

NPL Partial Site Deletion Narrative

California Gulch Leadville, Colorado

On April 11, 2016, EPA deleted portions of the California Gulch Superfund site from the National Priorities List (NPL). This partial deletion applies to Operable Unit (OU) 1 Yak Tunnel/Water Treatment Plant; and OU3, Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad Company (D&RGW) Slag Piles/Railroad Easement/Railroad Yard. The California Gulch site is located in Lake County, Colorado approximately 100 miles southwest of Denver. Located in a highly mineralized area of the Colorado Rocky Mountains, the California Gulch site covers 18 square miles of a watershed that drains along California Gulch to the Arkansas River.

According to the 1994 Consent Decree, the site was divided into 12 OUs. OU1 consists of the Yak Tunnel and Water Treatment Plant, located southwest of the city of Leadville. OU3 consists of the D&RGW Slag Piles/Railroad Easement/Railroad Yard. D&RGW Slag Piles/Railroad Easement/Railroad Yard (OU3) included three slag piles (Arkansas Valley (AV), La Plata, and Harrison Street). The D&RGW Slag Piles/Railroad Easement/Railroad Yard covered approximately 12 acres at Harrison Avenue and Monroe Street and contained the Harrison Street slag pile, and a portion of a rail yard known as Poverty Flats.

The selected remedy included: (1) Construction of a single surge pond as a permanent part of the remedy; (2) Construction of a flow-control bulkhead within the tunnel to prevent surges; (3) Identification of ground water flow direction and potential gradient reversal as additional element of the monitoring plan; (4) Placement of six or more weirs, or other flow measuring devices, at key locations in the Yak Tunnel; (5) Periodic inspection of the Yak Tunnel and (5) Development and implementation, as necessary, of a contingency plan to address any adverse effects on surface or ground water resulting from tunnel blockage.

Because the selected remedy left wastes in place, institutional controls (ICs) were also put in place. The objectives of ICs for OU1 are as follows: (1) Reduce or control human exposure to contaminants of concern; and (2) Maintain the integrity of and prevent disturbances to engineered features or structures established as part of the current remedy or future remedies.

The construction efforts on OU1 included four main elements: a surface water conveyance system, the surge pond itself, a barge transfer system and installation of gravity filters. In addition, all remedial components described in the 1988 OU1 Record of Decision (ROD) and subsequent 1989 OU1 Amended ROD (AROD), 1991 OU1 Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD), and the 2013 OU1 ESD have been implemented. No response actions were taken pursuant to a No Action ROD for OU3. The ICs established by the City and County ordinances were response actions that were incorporated into the OU3 remedy. Lake County and the city of Leadville implemented ICs in the form of local ordinances, amending the Land Development Codes and adopting regulations that protect both engineered and non-engineered remedies at OU3.

The EPA, with concurrence of the state of Colorado through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, has determined that all appropriate response actions under CERCLA, other than operation, maintenance, monitoring and five-year reviews, have been completed. Therefore, the EPA is deleting all of OU1, Yak Tunnel/Water Treatment Plant; and OU3, D&RGW Slag Piles Railroad Easement/Railroad Yard, of the California Gulch Superfund site from the NPL.