

Partnership on the Howard Fork Targets Mine Tailings Cleanup



THE CARBONERO TAILINGS, ADJACENT TO THE HOWARD FORK, JUST UPSTREAM OF EAST OPHIR

Citizens of the Town of Ophir join USFS & TLR to plan for Cleanup of Carbonero Tailings

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The Norwood Ranger District and the GMUG Forest Supervisor's Office of the US Forest Service received FY06 Forest Service Abandoned Mine Land funds to award a contract to design/build the reclamation of a site near Ophir known as the Carbonero Tailings.

The reclamation will be done as a Non-Time-Critical Removal Action under the US Forest Service's Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) authority. The Carbonero Tailings site is adjacent to the Howard Fork in the Ophir Valley, just east of the Town.

Most of the tailings at the site are situated on Forest Service land, but about 1/8th are estimated to sit on a mining claim known as the Ferric Oxide Placer. The Town of Ophir, as an open space protection acquisition, purchased the Ferric Oxide in 2005. Analysis last year by American Geological Consultants, working with the Trust for Land Restoration, estimated the volume of mill tailings at the site to be approximately 15,000 cubic yards. The Forest Service will prepare a set of Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) reclamation alternatives, and hold an early summer public meeting in Ophir to discuss. Another public meeting will be held early fall on-site to review the locations of the planned tailings removal areas, repository location and wetland reclamations. Actual removal of the tailings material is scheduled for the field season of FY07.

The Carbonero Tailings site is one of three mining-related cleanup priorities for the Howard Fork, as identified in 2001 by a working group sponsored by the San Miguel Watershed Coalition. The other two priorities are the Carbonero Mine and the Carribeau Mine. The Carbonero Mine is on private property, and is currently being studied by the Trust for Land Restoration as part of the Howard Fork Acid Rock Drainage (ARD) Study. The Carribeau Mine is a mixed ownership site. The mine opening is on public lands administered by the Forest Service, and the adjacent mill site and associated mill tailings are on private land. The Forest Service re-directed the mine drainage away from the mill tailings in 2001. Clean-up of the Carribeau Mill Site is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Forest Service and the Trust for Land Restoration are beginning their 5th field season of investigation and site characterization of abandoned mining sites and acid rock drainage (ARD) in the Howard Fork valley. Norwood District Ranger Judy Schutz and Linda Lanham of the Forest Service Supervisor's Office in Delta

have championed Forest Service clean-up efforts in the valley. ARD is water contaminated by heavy metals that emanates from mine openings, from the toe of waste rock and tailings piles, and, sometimes, from natural occurring springs and seeps. ARD in the Howard Fork severely impacts aquatic insect reproduction and aquatic fish species, but is not thought to be a threat to human health.



AMERICAN GEOLOGICAL SERVICES CREW TAKING CORE SAMPLES TO EVALUATE
CARBONERO TAILINGS
OPHIR, COLORADO
AUGUST 2005





AMERICAN GEOLOGICAL SERVICES JEFF LUDWICK WORKING ATOP THE CARBONERO
TAILINGS
OPHIR, COLORADO
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