

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

NPL Site

May 2019

COPPER BLUFF MINE | Hoopa, California Humboldt County

Site Location:

The Copper Bluff Mine is located within the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation adjacent to California State Highway 96 in Humboldt County, in Northern California. The mine sits above a narrow gorge and its primary entrance, or adit, is 300 feet above the Trinity River.

Site History:

The site is an abandoned copper and zinc mine that operated intermittently from approximately 1928 to 1962. The mine tunnels that were historically dug into the hillside to allow transport of materials now allow mine waste, or acid mine drainage, to flow more rapidly out of the mine and into the Trinity River.

Site Contamination/Contaminants:

Sediment and water samples collected from the adit, showed elevated levels of heavy metals including copper, cadmium, nickel and zinc. Mine waste drains visibly into the river right below the entrance.

Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:

Heavy metals released from the mine could be hazardous to the tribal subsistence fishery in the Trinity River and the habitat for the threatened Coho Salmon. The Trinity River is federally recognized as a "Wild and Scenic River." Tribal and non-tribal pedestrians are exposed to the acid mine drainage, and the associated orange sludge and acidic water, on a path that is frequented by those who want to avoid the nearby busy highway. The discharge point in the river is a culturally significant fishing location for the tribe. The integrity of the underground mine workings is unknown; however, there is a possibility that a collapse inside the mine tunnels could result in sudden high flow discharges of contaminated water into the Trinity River.

Response Activities (to date):

The EPA, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other entities first assessed the mine beginning in 1981. A metal gate was installed in front of the mine entrance by the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe, which prohibits public access to the mine tunnels.

Need for NPL Listing:

The Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe has requested the EPA's assistance in cleaning up the mine waste, and stabilizing the mine features. The tribe relies on the Trinity River for subsistence fishing and recreation. The EPA received a letter of support for placing this site on the NPL from the tribe.

[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. See 56 FR 5600, February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices]

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](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) can be found on the Internet at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp> or by telephone at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636.