

# NPL Site Narrative for Cleveland Mill

## CLEVELAND MILL Silver City, New Mexico

**Conditions at proposal (June 24, 1988):** Cleveland Mill is an abandoned lead, zinc, and copper mill covering 5-10 acres in Grant County, New Mexico, about 5 miles northeast of Silver City. The land is owned by Sharon Steel, Inc. On the site are piles of over 12,000 cubic yards of tailings heavily contaminated with lead, silver, zinc, copper, and arsenic, according to the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division (NMEID). The tailings were moved from the mill via a slurry pipeline and deposited directly to the steep sloping sides of a small valley.

The piles are uncovered, unstabilized, and unlined. They are approximately 100 yards south of the Continental Divide at the headwaters of Little Walnut Creek. NMEID has found that water in the creek at least 5 miles downstream of the tailings is highly acidic and contains the same contaminants as the piles. The creek and downstream waters are used for recreational activities.

Contamination of ground water is likely because the piles and contaminated surface water are in areas that recharge the alluvial aquifer. This shallow aquifer consists of coarse, permeable materials and is hydraulically connected to the bedrock aquifer, so that water moves downward. An estimated 1,200 people obtain drinking water from private wells within 3 miles of the site.

Direct contact with contaminated tailings is possible since the site is unfenced. Two Forest Service roads converge on-site.

**Status (March 31, 1989):** EPA has evaluated the site and determined that emergency action is not warranted at this time.

This mining site is potentially eligible for cleanup funds from the State of New Mexico's approved program under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA). EPA has proposed a policy for listing such sites. This site is being placed on the final NPL to avoid delay in starting CERCLA activities.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at [ATSDR - ToxFAQs](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.