

# Richardson Flats Tailings

April 2002

Park City, Utah, Summit County, Congressional District #3

EPA ID# UTD980952840

## National Priorities List

Remedial Investigation Underway

## ABOUT THE RICHARDSON FLATS TAILINGS SITE . .

The Richardson Flats Tailings site covers about 160 acres in a small valley 1½ miles northeast of Park City, Utah. The site consists of a tailings dam and impoundment that were used to capture and hold mill tailings from the Ontario Mine near Park City. The hazardous substances on the site, including heavy metals, such as arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, silver and zinc, come from these mine wastes. The property is owned by United Park City Mines (UPCM).

## BACKGROUND

Historical aerial photos show that the tailings pile existed as early as 1953. The most recent tailings disposal in the area occurred from 1975 to 1981, when UPCM leased their mining operations to Noranda Mining and Park City Ventures.

In 1989 and 1990, EPA and the State observed tailings sinking into an on-site diversion ditch and Silver Creek. According to EPA tests, the tailings contain arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, silver and zinc. Wetlands border the creek and diversion ditch. Water from the creek is diverted to irrigate about 300 acres of pastureland.

High-volume air sampling at the site, in 1986, found that arsenic, cadmium, lead and zinc were released to the air.

In the early 1990s, United Park City Mines completed some work at the Richardson Flats Tailings site, which included covering most of the tailings pond, revegetating, and improving runoff controls.

downstream of the site. Surface water coming from the diversion ditch surrounding the site is contaminated with heavy metals. This ditch empties into wetlands below the tailings dam and flows into Silver Creek. Ground water below the site is also contaminated with heavy metals.

## **CLEANUP APPROACH**

The site was proposed for the National Priorities List in 1992. EPA also conducted a removal assessment in 1992 and concluded that no immediate response actions were required while investigations continued. During the 1990s, UPCM performed some voluntary work at the site, including covering most of the tailings pile with clean, low-permeability soil and reseeded the site. The diversion ditch was also improved. Together, these steps have minimized the potential for direct contact with the tailings and contaminated soils, and have helped to reduce water infiltrating through the pile.

In October 2000, EPA and UPCM signed an Administrative Order on Consent for UPCM to conduct a focused Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) of the site. The RI/FS will last about two years and will focus on evaluating the existing condition of the tailings pile, as well as any other actions considered necessary to further stabilize the site.

Eventually, UPCM plans to clean up the tailings pile and develop a 27-hole golf course in the area surrounding the site. The entire Silver Creek Watershed is also being investigated by EPA, the State of Utah and United Park City Mines through a cooperative, community-based stakeholder group. The eventual goal is to minimize the effects of more than 100 years of mining on the Silver Creek Watershed and to return Silver Creek to a safe, productive condition.