

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN
AJAX AND MAGNOLIA MINES IN LUCAS GULCH**

**Grant County, Oregon
Prepared by the
Umatilla National Forest
2517 S.W. Hailey Avenue
Pendleton, Oregon 97801**

April 6, 2004

OVERVIEW

This Public Participation Plan (Plan) was designed pursuant to the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) in order to involve potentially interested members of the public in the vicinity of the Ajax and Magnolia Mines (Sites), located on the North Fork John Day District of the Umatilla National Forest, Grant County, Oregon. The purpose of this Plan is to document how the public will be kept informed of proposed Forest Service activities at the Sites, and how the Forest Service will solicit public comments on the proposed investigations and possible clean-up activities at these two Sites.

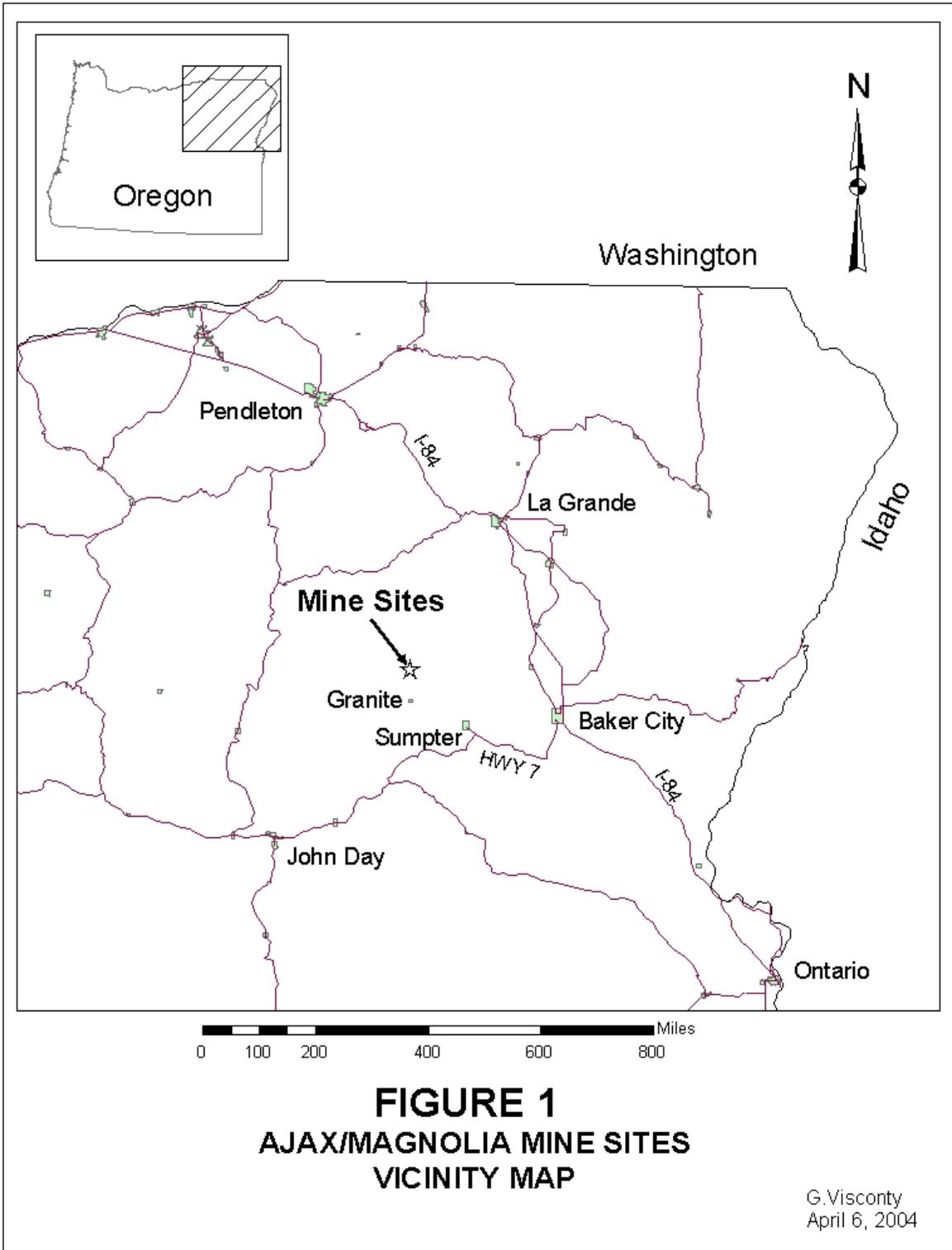
SITE DESCRIPTION

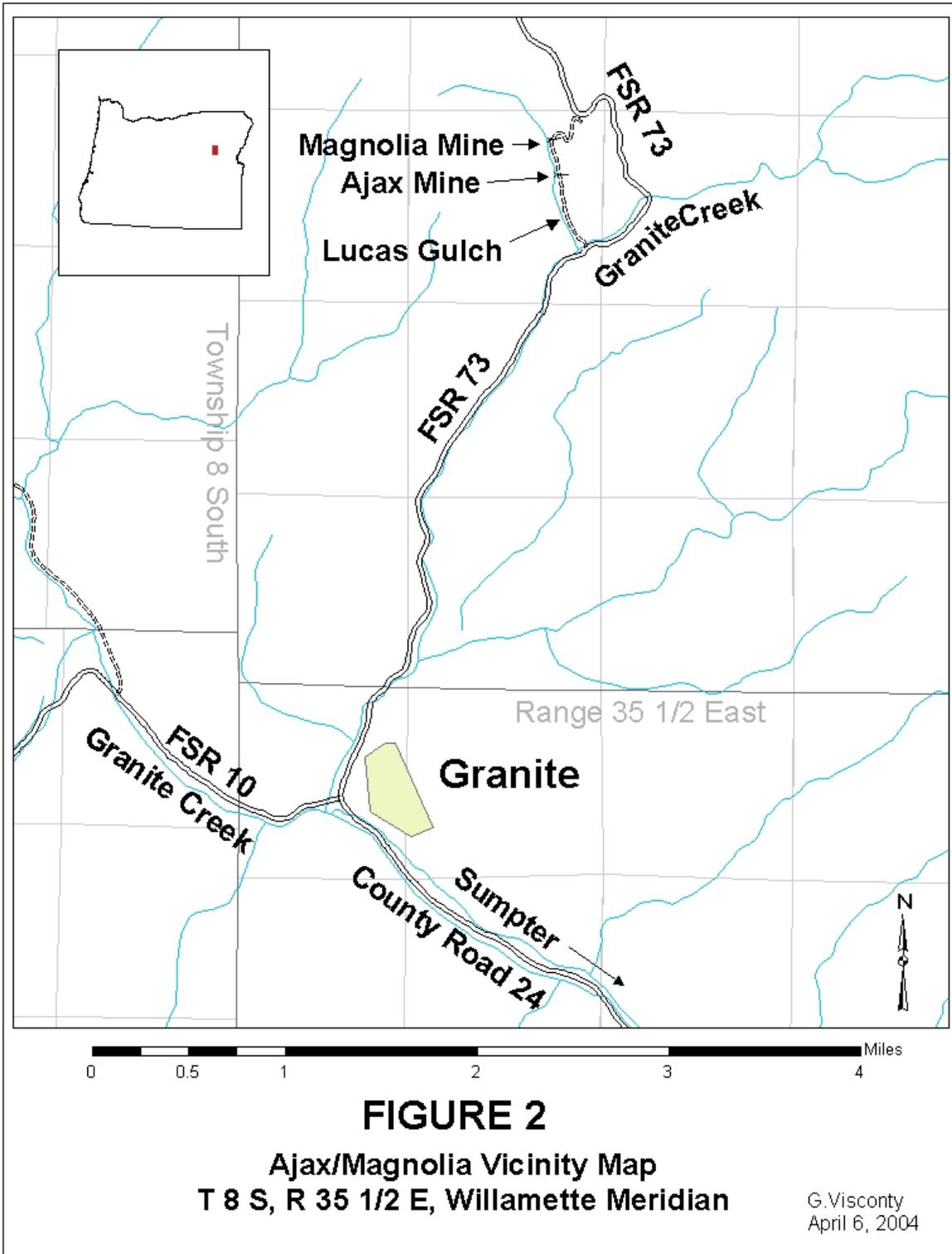
The Granite Creek watershed has a rich history of lode and placer mining dating back to 1862, and mining in the Granite Creek area was a significant part of Oregon's mineral industry prior to World War II. In the late 1880s, lode mining became the most profitable form of mining with the advent of large-scale drilling and crushing equipment and chemical extraction methods (to extract the gold from its alloys). In the 1920s, dredging for gold in the rivers again became profitable using large-scale equipment. Numerous dredge tailings piles are still visible along these creeks. Mining activities have reduced in scale since World War II, mostly due to increased cost of operations and the increased difficulty in processing the lower grade deposits left after the high grading of the pre-World War II era. Although the price of gold and other precious metals has increased significantly since then, the current level of mining in this watershed has reduced to small placer and lode operations.

