

Fact Sheet

Rock Creek Abandoned Coal Mine Sites Daniel Boone National Forest

Overview

The Rock Creek Abandoned Mine Sites are located in the Daniel Boone National Forest, McCreary County, approximately five miles west of Stearns, Kentucky. The U.S. Forest Service is examining this site to: 1) evaluate the environmental impacts; 2) assess public health risks; and 3) minimize the impacts associated with historic coal mining activities in this area.



"Big Momma" in the Rock Creek Watershed

Site History

The Rock Creek Abandoned Mine Sites contain many abandoned coal mines in the Rock Creek watershed. The U.S. Forest Service manages a portion of the watershed which encompasses 24,000 acres, or 37.5 square miles. The U.S. Forest Service acquired surface rights of the watershed in 1937 and mineral rights in 2011.

This area was sub-surface mined extensively beginning in the early 1900s, with some portions mined into the mid-1970s.

Mine entries, or portals, were created to access the coal underground. These portals occur mostly along steep slopes and above streams that flow into Rock Creek.

Acid mine drainage, which is characterized by acidic water with a high level of heavy metals, flows from several mine portals into the streams below. Many uncapped and unlined piles of waste and unrecovered coal further contribute to the contamination of nearby streams.

Water samples collected from ponds, seeps, portal pools and streams indicate widespread contamination. These waters contain elevated concentrations of sulfate, aluminum, iron and other toxic metals.

Evaluation and Remedial Cost Analysis

Pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the U.S. Forest Service is evaluating the Rock Creek Abandoned Mine Sites to determine the extent of acid mine drainage, related mining damage, and potential cleanup alternatives.

Due to the impacts on water quality and associated health risks, the evaluation is focused on uncapped/unlined coal waste piles and contaminated water flowing from mine portals, seeps, and sedimentation ponds. The cost analysis is focused on the feasibility of necessary corrective actions.

Potential Actions

The U.S. Forest Service has identified several technologies that may reduce or remove acid mine drainage impacts. An engineering evaluation and cost analysis (EE/CA) is being conducted to address potential alternatives. The Draft EE/CA and other administrative records will be available for public review at the Daniel Boone National Forest Supervisor's Office and Stearns Ranger District office. The Draft EE/CA and Fact Sheet are available for public review online at www.fs.usda.gov/dbnf/.



Public Contact Information

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Draft EE/CA and Fact Sheet Online:
www.fs.usda.gov/dbnf/

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