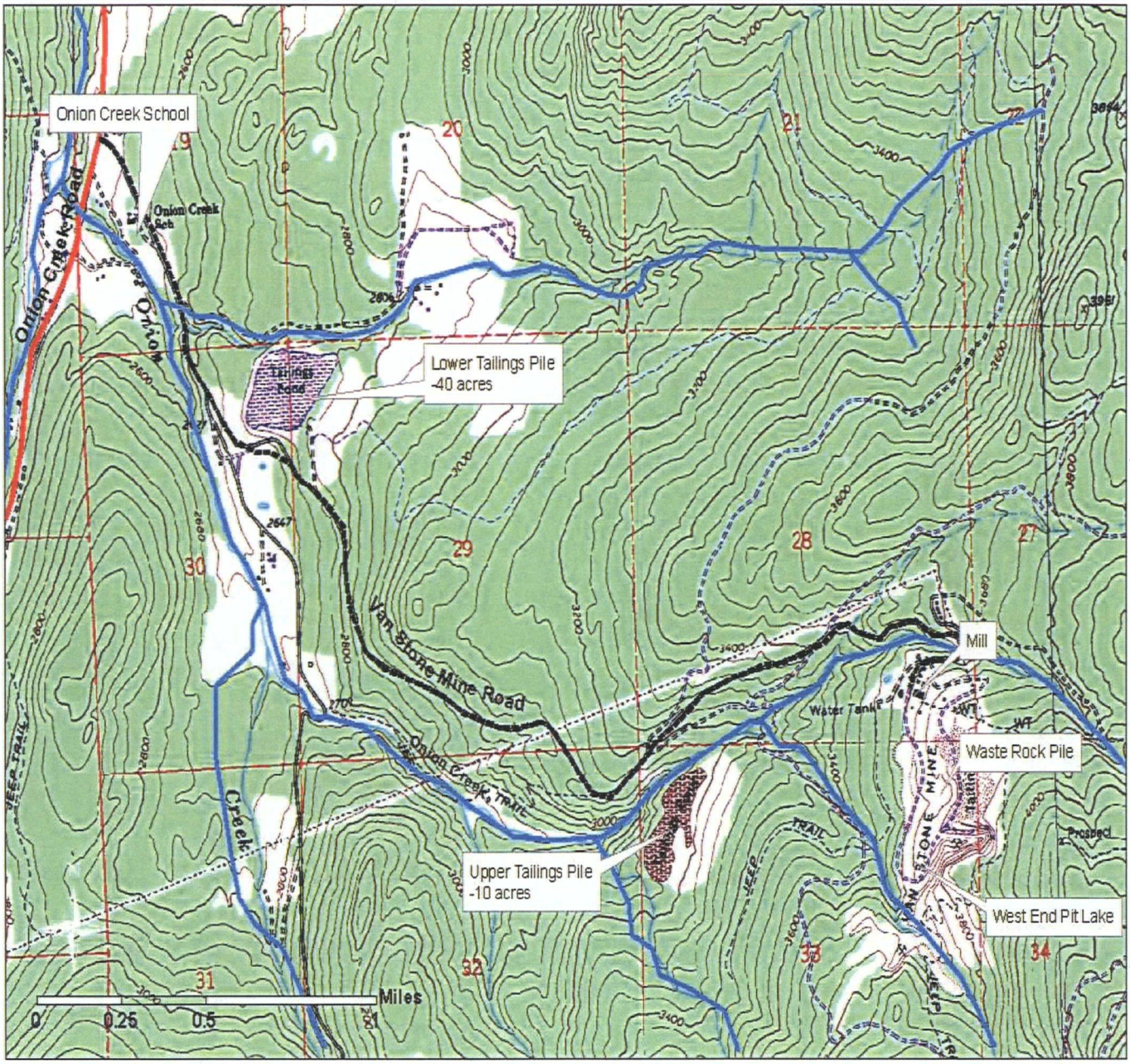

Onion Creek School
Onion Creek Road
Onion Creek
Lower Tailings Pile
-40 acres
Van Stone Mine Road
Mill
Water Tank
Waste Rock Pile
Onion Creek Trail
Upper Tailings Pile
-10 acres
West End Pit Lake
Creek
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
1

Figure 1