

February 21, 2008

Greetings:

This letter is the first of what will be semi-regular project updates from the Elizabeth Mine Community Advisory Group (EMCAG). The purpose of this update is to give the public clear, objective information regarding the status of the cleanup.

The following is a brief summary of various aspects of the project that may be of interest to area residents and the general public.

EMCAG Letter in Support of Funding to Complete the Elizabeth Mine Cleanup

The EMCAG recently sent a letter to Vermont's Congressional Delegation asking the delegation for assistance in obtaining funding to complete the cleanup. This letter was endorsed by consensus of all EMCAG members.

Discoloration of the West Branch of the Ompompanoosuc River Last Summer

The dramatic discoloration of the Ompompanoosuc this past summer was the result of increased levels of iron flowing from the mine site. This increase in iron seems to be a function of the very dry summer conditions, compounded by the construction of a buttress to stabilize the largest of the site's tailings piles. Experts agree that the long-term solution to this problem is to cap the tailings piles, so that water does not flow through the tailing and pick up contaminants. Because EPA may not have the funds to cap the tailings for at least another year or more, in the interim, EPA will treat the water that flows through the tailings so that these contaminants do not pollute the West Branch.

Interim Treatment of Water from the Mine Tailing Piles

EPA is in the process of exploring ways to treat the contaminated water that is flowing from the base of the mine's largest tailing pile. This treatment system will be in place until the cover system is installed. The cover system will effectively eliminate the infiltration of rain water and snow melt into the tailings.

Water Quality in Lord Brook

Water quality in Lord Brook (a tributary to the West Branch that drains an open cut at the mine) was very good this past summer. This was probably because of the very dry summer—water in the Open Cut rarely got high enough to flow into Lord Brook. EPA will continue to monitor Lord Brook, and will re-assess the cleanup if Lord Brook is shown to consistently meet State Water Quality Standards.

Independent Review of the Cleanup Design

EPA is in the process of contracting w/ national mining remediation experts to review and comment on EPA's cleanup plan. The results of this review will be made available to the EMCAG and the public. In addition, The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is in the process of signing a contract with an acid mine drainage expert, who will participate in the evaluation of EPA's cleanup plan.

Public's Role Regarding Possible use of OMYA Waste at the Mine

The EMCAG's technical advisors have requested that EPA and ANR investigate ways to use recycled materials at the site. Waste material from OMYA operations could be useful in reducing acidity at the mine site. However, questions have been raised regarding possible chemical contamination of the OMYA waste. An independent study sponsored by the Vermont Legislature regarding the composition of OMYA's waste was released last week. ANR officials have stated that they will not support the use of OMYA waste at the site unless there is community support for its use.

For more information about the cleanup, please visit the EMCAG's website www.dartmouth.edu/~cehs/CAGsite/welcome.html, or contact the EMCAG's facilitator Cindy Cook at 802-223-1330, ccook@adamantaccord.com.