

Your Comments Invited: Interim Cleanup Action at Black Butte Mine Superfund Site

Region 10

Fact Sheet

August 2016

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency invites your comments on the proposed cleanup action at the Black Butte Mine Superfund Site. This is an interim action to clean up a small area that is the biggest ongoing source of mercury entering the Cottage Grove Reservoir watershed. The proposed cleanup action will remove and stabilize mercury contaminated mine tailings, soil along the bank and sediment in and around Furnace Creek.

These actions will reduce the amount of mercury being carried downstream and into the reservoir.

The Black Butte Mine Superfund Site is in a rural area of Lane County about 10 miles south of Cottage Grove Reservoir. EPA identified mine tailings in a five-acre area adjacent to Furnace Creek as the largest source of mercury to the watershed. Furnace Creek flows into Garoutte Creek, which is a tributary to Cottage Grove Reservoir and the Coast Fork Willamette River. Recent studies show that Cottage Grove Reservoir continues to receive significant amounts of mercury from upstream sources, especially after heavy rainfall.

The mercury-contaminated sediments in the lake cause elevated levels of mercury in fish tissue. Consumption of fish that contains mercury has been identified as a public health concern (See Fish Advisory text on [Page 2](#)).



Recommended Cleanup Alternative

The EPA recommended one of the alternatives as the proposed course of action because it best achieves the cleanup objectives, after considering the evaluation criteria of effectiveness, implementability and cost.

The recommended cleanup action focuses on excavation of mercury-contaminated mine wastes, soil and sediment within the Furnace Creek area, placing them in an existing on-site repository. The excavated areas would be graded and revegetated to stabilize the bank slopes, which will reduce future erosion. This approach would remove the primary source of mercury contamination and reduce the amount of mercury flowing into the reservoir.

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How to Comment

*The public comment period for the Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis is from Aug. 24 to Sept. 26, 2016. Comments can be submitted in writing, by e-mail, or Spoken comments can be given in person at a **public meeting**:*

- **Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2016, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.**
- Shepherd Room, Cottage Grove Community Center, 700 E. Gibbs Avenue, Cottage Grove.

*Comments sent by surface mail should be postmarked no later than **Sept. 26**, and mailed to:*

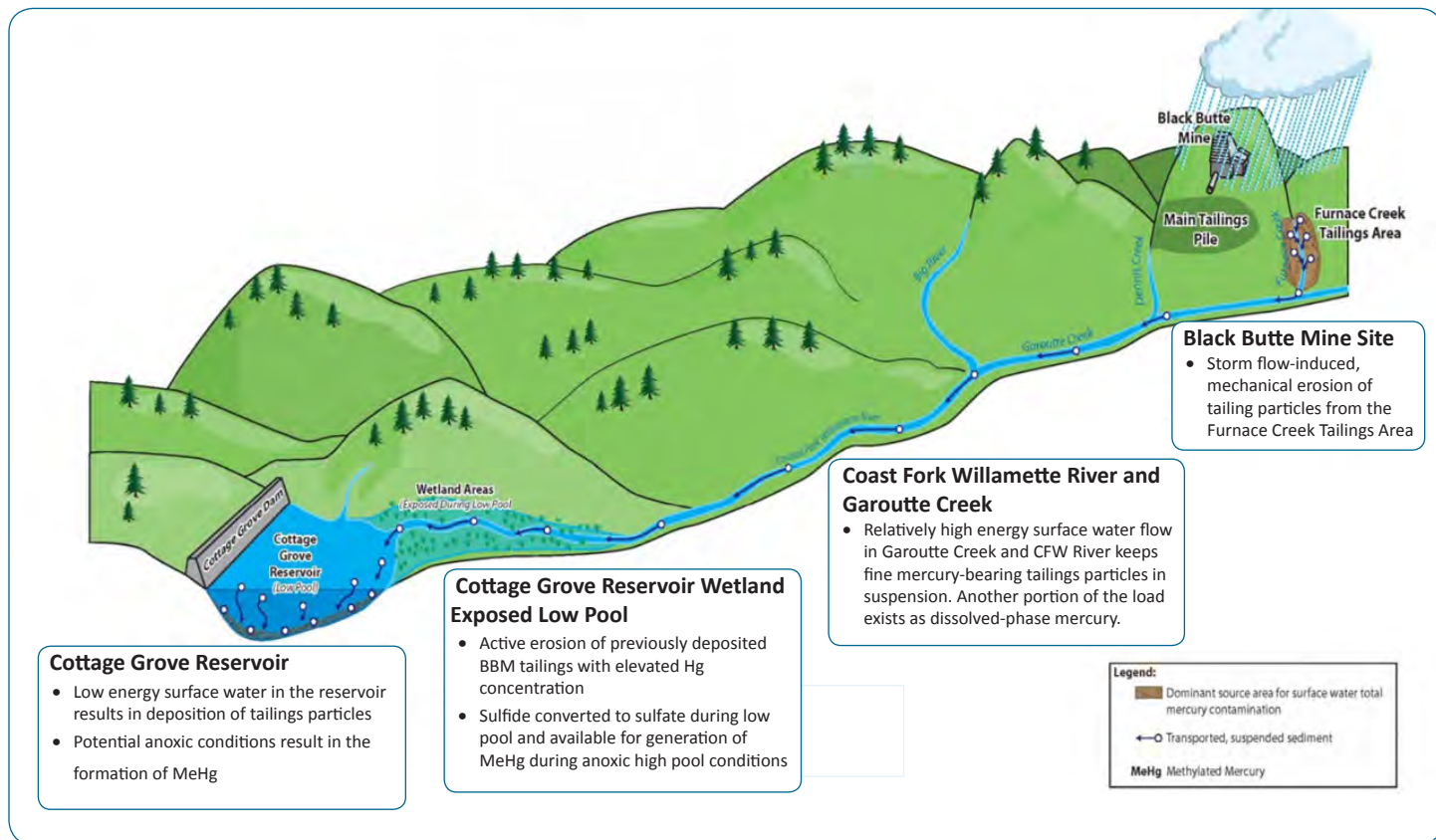
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Comments may be emailed to: tomten.dave@epa.gov

