Lisbon Valley Mining District
Removal Site Update

Operations Period: 08 November 28 – December 4, 2022

Website: response.epa.gov/LisbonValleyMiningDistrict
Story Map: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d53319ab3b444696a28e2faea977b443

Site Description

The Historic Lisbon Valley Mining District (Site) is located southeast of La Sal in San Juan County, Utah. Miners discovered copper in the area in 1892 and expanded their mining activities after the additional uranium and vanadium. The area remained a significant producer and area of exploration until mining operations slowed over the decades following World War 2.

In 2022, EPA, BLM and the State of Utah identified two abandoned mines where recreational human exposure to mine waste is evident, the downstream migration of mine waste is significant and no apparent remediation has occurred. These two abandoned mines are the Radon Mine and the Columbia Shaft.

EPA is currently conducting a CERCLA Time Critical Removal Action at the Radon Mine and the Columbia Shaft to control erosion and limit human exposure to mine waste.

Site Safety Message

Radioactive mine waste containing high levels of heavy metals is at the surface at both the Radon Mine and the Columbia Shaft. Visitors to these locations may be exposed to radiation and hazardous substances. Hiking, camping and exploring at these mines is discouraged.

Site Objectives

Radon Mine

1. Remove radioactive metal debris found on surface of waste pile.
2. Regrade the waste pile and install erosion control features.
3. Pull toe of the waste pile out of the ephemeral drainage.
4. Restrict visitor access until new vegetation is established.

Columbia Shaft

1. Regrade the waste pile and install erosion control features.
2. Restrict camping and access to the waste pile.

Radon Mine at the beginning of EPA's Removal Action:

Radon Mine at the End of this Operations Period:

Columbia Shaft at the beginning of EPA's Removal Action:

Columbia Shaft at the End of this Operations Period:

Period Objectives

Radon Mine

- Maintain Site security.

Columbia Shaft

- Establish work zone and support areas.
- Remove the first lift of waste material.

Period Accomplishments

Radon Mine

EPA's Response Team insured that the gate to the mine access road (which is located where the access road leaves the county road) remained locked and secure. The lock is not permanent but will remain in place for 1-3 years until vegetation is established on the regraded waste pile.

Columbia Shaft

The Team delineated its work zone as the entire waste pile and established a decontamination area as well as a support zone. The decontamination area and support zone are located down the Columbia Shaft access road on the other side of a rocky ridge from the waste pile. Temporary fencing was used to designate work areas and limit damage to desert vegetation and cryptogamic soil.

The crew removed the top 10 feet of waste material along the entire crown of the waste pile's face. This material was hauled a short distance to the top of the waste pile and deposited along a rock face that was quarried when the shaft was developed.

Planned Activities

Radon Mine

The Response Team will finish installing warning signs as well as erosion control waddles and rock water bars. The crew also plans to add an additional layer of hydro mulch on top of the seed and mulch that was previously applied.

Columbia Shaft

The Team will continue regrading the waste pile. The slope of the finished grade will ideally be 3:1 but the volume of material being removed and the space available to place it may not make that possible.

Gate and BLM Warning Sign Installed at Entrance to Mine Access Road

Removing the First Lift of Waste Material at the Columbia Shaft