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TRIUMPH MINE SITE

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

1993

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed listing Triumph Mine as a Superfund site. EPA identified the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and Asarco Incorporated as potentially responsible parties. Local residents opposed listing the Triumph Mine as a Superfund site over the stigma of a federal Superfund site located in their community.

1994

EPA and DEQ agreed to a Memorandum of Agreement that deferred cleanup oversight to DEQ. Without Superfund designation, the site cleanup activities became subject to federal regulations such as the Clean Water Act (CWA). Asarco and IDL entered into a legal agreement with DEQ to complete an initial assessment to determine the extent of the contamination and develop cleanup alternatives.

1998

DEQ prepared a Record of Decision (ROD), approved after public review and input, to describe the cleanup plan. The ROD details the selected remedy, five-year review requirements, and ongoing routine operation and maintenance (O&M) required to ensure the remedy protects human health and the environment. Initial cleanup activities were completed by 2004 and included:

- Removal of contaminated soils from residential properties and replaced with clean soils and new vegetation. Soils in nonresidential areas were replaced where heavy metals posed a risk to human health.
- Installation of mine water management infrastructure including a pipeline that combines discharge water from the mine adit and the permanent pond (located east of the lower tailings pile). The pipeline routed discharge water to the wetlands near the East Fork Big Wood River.

2003

EPA withdrew their proposal to list the Triumph Mine as a Superfund site. To control water discharge from the mine adit, Asarco installed the first plug in the Triumph Mine tunnel.

2009

Asarco entered into a bankruptcy agreement with the federal government and several states. DEQ and IDL received settlement funds as a part of the agreement.

2018

Without the protections of a Superfund designation at the site, the Idaho Conservation League filed a lawsuit against DEQ and IDL alleging a violation of the Clean Water Act for discharging pollutants in the

pipeline from the mine adit and the permanent pond. During periodic, infrequent heavy precipitation or snowmelt events, this water can discharge directly into the river. DEQ and IDL entered into a settlement agreement with the Idaho Conservation League to pay legal fees and either obtain an Idaho Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit or eliminate the need for a permit through the use of an infiltration system that diverts all water discharging in such a manner that no pollutants from this point source are entering navigable waters.

2019

DEQ and IDL submitted a joint discharge permit application as agreed upon.

2021

Idaho directed funding from the American Rescue Plan Act for use at the Triumph Mine Site (ARPA). Activities from 2021 through 2026 used this funding.

2022

DEQ and IDL installed groundwater monitoring wells to collect data in and around the tunnel, on the surrounding hillside, around the upper and lower tailings piles, and within the valley floor. Groundwater and surface water monitoring data collected over two years was used to direct decisions for immediate work completed.

DEQ and IDL also identified areas with elevated levels of lead and arsenic on roads, ditches, and road shoulders to determine areas when contaminant barrier maintenance was needed.

2024

Results of preliminary modeling indicated that infiltrating discharge water on IDL property would be feasible at removing heavy metal contaminants using infiltration basins.

2025

DEQ and IDL completed a series of improvements to the Triumph Mine Site.

- Installation of infiltration basins to move the mine water discharge from the wetlands to an area on IDL property west of the lower tailings pile. Long term operations of these infiltration basins satisfy the conditions of the settlement agreement with Idaho Conservation League.
- Completed additional portal stabilization with the installation of a retaining wall around the entrance to control the direction of hillside erosion and keep access to the tunnel and drainage system open.
- Performed barrier maintenance on roads, ditches, and road shoulders by removing contaminated materials and replacing with clean materials.

2026

DEQ and IDL completed a series of improvements to the Triumph Mine Site.

- Extension of an access road via DEQ property to the surge pond and portal. This road allows access via State land for long-term operations and maintenance (O&M).
- Waste collected from barrier maintenance in 2025 was placed on the lower tailings pile (LTP). Placement focused around the southern portion of the LTP to improve positive drainage of stormwater. The community repository was also cleaned out and materials placed on the LTP.
- Armoring and barrier improvements to strengthen the LTP barrier with a focus on the edge slopes and top surface.

As of October 2026, ARPA funded work at the Triumph Mine site is complete. Future activities will be conducted using existing State funding set aside for long-term operation and maintenance (O&M) at Triumph Mine. Future O&M will include general maintenance activities and ongoing water quality monitoring, annual inspections, and reporting in accordance with the ROD and Five-Year Reviews. If future activities or needs arise that are outside the scope of O&M, DEQ and IDL may need to seek additional funding.