

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Pacific Southwest Region • June 2022

The Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine Site: Arsenic and Mercury Risks

This brochure is intended to:

- help you understand the health risks on the mine site;
- show you where health risks are the greatest; and
- suggest at home practices to reduce risks.

EPA recognizes tribes have cared for the land since time immemorial. EPA also acknowledges the cultural, ancestral and ecological value of the property, and that wood-gathering, foraging and hunting may occur.

Arsenic on the Mine Site and How to Protect Yourself



- The mine waste across the site is contaminated with high levels of arsenic.
- Arsenic is **highly toxic**. Coming in contact with arsenic can increase your risk of developing cancer.



The soil/dust should not be eaten or breathed in, and you should not contact soil with bare skin. Spending time in areas of loose dirt may leave arsenic stuck to your hands, hair and clothes.



The waste piles have the highest arsenic levels (see orange areas in Figure 1 on page 3). Please stay away from these areas, especially.



The plants in the area have high levels of arsenic. Acorns from oaks growing from mine waste have especially high levels of arsenic.



There are, naturally, high levels of arsenic in the area. EPA recommends you to use the five at home practices (see cartoon strip below) to reduce contact with arsenic in the soil.



Exposure Risks to Arsenic the on Elem Indian Colony: Avoid digging in the areas where EPA has previously capped (covered) contaminated soil (see Figure 3 on page 4).

Please do not go on the mine site

- Contact with high mercury and arsenic levels in soils throughout the site may have serious health risks.
- The mine is currently on private property.
- EPA cannot allow property access for any reason other than for official cleanup-related work.
- The mine site has not yet been cleaned up.
- The arsenic levels on the mine site are more than 10 times higher than anywhere else on the Elem Indian Colony (see Figure 3 and 4 on page 4 for reference).



Mercury on the Mine Site and How to Protect Yourself



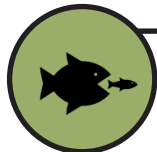
- Mine waste and soil across the site contain **high levels** of mercury
- Mercury affects the brain and can cause permanent damage to the **nervous system**.
- Mercury is especially **dangerous** for developing brains, so pregnant **women and children** should take special care to follow the recommendations below.



The waste piles on the mine site have the highest mercury levels (*see orange areas in Figure 2 on page 3*), but unmapped areas of mercury contaminated soils exist between piles.

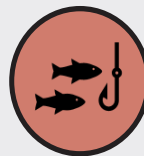


The five at home practices (in the cartoon strip below) may reduce your contact to arsenic and mercury in contaminated soil.



Groundwater flowing from the site through the Waste Rock Dam carries mercury to Clear Lake (see Waste Rock Dam label in Figure 1 & 2), where it builds up in the food chain.

Health Risks From Activities on Clear Lake



Eating Fish Safely From the Lake: Eating large amounts of fish creates the greatest risk

