



U.S. Forest Service Prescott National Forest Briefing Paper

October 25, 2016

TOPIC: Mingus Site CERCLA Action and Proposed Area Closures

TALKING POINTS:

- A Recreation Area Proposal was identified in Collaborative planning effort “Verde Front” and submitted to the USDA Forest Service, Verde Ranger District on January 9, 2012.
- An Interdisciplinary review of the project proposal raised public health and safety concerns due to the history of the proposed site being near a historic town dump.
- In 2015, the Forest Service prepared a Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation (PA/SI) to further evaluate site conditions.
- Uncontained and uncontrolled soil and sediment are documented to contain elevated concentrations of lead, antimony, cadmium, mercury, and zinc. These hazardous substances in soils and sediments may be released through wind erosion, surface runoff, leaching, and plant uptake, thus posing a continual release or threat of release to the surrounding environments, specifically Blowout Creek and a smaller tributary.
- Residents and visitors of nearby Cottonwood, Cornville, and Clarksdale are within 2 miles of the Site. There is a potential risk to surface water in Blowout Creek from surface runoff containing concentrations of lead, zinc, arsenic, and copper.
- There is a potential risk of soil containing elevated concentrations lead, antimony, and other hazardous substances to erode from the abandoned dumps and target shooting areas and migrate into stream channels within the watershed area. Lead concentrations in soil were up to 48,000 mg/kg. The Arizona Non-Residential Soil Remediation Level SRL for lead is 800 mg/kg.
- Actual or threatened releases of hazardous substances from the Site, if not addressed by implementing the response action selected in this Removal Action Time Critical Approval Memorandum, may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, welfare, or the environment due to exposure of hazardous substances. If the Site is not remediated before the next monsoon season, the soil containing hazardous substances will continue to erode and wash down the canyon.
- The CERCLA action will construct an onsite consolidation cell to contain the soils and sediment containing hazardous substances including lead and antimony. It is the most feasible solution for mitigating potential threats to human health and the environment at the Site.
- Soil and sediment excavation and disposal into a consolidation cell will mitigate the public health threat posed by ingestion, dermal absorption, and inhalation.
- Helio Tech JV has been contracted to implement the proposed action. The estimated cost of this action is \$500,000, including project oversight.
- The proposed action is expected to be completed by March 2017.
- A temporary Forest Order, up to 2 years, is proposed that will prohibit public access and recreational shooting at the “Site”, approximately 45 acres and prohibit recreational shooting on lands adjacent to the “Site”, approximately 1780 acres.
- The forest and community partners are sensitive to the shooting community and the impact this may have on their activity and understand that the current action and proposed shooting restrictions will displace this activity to other areas.
- The Verde Valley area offers one indoor shooting range open to the public. This private range is located on HWY 260 approximately half way between the communities of Cottonwood and Camp Verde. The remaining 320,000 acres of National Forest within the Verde Ranger District remain open to dispersed recreational shooting.
- The forest is committed to seeking out and engaging with shooting groups and individuals, community leaders, agencies and others to begin discussions about long term viable solutions to accommodate recreational shooting activities in the Verde Valley.

- Monitoring and enforcement of proposed forest closures will be accomplished jointly with Forest LEI, AZGFD, Municipal and County Law Enforcement agencies.
- **An Informational Public Meeting is scheduled for November 3, 2016 from 6.00 Pm to 8:00 PM at the Men's Lounge at Clark Memorial Clubhouse 19 N. 9th Street, Clarkdale, AZ.**

BACKGROUND: The Mingus (Site) is located on PNF lands northerly and adjacent to FR 493, which originates as W. Mingus Ave in Cottonwood, AZ. The site is approximately 1.2 miles southwesterly of the Cottonwood Airport, in T 15 N, R 3 E, Sections 5 & 8, or approximately N 34.716, W -112.058 (see Figure 1) and within the town boundaries of the Town of Clarkdale

Over the past century the area has experienced mining exploration and cattle ranching. It is common knowledge that historically, the site had been subject to “wildcat” dumping in the past, and people often referred to it as “the old dump”. Over the years portions of this area have been subjected to heavy use from various intensive activities, such as trash dumping, off-road travel and informal target shooting.

Public interest in improving non-motorized trail opportunities and other outdoor recreational activities in this area has been well documented through various public planning efforts, including the Verde Valley Regional Trails Concept Plan effort and the Community based Verde Front Sustainable Recreation process.

The West Mingus Avenue Trails project was proposed by the City of Cottonwood in 2008 and then again in 2012 after the establishment of the Verde Front Collaborative. With Support from surrounding communities the Forest Service began to look into the feasibility of developing a trailhead and trail system in the Blowout Creek area near and adjacent to the “old dump”

On August 8, 2013, the Prescott National Forest (PNF) – Verde Ranger District, convened an interdisciplinary team (IDT) meeting to begin assessing a potential site for the proposed recreation area.

Concerns for public health and safety with regard to developing a public recreation site near or adjacent to the “old dump” led to A Limited Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) in early 2014. A subsequent Preliminary Assessment Site Inspection (PASI) was conducted in 2015, under the authorities of the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), evaluated the site for the possibility of contamination.

The assessment included three separate areas totaling approximately 45 acres. Results of the PA/SI warranted a time critical removal action. The site is scheduled for remediation under CERCLA in Mid-January 2017.

A proposed temporary Forest Order will restrict public entry in the remediated areas and prohibit shooting for safety concerns in adjacent areas. After remediation, activities will be restricted to allow for site rehabilitation. In 2017 the Forest Service will initiate a public process to determine the future opportunities in this area.

CONTACTS: Todd Willard, Verde District Ranger, 928-567-4121 (twillard@fs.fed.us); Thomas Palmer, East Zone Recreation Program Manager, 928-567-1114 (tpalmer01@fs.fed.us); Debbie Maneely, Public Affairs Officer, 928-443-8130, (dmaneely@fs.fed.us)

