

The next Questa Community Meeting will be held on Thursday, April 22 at 6:30pm in the La Cienega Community Center. Please plan to attend this meeting and bring a friend!

Village Water Lines Buried in Tailings

RCRC received a copy of a document entitled “*Draft Sampling and Analysis Plan for Investigation of Historic Tailing Spill Deposits, Molycorp, Inc. Superfund Site, Questa, NM*” on November 14, 2003. Steve Blodgett, one of RCRC’s technical advisors, prepared comments on that plan for the committee. The main issue that RCRC raised in these comments was concern about the tailings found surrounding water pipes around the community. “The RCRC has serious concerns that the largest “spill” of tailings in Questa, the use of tailings for bedding material in water lines, has not been acknowledged, sampled, or mapped in the draft Plan. Any tailings found outside of the pipeline or at the tailing ponds, have been spilled, even if the spill was inadvertent.” The Village of Questa has stated that tailings were used for bedding material in 1968 when a new water system was built

and later when major repairs and upgrades were made to the system. Several recent water line breaks and the recent (November 17th) dredging of Hunt’s Pond have revealed tailings in water line trenches. The NMED and EPA have collected water samples from some residences in Questa to determine whether contaminants from these tailings have entered the water supply. To date, these samples appear to show no effects from these tailings in residential water lines. However, these samples provide no information on the contamination to local water supplies and effects on human health that may have occurred over the past 35 years and does not address contamination that could still be occurring with back-siphonage when there is a break in the water line. Any information on tailings deposits/spills should be reported to the EPA so that steps to clean up these spills can be taken. Call Mark Purcell at 214-665-6707.

Health Study

The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR), due to pressure from RCRC and other local organizations, is working on a new comprehensive health assessment for the communities impacted by possible contamination from the Molycorp mine site. Many RCRC members have been concerned about the increasing numbers

of community members being diagnosed with various forms of cancers and urge the community to help ATSDR by reporting any health problems. If you or anyone you know is experiencing disease or illness please contact ATSDR toll-free at 1-888-422-8737 or email at ATSDR @cdc.gov.

Possible Petroleum Spills

RCRC has expressed concern to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the New Mexico Environment Department about reports of petroleum products and other potentially hazardous solvents being disposed of in an unsafe manner at

the mine site. RCRC is concerned about possible impacts to the Red River and community health due to these practices and has asked both the EPA and the Environment Department to investigate this issue.

Goat Hill North Mitigation Construction

Due to pressure from the public and the State, Molycorp has developed a plan for addressing slope stability at Goat Hill North Waste Dump. Technical advisor Ken Klco has been following the Goat Hill Slope stability issue for RCRC. During the second quarter, 2004, Molycorp contractors will begin construction on efforts to stabilize the Goat Hill Dump, which is known to be slowly but continually moving downslope for the last several years (Molycorp admits knowledge of this slippage since the late 60’s). After final approval of construction plans by the State, Molycorp will move ahead with mitigation plans to address this potentially

serious threat to worker and public health safety. Planned work will include the construction of an under-drain system to allow for the removal of water draining from the base of the Goat Hill North Dump and the construction of a toe buttress system on top of the under-drain that will help to stabilize the downward movement of the waste dump material. Construction work will also involve the re-grading of the dump out slopes to result in a surface configuration more resistant to erosion and more amenable to revegetation efforts. A continuous monitoring system will be in place during and after construction work, which should be completed by late summer, 2004.

In early March, an alarm set up in Goat Hill North was tripped, alerting Molycorp to movement that was apparently triggered by a large amount of snow melt. Though Molycorp expressed that the amount of moisture was an “anomaly,” we

feel that this situation is a reminder that vigilance regarding the waste rock slide is necessary for the safety of those who live above and below the mine.

Contact Information for Molycorp Mine Issues

U.S. EPA

Mark Purcell
EPA, Region 6 (Dallas)
214-665-6707

ATSDR

Debra Joseph
(888) 422-8737

New Mexico Environment Dept

Mike Reed, Molycorp Permit
Lead
Ground Water Quality Bureau
505-827-2340

Al Pasteris, Surface Water Bureau
505-827-2575

Jerry Schoeppner, Chief, Ground
Water Quality Bureau
505-827-2919

Sandra Ely, Chief, Air Quality
505-827-1494

Ron Curry, Secretary, NMED
505-827-2855

Mining and Minerals Division

Holland Shepherd, Program
Manager
505-476-3437

Karen Garcia, Bureau Chief,
MMD
505-476-3435

Bill Brancard, Director, MMD
505-476-3405

Elected Officials

Congressman Tom Udall
505-984-8950 (Santa Fe office)

Senator Jeff Bingaman
505-988-6647 (Santa Fe office)

Senator Pete Domenici, Sr.
505-988-6511 (Santa Fe office)

State Senator Carlos Cisneros
505-586-0873 (home)

Mayor Charlie Gonzalez, Questa
505-586-0694 (office)
505-586-1589 (home)

Governor Bill Richardson
(Contact: Hillary Tompkins,
Deputy Counsel)
505-476-2222

Other Contacts

Tom Gorman, Office Of
Emergency Management
505-476-9600

Ben Neary, Reporter
Santa Fe New Mexican
505-986-3035

Cornelia de Bruin, Reporter
Taos News
505-758-2241

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A community based organization dedicated
to the reclamation of the Molycorp mine
and the restoration of the Red River in
Northern New Mexico.

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