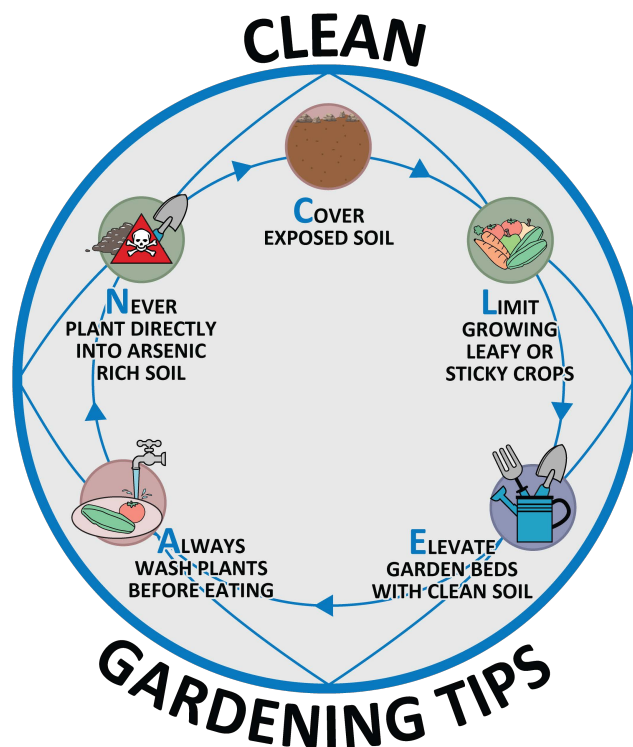
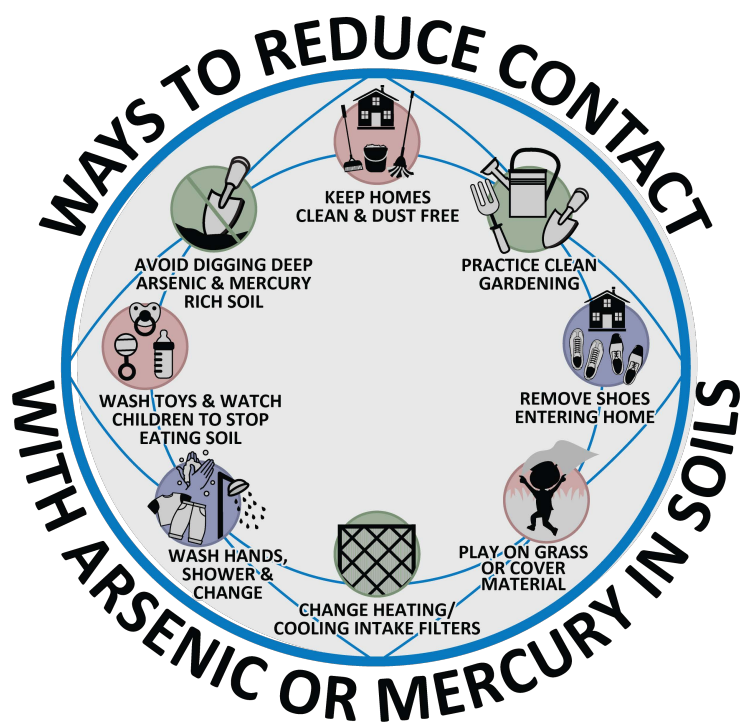
to your health. For this reason, EPA recommends following the state's Fish Consumption Advisory and reducing how much of certain types of fish you eat. Please visit: www.oehha.ca.gov/advisories/clear-lake



Using Elem Indian Colony Shoreline Water and Plants:

The following activities do not seriously increase your health risk from mercury:

- swimming, wading, or consuming small amounts of water for ceremonial practices
- using tules or cattails in traditional ways (based on samples EPA analyzed from the area)



Site Maps

Figure 1: Areas onsite with the highest levels of arsenic. Some of these areas are currently vegetated. Arsenic values are shown in milligrams per kilogram.

To protect your health and safety, stay away from all areas, especially the orange areas. Unmapped areas of contamination likely exist between waste piles.



For more information about health risks of arsenic, scan the QR-code or use this link, www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts2.pdf

