

**Coronado National Memorial
Grand Canyon National Park
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument
Saguaro National Park**

**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**



Abandoned Mine Lands Closure Plan

August 10, 2009

Project Scoping for an Environmental Assessment

Dear Friend,

The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing a plan to correct health and safety hazards at abandoned mine lands in Coronado National Memorial, Grand Canyon National Park, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, and Saguaro National Park. This is an American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 (ARRA) project.

Like other regions in the American West, during the mid- to late 19th century, Arizona was prospected for gold, silver, copper and lead ores. Mining districts were established, and innumerable prospect pits, adits, and shafts were opened to test or mine the marginal deposits. In the 20th century, important deposits of asbestos were located and opened in Grand Canyon; and from the late 1950's through the mid-1980's, uranium was mined. The main hazards associated with abandoned mines include falling into shafts, loose rock falling from the roofs of adits, high radon concentrations, toxic metals, or inhaling asbestos. Some mine features are located in areas that have wilderness character, some provide important wildlife habitat (particularly for bats), and some are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The planning objective is to correct health and safety hazards at the abandoned mine sites to reduce exposure of park visitors to the dangers posed at these sites, while preserving natural and cultural resource values.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) explores a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The NPS encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to comment on this project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the EA. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project, and we invite you to voice your ideas, comments, or concerns about this effort. These comments will be considered during preparation of the EA. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Kym Hall
Superintendent
Coronado National Memorial* *Steve Martin
Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park*

*Lee Baiza
Superintendent
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument* *Darla Sidles
Superintendent
Saguaro National Park*

What does the scoping period mean? Scoping is done in the initial phase of a project to seek input from a variety of sources. The input is used to identify issues, areas requiring additional study, and topics that will be analyzed in the EA process. This is an opportunity for you to provide us with your suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding this project.

Is scoping my only opportunity to comment on the project? No, once the EA is developed, the document will be made available for public review for a 30-day period.

Overview of the Process

Project milestones include:

- **Public scoping period** (August 10-September 8, 2009)*
- Preparation of Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Public review of EA (January 2010)*
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision on proposal

Bold indicates where we are now;

* indicates opportunities for public review

Resources and Concerns

The Environmental Assessment will analyze potential impacts to a number of resources including the following concerns:

Air Quality – asbestos, radon, oxygen deficiency, and other air quality concerns at some mine features; and short-term emissions from implementing closures, i.e., welding gases, dust.

Soundscapes – short-term increase in noise from implementing closures, i.e., from helicopter transport of equipment and materials, and in fabrication of closures.

Water Quality – ongoing surveys will determine if mine features are affecting water quality or if constructing closures and performing reclamation could have effects.

Wildlife – ongoing surveys will identify if mine features are used by bats and other wildlife.

Vegetation – ongoing surveys will determine the presence of Species of Management Concern and if mine closures and reclamation could introduce invasive exotic plant species.

Recreational Use and Health and Safety – ongoing surveys will identify health and safety hazards.

Cultural Resources – ongoing historical research and site surveys will determine whether mine sites are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Wilderness Character – some of the mine sites are located in areas with wilderness character. The EA will include a minimum requirements analysis to determine appropriate methods to transport materials and equipment.

Alternatives

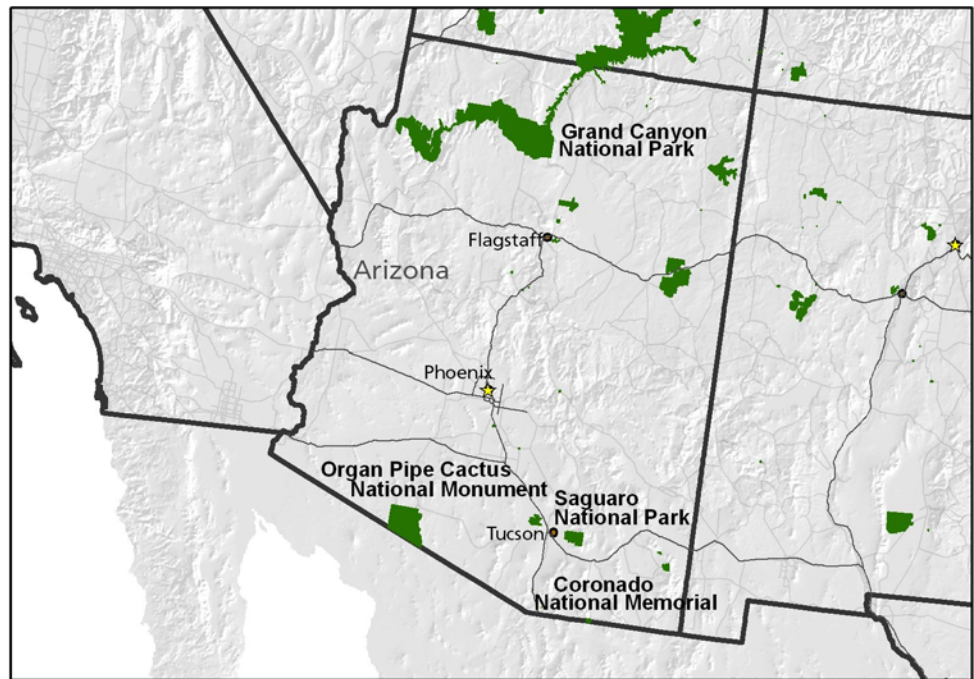
The preliminary range of alternatives, including the proposed action, to be evaluated in the environmental assessment is:

Alternative 1 – No Action

This alternative represents the continuation of existing conditions. In this case, “No-Action” means the project would not take place; and

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Close access to mine openings that pose health and safety hazards using closure designs that take into consideration the type of health and safety hazards posed, while protecting wildlife habitat and cultural resource values. Some closure options include constructing bat-accessible gates into mine adits, constructing grates over mine shafts, backfilling, fencing, and administrative closure.



Location of Coronado National Memorial, Grand Canyon National Park, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, and Saguaro National Park.

Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have ideas to share about the resources and concerns, or are there additional resources and concerns that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the Environmental Assessment?

How Do I Comment on This Project?

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website for one of the four parks (Coronado NM #24740, Grand Canyon NP #26114, Organ Pipe Cactus NM #26006, or Saguaro NP #26256):

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>

Please provide all comments by September 8, 2009. If you wish to be added to or removed from the mailing list for future correspondence, please indicate that in your response.

If you are unable to submit comments electronically through this website, then you may also submit written comments to one of the park addresses below. You may also hand-deliver written comments to the Visitor Center at one of the four parks.

AML Closure EA
Coronado National Memorial
4101 E. Montezuma Canyon Rd.
Trail
Hereford, AZ 85615

AML Closure EA
Grand Canyon National Park
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023-0129

AML Closure EA
Organ Pipe Cactus National
10 Organ Pipe Drive
Ajo, AZ 85321-9626

AML Closure EA
Saguaro National Park
3693 S. Old Spanish
Tucson, AZ 85730-5601