

Fact Sheet

Pine Mountain Mine

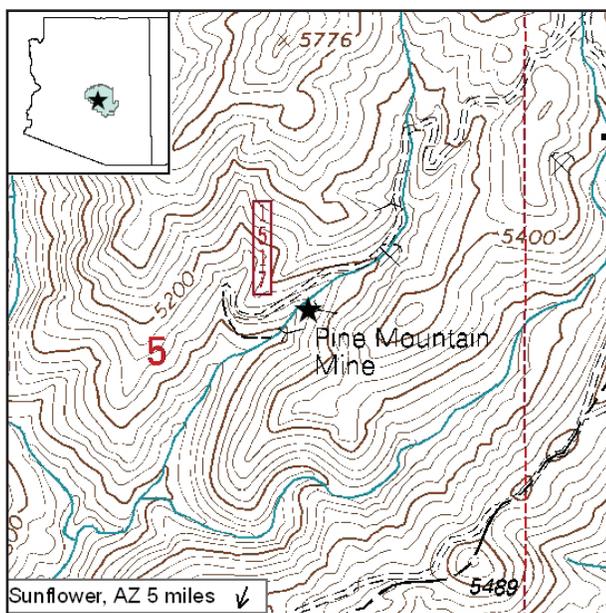
Tonto National Forest

March 2008



Site Location and History . . .

The Pine Mountain Mine (site) is located within the Mesa Ranger District of the Tonto National Forest near Mesa, Arizona. The site is in the NW quarter of Section 4, NE corner of Section 5, Township 7 North, Range 9 East, in Maricopa County.



In the early 1900s, gold prospecting led to the discovery of cinnabar (mercury sulfide) in an area known as the Mazatzal Mining District. Mercury mining production did not start until the 1930s and continued intermittently until February 1970. The intensity of mining activity corresponded with the price of mercury with peak operations occurring after both World War I and World War II. Ore from nearby workings was crushed and the mercury separated in the retort facility located on the site. The retort is a furnace that is used to heat the cinnabar to vaporize the mercury. United Nuclear Corporation (UNC) was responsible for operations from October 1965 to May 1967, and their activities resulted in the disposal of mercury retort tailings with residual mercury around the site. Historical records indicate that at least 33,000 tons of retort tailings were produced.

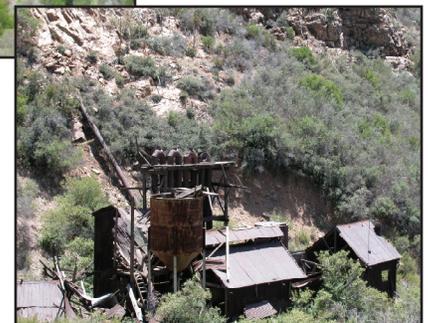
And Now . . .

Past mining activities left remains of mining and milling equipment, a mill retort building, and 7,800 cubic yards of mercury contaminated tailings at the site. The retort building contains a rotary kiln and condenser. The structural condition of the building is weak and unsound. A fallen smokestack is located adjacent to the retort building and along the hillside. The site is surrounded by undeveloped and uninhabited land within the Tonto National Forest. The arid mountains are a recreational area that draws hunters, hikers,



off-road vehicle enthusiasts, campers and rock collectors. Precipitation from heavy storms has washed the retort tailings

onto drainages downstream. The mercury in the tailings poses a potential threat to human health and the environment.



Pine Mountain Mine EE/CA . . .

Pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service had UNC prepare an Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis (EE/CA) for the site. The purpose of an EE/CA is to evaluate the magnitude and extent of contamination associated with past mining activities and to evaluate mine cleanup/removal alternatives.

The EE/CA focused on two main areas of interest: (1) the retort tailings and streambed sediment, and (2) the retort building.

The following preliminary removal action objectives were established for each area of interest.

Retort Tailings/Streambed Sediment:

- Reduce the potential exposure to human populations, animals, or the food chain to mercury present in the retort tailings and downstream sediments.

Retort Building:

- Reduce the potential exposure to human populations, animals, or the food chain to mercury present in the soils surrounding the retort building.

To achieve these objectives, removal action alternatives were identified and evaluated:

Alternative 1: No action. This alternative does not require any further action. The site conditions remain unaltered.

Alternative 2: No action for the retort tailings and streambed sediment downstream and limited access. This alternative is identical to alternative 1, with the addition of access limitations to minimize physical safety hazard risks associated with the retort building.

Alternative 3: No action for the retort tailings/streambed sediment downstream; limited soil removal around the retort building. This alternative is identical to alternative 2, with the addition that limited soil removal is performed around the fallen retort stack.

Alternative 4: No action for the retort tailings/streambed sediment downstream, demolish retort building, and limited soil removal around the retort building. This alternative demolishes the retort building with the exception of the concrete slab.

Alternative 5: No action for the retort tailings/streambed sediment downstream, removal of the retort building, and limited soil removal around the retort building. This alternative is identical to alternative 4, but requires the removal of the concrete slab from the retort building and any contaminated soils under the slab.

Alternative 6: Inplace closure for the retort tailings, onsite consolidation of the streambed sediment downstream, removal of the retort building, and

limited soil removal around the retort building. This alternative would demolish the retort building and onsite consolidation of the tailings.

Alternative 7: Onsite consolidation of retort tailings/streambed sediment downstream, removal of retort building, and limited soil removal around retort building. Remove the retort tailings/streambed sediment and demolition debris and dispose in the existing mine workings.

Alternative 8: Offsite disposal of retort tailings/streambed sediment downstream, removal of retort building, and limited soil removal around retort building. This alternative is identical to alternative 7 with the exception that retort tailings and streambed sediment downstream are disposed offsite.

Availability of Information . . .

The EE/CA report, news release, and this fact sheet are located on the Tonto National Forest Web site under "Projects and Plans" at

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/home.shtml>

An electronic comment form is also available in this section of the Web site.

Contact Information . . .

The EE/CA report and administrative record are available to the public for review and comment at the following locations. Please call for an appointment. Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Tonto National Forest
ATTN: Anne Fischer, P.E.
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