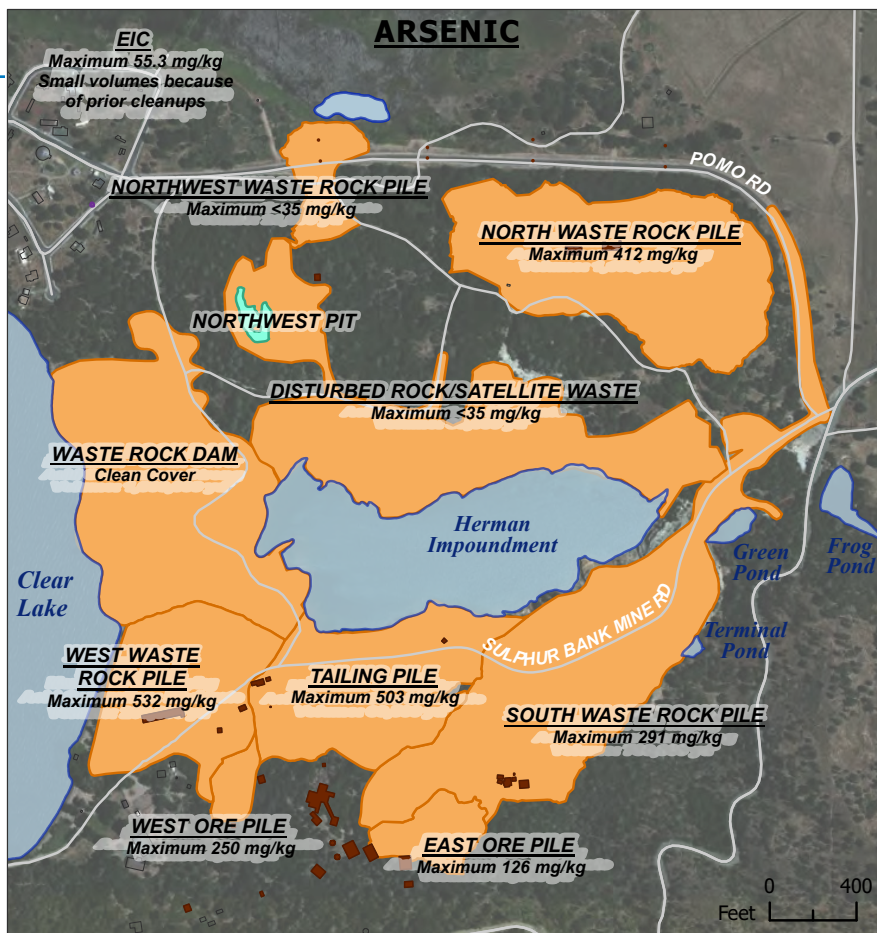


Figure 2: Areas onsite with the highest levels of Mercury. Some of these areas are currently vegetated. Mercury values are shown in milligrams per kilogram meaning the more.

To protect your health and safety, stay away from all areas, especially the orange areas. Unmapped areas of contamination likely exist between waste piles.



For more information about the health risks of mercury, scan the QR-code or use this link www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts46.pdf

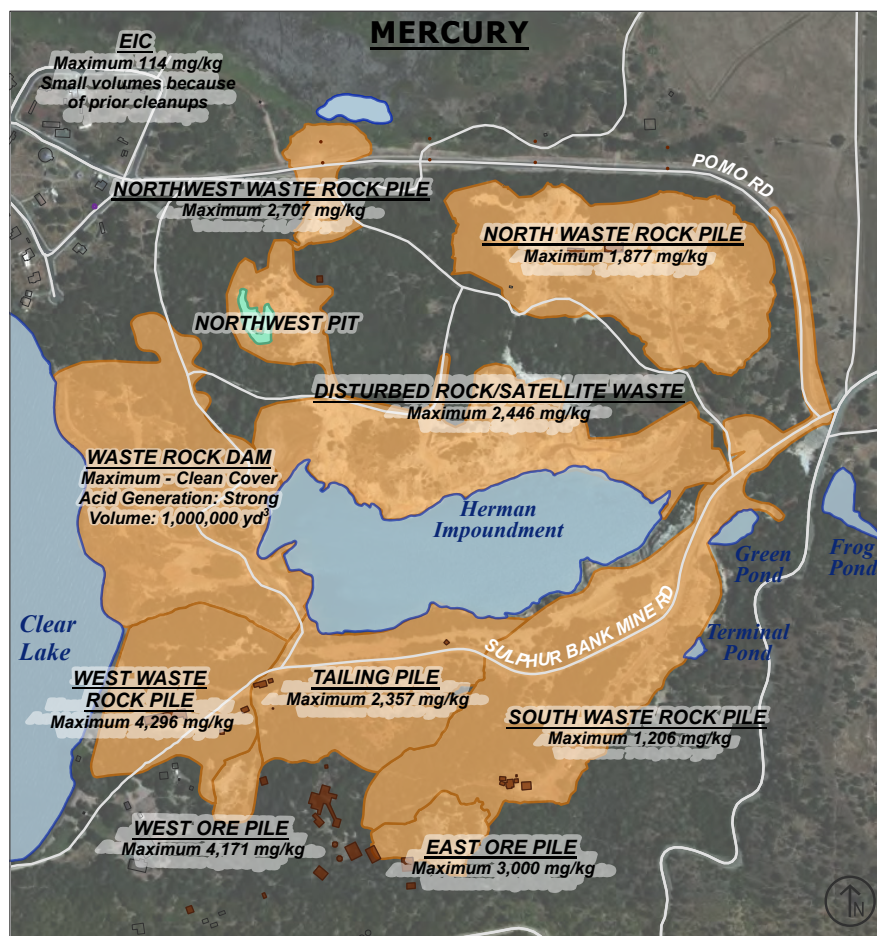




Figure 3: Map of cleanup done in 1997-1998 and 2006. **Yellow** areas show where soil removal and/or home replacements happened. **Blue** areas show where soil removal and road infrastructure replacement happened. EPA put one to two feet of clean soil over the colored areas once work was done.



Figure 4: For those who are not from the community, this shows the location of the Elem Indian Colony on shore of Clear Lake in California.

Where to find more information and who to contact

Visit the site website (www.epa.gov/superfund/sulphurbankmercury) or contact the site's Community Involvement Coordinator or Remedial Project Manager.

Community Involvement Coordinator

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