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Description of Recommended Cleanup Alternative

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality participated in the development of the evaluation and supports the recommended cleanup actions. A full description of all of the alternatives considered and the detailed evaluation of their effectiveness is available in the Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis. The document is available online at <https://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites/bbm> and a printed copy is available at the Cottage Grove Library 700 E. Gibbs Avenue, Cottage Grove.



Cottage Grove Reservoir Fish Advisory

- People of all ages can safely eat nine meals a month of rainbow trout that are 12 inches in length or less.
- Women ages 18-45, children under 6, and people with liver and kidney problems should avoid eating fish from these waters, with the exception of hatchery raised rainbow trout that are 12 inches or less in length.
- Healthy women beyond childbearing age (over 45 years) and healthy adult males should eat no more than one meal per month, with the exception of hatchery-raised rainbow trout 12 inches or less in length.
- A meal is about the size and thickness of your hand.

For more information on public health and the fish advisory, visit the Oregon Health Authority Website at <http://go.usa.gov/xDQPz>

Next Steps

The EPA will consider all comments received during the public comment period and then issue an Action Memorandum, which documents selection of the final response action and contains a summary of responses to comments received during the comment period. The memorandum will be added to the Administrative Record for the Black Butte Mine Superfund Site.

Following final selection, the EPA will develop more detailed plans for implementation. Actual construction work is anticipated to occur in summer and fall of 2017.

Site History and Background

The Black Butte Mine Superfund Site is a former mercury mining and processing operation that was first operated in the late 1890s and continued intermittently through the late 1960s. Runoff from the site drains into Dennis Creek and Furnace Creek, which themselves drain into downstream water bodies including Garoutte Creek, the Coast Fork Willamette River and Cottage Grove Reservoir. Contaminants released from the mine and processing areas ultimately end up in all of these bodies of water.

The site features include collapsed and open mine access tunnels, waste rock piles near the mine entries, the main tailings pile adjacent to Dennis Creek, the old furnace area, the new furnace area and the Furnace Creek tailings area.



Because the mine area is a significant contributor of mercury to sediment and fish tissue downstream, EPA added the site to the National Priorities List (also known as Superfund) in 2010.

In 2007, the EPA completed a similar interim cleanup action to stabilize contaminated mine wastes and reduce delivery into the downstream watershed at another part of the site near Dennis Creek. EPA's team is collecting additional data this year, and will prepare the Remedial Investigation report in late 2016 and early 2017.



For More Information:

EPA Black Butte Mine Website: <https://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites/bbm>

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Todd Hudson, Oregon Health Authority Public Health Toxicologist • 971-673-0024 • todd.hudson@state.or.us

Information Repositories:

Facility	Location
Cottage Grove Library	700 E. Gibbs St. Cottage Grove
EPA Superfund Records Center	1200 Sixth Avenue, Seattle

The EPA provides reasonable accommodation to individuals with disabilities where appropriate. If you need a reasonable accommodation please notify **Judy Smith** at 503-326-6994 or by email at smith.judy@epa.gov.

TTY users may call the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8839 and give the operator Judy Smith's phone number. Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis.

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Look Inside for

- ▶ ***Recommended Cleanup Action***
- ▶ ***How to Comment***
- ▶ ***Next Steps***

