Klau/Buena Vista Mine

Paso Robles, California
EPA Facility ID: CA1141190578
Basin: Salinas Watershed
HUC: 18060005

The Klau/Buena Vista Mine site consists of two abandoned mercury mines near Paso Robles, in the Santa Lucia Range of the California coastal mountains. The Klau and Buena Vista mines are situated on adjacent properties on a northwest-southeast trending ridge. From 1868 to 1970, mercury mining and ore processing were conducted at the mines. Sources of contamination at the site include tailings piles, waste repositories, tunnels, drifts, open pits, a catchment basin, a dam, ore processing mills, and ponds. Tailings piles are adjacent to the North Fork of Las Tablas Creek and the Klau Branch. During numerous investigations of the site conducted by state and federal agencies, elevated concentrations of mercury were detected in surface water and sediment samples, as well as bioaccumulation of mercury in several fish species found in adjacent surface waters.

Surface water runoff from the site flows overland or is directed via a series of swales, ditches, open pits, ponds, and culverts into the Klau Branch, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Reservoir (on Klau Creek), and the North and South Forks of Las Tablas Creek. Klau Branch and the North and South Forks of Las Tablas Creek are tributaries of Las Tablas Creek. Surface water runoff from the Buena Vista Mine flows north approximately 0.3 km (0.2 mi) before discharging into the North Fork of Las Tablas Creek, which continues to flow approximately 1 km (0.7 mi) before merging with the South Fork of Las Tablas Creek. Surface water runoff from the Klau Mine flows south directly into the Klau Branch and the BLM Reservoir. Klau Branch flows approximately 0.6 km (0.4 mi) before merging with the South Fork Las Tablas Creek. Las Tablas Creek flows approximately 4.2 km (6.8 mi) before entering the Nacimiento Reservoir. The Nacimiento Reservoir is a constructed reservoir created by a dam on the Nacimiento River. The Nacimiento River flows approximately 19 km (12 mi) before emptying into the Salinas River.

The Salinas River system provides spawning, rearing, and adult habitat for anadromous steelhead. Steelhead are reported to occur at low numbers in the Nacimiento River, although during surveys conducted by the California Department of Fish and Game steelhead have not been documented in the river (M. Hill, personal communication, January 6, 2005). The Nacimiento Reservoir and its tributaries are blocked to fish passage by the dam creating the reservoir. There are no plans in the future to create fish passage at the dam (M. Hill, personal communication, January 6, 2005).

This screening-level site review is based on resource and contaminant information available in the USEPA site narrative and the hazard ranking score documentation record at the time the site was proposed for placement on the USEPA National Priorities List. It does not represent a review of all the information available for the site. At this time, NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration, Assessment and Restoration Division, Southwest Branch is not actively working on this site. However, should new information become available to this office that indicates there is potential harm to NOAA Trust resources associated with this site, this office will activate its role as Trustee.

January 2005