



Palmerton Zinc Pile Superfund Site Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Appalachian Trail Hiking Study

Assessment of Hiking Activity in Areas Potentially Impacted by Contamination

The Palmerton Zinc Pile Superfund Site in PA is the site of a former zinc smelting operation. For most of the 20th Century, the Palmerton, PA facility emitted large quantities of metals that were deposited in the Palmerton area including Blue Mountain and nearby watersheds. While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continues clean-up efforts, Federal and State trustee agencies are conducting a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). Monies recovered through the NRDA process will be used to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the injured public resources in order to compensate the public for lost services provided by those resources.

This Fact Sheet describes an assessment of hiking activity along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) between Lehigh Furnace Gap and Little Gap on Blue Mountain. The AT is managed cooperatively by the National Park Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), volunteers from 30 local AT Clubs, the USDA Forest Service, and other public land-managing agencies. It offers a variety of opportunities for viewing spectacular scenery, for exploring, for adventure, for exercise, for nature study, and for renewal.

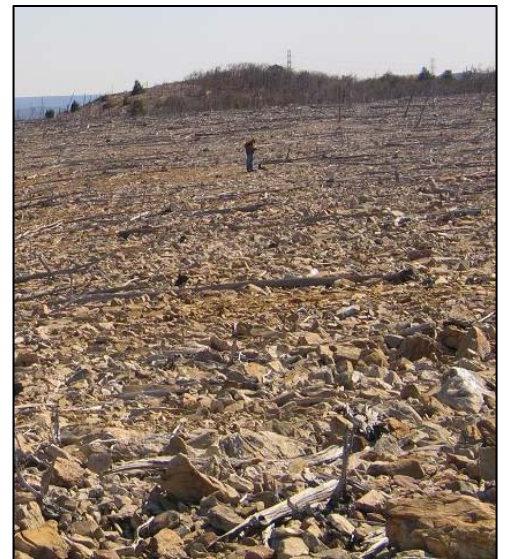
Purpose

The forest on Blue Mountain, including areas adjacent to and visible from the Appalachian Trail (AT), has been adversely impacted by metals contamination from the Site. Studies conducted at other hiking sites throughout the U.S. indicate that forest disturbances that reduce the quality of trailside scenery can decrease the value of hikers' experiences. Therefore, it is likely that metals-induced changes on Blue Mountain negatively impact hikers using the AT. The following study, developed and undertaken in cooperation with CBS Operations, Inc. (Potentially Responsible Party), is a first step in evaluating actual impacts to hiker's recreational use and enjoyment of the AT due to metals contamination and the resulting deforestation along the trail corridor. Detailed study plans and results will be posted on the web at:

www.fws.gov/contaminants/restorationplans/Palmerton/Palmerton.cfm

Hiker Count Study

This study was designed to provide an initial assessment of the level of hiking activity on the Appalachian Trail in the Palmerton area. Throughout the summer and fall of 2006, hikers were interviewed at several locations near Palmerton that provide access to the AT: Little Gap, Lehigh Gap, Translator Lane, and Lehigh Furnace Gap. Hikers were asked about their intended destination, the expected length of their trip, the primary purpose of their trip, and the composition of their party (i.e., the number of adults and children). The interviews were conducted during 58 morning (7 am to 1 pm) and afternoon (1 pm to 7 pm) shifts on systematically selected weekends and weekdays. The hiker counts on these selected days will be used to estimate hiking activity throughout the year.



A metals contaminated area along the AT.

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