Community Update

Glass-Heifner Mine Site

January 2024

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Alaska Region

Kenai Fjords National Park

The Glass-Heifner Mine Site (the Site) is located in the Nuka Bay Historic Mining District within Kenai Fjords National Park (KEFJ), approximately 60 miles southwest of the town of Seward. The Site is a former gold mine that was intermittently active starting in the mid-1920s, with a period of commercial mining between 1965 and the mid-1970s. The Site is comprised of a gravel pad on which a collapsed mill building, workshop and other buildings were constructed. Above the gravel pad, the mountain slope is marked by surface trenching and adit excavation (horizontal tunneling into the hillside). Known types of wastes generated as a result of the ore milling process include mine tailings containing elevated arsenic. The Site is situated approximately 80 ft above and 200 ft to the southeast of Ferrum Creek with steep embankments leading down to the creek along the northern and western sides of the pad. Ferrum Creek is a breeding ground for Chum, Pink, Coho, and Sockeye salmon and Dolly Varden.

Ruins of the Glass-Heifner Mine ore chute and mill building

PAST ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS AND CLEANUP

NPS employees inspect the Consolidated Tailings Impoundment in 2010

In 1994, NPS began environmental investigations to evaluate potential risks posed to human health and the environment by contaminants at the Site and to evaluate potential remedies to address identified risks. These investigations are being conducted pursuant to NPS's cleanup authority under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also referred to as Superfund. NPS is the CERCLA lead agency at the Site, responsible for planning and directing the Site investigation and cleanup activities.

From 1994-1995, NPS sampled soil and water from areas around the site and determined that arsenic was found in the tailings at levels that exceeded cleanup levels and NPS ecological screening values by multiple orders of magnitude. The final Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) report evaluated six removal action alternatives and recommended solidification/ stabilization of the tailings at the Site. In 1998, NPS consolidated material from the tailings settling ponds at the Site into a single pond and solidified the upper portion by blending and capping it with a cement mix. This is referred to as the Consolidated Tailings Impoundment.

In 2021, a Site Inspection was conducted to study concentrations of arsenic and mercury under abandoned milling equipment located outside of the portion of the Site that was cleaned up in 1998.

TIME-CRITICAL REMOVAL ACTION

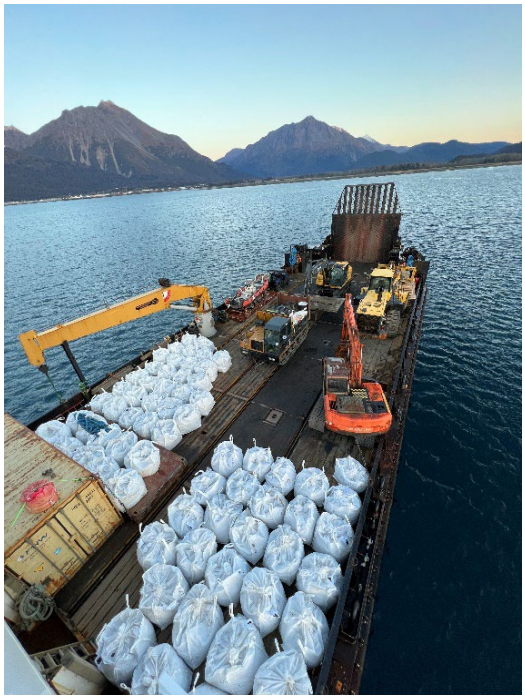
In 2021, during the Site Inspection, NPS observed erosion undercutting the bank near the edge of the Consolidated Tailings Impoundment. If erosion reached the impoundment, mine tailings would be released down the bank into Ferrum Creek.

In 2022, NPS applied for and received Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Ecosystem Restoration funds to remove the tailings from the Site to protect the environment.

In fall of 2023, NPS initiated a CERCLA Time-Critical Removal Action to remove the contents of the Consolidated Tailings Impoundment before erosion could cause the contaminated tailings to spill into Ferrum Creek. The mine tailings closest to the edge of the erosion were excavated first, increasing the distance between the edge of the eroding bank and the remainder of the contamination. Approximately two thirds of the planned removal work was done before an October storm cut the work short for the season.

NEXT STEPS

Cleanup work will resume next summer when the Site is snow-free and conditions allow access. After Summer 2024, future steps may include additional environmental investigations to understand the nature and extent of any remaining contamination at the Site. This information will determine the potential risks posed to to human health and the environment and inform future cleanup response.



Mine tailings removed from the Site in 2023

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement is an important part of the NPS CERCLA process. Information repositories have been established in the two locations identified below. These repositories house copies of the Site administrative record file. CERCLA administrative record files consist of those documents that will form the basis for the selection of the Site cleanup action. They may include documents such as reports of all Site- related environmental investigations, ecological and human health risk assessments, community relations materials, public comments and responses to significant comments and are updated periodically.

Call for an appointment to review the records in person.

Glass-Heifner Mine Site Information Repositories:

NPS Alaska Regional Office
240 W 5th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
Contact: Sarah Venator
Phone: (907) 644-3573

KEFJ Park Headquarters
411 Washington St
Seward, AK 99664
Contact: Patrick Lewis
Phone: (907) 422-0543

FOR MORE INFORMATION….

If you have questions concerning the information contained in this Community Update, please contact Sarah Venator, NPS Federal Government Lead, via email at sarah_venator@nps.gov, or Patrick Lewis, NPS Park Contact, via email at patrick_lewis@nps.gov.