

# Red Devil Mine

## Environmental Investigation Update

August 2011

This newsletter provides updates on the environmental investigation the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is conducting at the Red Devil Mine, an abandoned cinnabar mine and mercury production facility on the Kuskokwim River.

### Community Involvement

The BLM is conducting a *Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study* for the Red Devil Mine site using a process defined under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, known as CERCLA. Community involvement is an important part of the CERCLA process.



Akiak community meeting

This past March and April, the BLM continued ongoing community involvement efforts for the Red Devil Mine investigation by meeting with several interested communities along the lower and middle Kuskokwim River. These communities included Akiachak, Aniak, Bethel, Chuathbaluk, Crooked Creek, Georgetown, Kalskag, Kwethluk, Lime Village, Red Devil and Sleetmute.



Kwethluk community meeting

The communities had a variety of comments on the investigation at the mine site. Some participants were concerned about the possible downriver migration of contaminants from the site. Others were concerned that disturbing the site to remove the tailings could result in additional metals being released.

The BLM will consider these concerns as we look at the sampling data and develop cleanup alternatives for the site.

### Early Action

The BLM considered conducting an early action at the site this summer prior to completing the *Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study* process. After exploring early action options and considering comments made by community members this spring, the BLM decided not to conduct an early action at this time. The BLM will proceed with field sampling to further define the nature and extent of contamination.

The additional data collected in July through September will better inform the need for any future early actions and how an early action could be part of a final cleanup remedy for the site.

### 2011 Field Sampling

The BLM is continuing the field sampling started last fall. From late July through September, BLM and contract personnel will collect samples from the soil, sediment, surface water and groundwater. The samples will be analyzed for mercury, arsenic, antimony and other contaminants.

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These results will then be compiled in a Remedial Investigation report to show where contaminants occur, how they may be moving, and the potential risk to humans and wildlife.

In addition, the results from the Remedial Investigation will be used to identify and evaluate cleanup alternatives for the mine site in a Feasibility Study. This will result in a Proposed Plan scheduled to be released in the spring of 2013.

### **Fish Sampling and Tracking**

The BLM and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game completed the first round of radio tagging in early July with 26 tags implanted in pike in the middle Kuskokwim from Crooked Creek to Stony River, including the lower portions of the Holitna and George rivers. An additional 154 tags will be implanted in both pike and burbot (lush) in early August. The tagged fish will be tracked to determine seasonal movements.



Fish and aquatic insects sampling was completed at Red Devil Creek, Egnaty Creek and Cinnabar Creek. As noted during last year's sampling, juvenile coho (silver) salmon were found in Red Devil Creek, where they were released after being measured. A second round of sampling will occur in late September.

The fish sampling operations plan is available at [http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/fisheries/rdm\\_fish.html](http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/fisheries/rdm_fish.html). To receive a paper copy of the plan, contact the BLM at the phone number or e-mail address below. The 2010 fish tissue analysis report will be posted on the Website when it becomes available in August.

### **Safety Reminder**

The BLM continues to recommend that people not enter or use the Red Devil Mine site for any purpose, including subsistence activities. Please observe the posted safety notice at the site until the potential risks have been evaluated and appropriate action is taken.

### **Next Steps**

Once the results of this year's soil, sediment and water sampling are analyzed and the *Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study* completed, the BLM will coordinate with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to develop cleanup alternatives. The BLM will continue to conduct community meetings to discuss the alternatives and listen to comments and concerns from interested communities.

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**DID YOU KNOW:** The Alaska Division of Public Health has developed new consumption guidelines for women and children who eat pike and burbot from the Middle Kuskokwim River area. Visit [www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/eh/fish/](http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/eh/fish/) to learn more.



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