

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

Final Site

September 2011

CHEVRON QUESTA MINE | Questa, New Mexico Taos County

Site Location:

The Chevron Questa Mine site, called the MolyCorp, Inc. site when it was proposed, is a molybdenum mining site located near the village of Questa, Taos County, New Mexico and consists of two separate areas: the mine area and the tailing ponds. The mine itself is approximately 3 square miles in size and is surrounded by the Carson National Forest and the state-designated Latir Peak Wilderness Area, which is located approximately two miles north of the mine. The tailing facility, which is approximately one square mile in size, is located 6 miles west of the mine site in the village of Questa. The mine is located near the Red River and includes several side drainages, including Sulfur Gulch, Spring Gulch, Goathill Gulch and Capulin Canyon.

Site History:

Chevron Mining, Inc. (CMI), currently owns and operates the MolyCorp mine site. The mining operation has been active for the last 90 years, with three distinct operational phases: (1) conventional underground mining, which occurred from about 1919 to 1958, (2) open pit mining, which was conducted from 1965 to 1981 and (3) underground block cave mining, which started in 1983 and continues to the present. As part of the current operations, the facility also consists of a mill, a tailing facility and a tailing pipeline that runs between the mine and the tailing facility.

Site Contamination/Contaminants:

Sources evaluated include the open pit mine, waste rock piles, contaminated soil in the mill area, tailing impoundments and the tailing pipeline. Primary site contaminants include polychlorinated bi-phenyls (PCBs), molybdenum and other heavy metals. Antimony, boron, cadmium, cobalt, manganese, molybdenum, nickel, vanadium and zinc were detected in the Red River.

Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:

Hazardous substances, contaminants and pollutants from the mining-related sources have released into the soil, ground water, surface water and sediment at and in the vicinity of the mine site and tailing facility, including the surface water of the Red River. A release of hazardous substances has been documented in both surface water and sediment within the Red River, including the Red River Fish Hatchery, which is located downstream of the site. Both a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment have been completed at the site, and identified unacceptable risks to human health and the environment.

Response Activities (to date):

A Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) has been conducted through an Administrative Order on Consent between EPA and Chevron. Chevron currently is working in conjunction with the State and EPA to address ongoing releases.

Need for NPL Listing:

The site was initially proposed to the NPL in May 2000. EPA is re-proposing to ensure that the Hazard Ranking System site score more accurately reflects current site conditions obtained since the May 2000 proposal. EPA received a letter from the state supporting listing of the site on the NPL.

[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination.]