

Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park Glacier National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Project Scoping

August 14, 2009

Abandoned Mine Lands Closure Environmental Assessment

Dear Friend,

The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing an environmental assessment to correct health and safety hazards at abandoned mine sites in Glacier National Park, Montana. This is an American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 (ARRA) project.

Like other regions in the American West, during the mid- 19th century to early 20th century, the area which is now Glacier National Park was prospected for gold, silver, and copper. Mining districts were established, and innumerable prospect pits, adits, and shafts were opened to test or mine what turned out to be marginal deposits. **Glacier's mine features are** located within recommended wilderness in the backcountry. Studies are being conducted to determine whether the mines provide important wildlife habitat, and are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The main hazards associated with abandoned mines include falling into shafts, loose rock falling from the roofs of adits, deadly gas and lack of oxygen, unstable explosives, cave-ins and decayed timbers. The planning objective is to correct health and safety hazards at the abandoned mine sites to reduce the dangers of park visitors posed at these sites, while also 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, 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. Coronado National Memorial, Grand Canyon National Park, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Big Thicket and Saguaro National Park are also conducting scoping and preparing EA's on this issue.

I welcome and encourage public participation throughout the NEPA process during which you will have two opportunities to comment: once, now during this initial phase known as scoping period and again following the release of the EA. I encourage you to voice your ideas, comments or concerns about this effort. These comments will be considered during preparation of the EA. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Chas Cartwright

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, it will be available for public review for 30 days.

Project milestones include:

- Public scoping period (August 14-September 14, 2009)
- Preparation of Environmental Assessment (December 2009)
- Public review of EA (January 2010)
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision (Spring 2010)

Resources and Concerns

Initial internal project scoping identified the following resources and other concerns for consideration in the Environmental Assessment (EA).

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

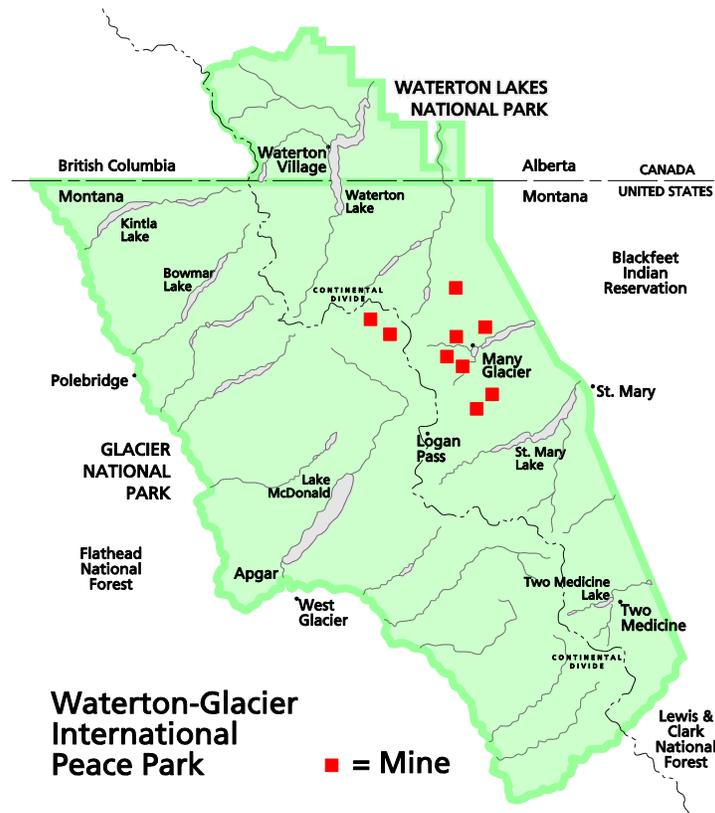
Soundscapes – short-term increase in elevated noise from construction and installation of closures.

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

Wildlife – site surveys are ongoing to determine if mine features are used by bats and other wildlife including federally listed species and Montana species of concern.

Recreational Use and Health and Safety – site surveys are ongoing to identify health and safety hazards.
 Cultural Resources – historical research and site surveys are ongoing to determine eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Wilderness Character – Since these mines are located within recommended wilderness in Glacier’s backcountry, the EA will include a minimum requirements minimum tool analysis to determine appropriate methods to transport materials and equipment and construct closures.



Alternatives

Initial internal project scoping identified the following alternatives for consideration in the EA.

1. No action (maintain current condition at each mine site)
2. Close access to mine openings that pose health and safety hazards. Closure options include constructing bat-accessible gates into mine adits, constructing grates over mine shafts, backfilling, fencing, and administrative closure.

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?



Mine Opening

How Do I Comment on This Project?

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov> for project #26285.

Or, send written comments or hand deliver to:
 Abandoned Mine Lands Closure EA
 Glacier National Park
 Headquarters
 West Glacier, MT 59936

Please provide all comments by September 14, 2009.