The Sites are located on Lucas Gulch approximately four miles north of the town of Granite, in Township 8 South, Range 35 ½ East, Section 22, Willamette Meridian (Figures 1 and 2). Lucas Gulch is a tributary to Granite Creek which flows south past Granite and then west into the North Fork John Day River, eventually flowing into the Columbia River about 100 miles east of Portland, Oregon. Access to the mines is by County Road 73 and Forest Service Road 580, which is restricted by a locked gate. The Magnolia is about .2 mile upstream from the Ajax, and both are situated on the north bank of Lucas Gulch at about 5,400 feet in elevation.

Magnolia Mine Site

The Magnolia Mine Site covers approximately 1 acre, and currently consists of 4 unpatented lode claims with 4 adits, 2 of which are collapsed and 2 are intact and discharging mine water. The discharge from the main adit flows into 2 settling ponds in series, and then infiltrates into the





soils. There is evidence that overland flow occurs from the last pond, likely during spring high water runoff, which then drains into Lucas Gulch. The discharge from the main open adit has stained the drainage ditch between the adit and first settling pond a heavy red color. The other intact adit (boarded up) is located on the south Side of Lucas Gulch, and discharges mine water directly into Lucas Gulch. The drainage is only slightly stained red at the mouth of the adit and virtually clear at its point of entry into Lucas Gulch approximately 15 to 20 ft from the adit.

The original seven lode claims were located for the Magnolia group between 1895 and 1899, consisting of Magnolia, Jupiter, Tacoma, Rose, Atlas, Helena, and Violet. Over the years that these claims were maintained, there were numerous individuals and several corporations who owned this property through a series of complex location amendments, transfer deeds, and sheriff's sales. These claims were dropped in 1996. Four of them were relocated in 2002; the Helena, Magnolia, Rose, and Violet.

A ten-stamp mill was erected in 1899, and a very small amount of ore was processed until 1904. The property was reported to be idle in 1916; however the owners were planning mill and mine activities. Part of their plans included an addition of a cyanide plant. There is no evidence or record indicating that this or any other mining activities took place at this time. From the 1920s to the present, work consisted of maintaining the present mine, with some exploration activities to try to get the mine back into production. No further production took place at the Magnolia.

Ajax Mine Site

The Ajax Mine Site covers approximately 1 acre, and is currently inactive. The site consists of a total of 4 adits, two of which are near the creek on the north side. The other two adits are located on the slope above Lucas Gulch. The main adit, which is adjacent to Forest Service Road 580 and locked with a wooden door, discharges mine water through a polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe under the road, and into a narrow settling pond (approximately 4 ft by 10 ft in size) which was excavated in the mine dump in the riparian zone of Lucas Gulch. Water from this pond seeps through the mine dump material into a heavily iron stained bog at the base of this dump, and then directly into the creek.

There are currently no active mining claims at the Ajax; the last ones having lapsed in 1996. The original Ajax group of mining claims consisted of the Golden Star, Snowbird, Vigilant, Ajax No. 1, Ajax No. 2, the Ajax mill site, and the Snowbird Fraction (later Snowbird No. 2), located between 1895 and 1902. County records indicate that a mill was constructed near the main adit in 1905, and \$40,000 in gold and silver were reportedly produced from this mill in 1905 and 1906. County records also indicate that a five-stamp mill was erected near the mouth of Lucas Gulch in 1916, and that intermittent milling occurred there between 1916 and 1935. Up until 1996, only periodic maintenance occurred at this Site.

FOREST SERVICE ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

Preliminary Assessments

The Forest Service performed Abbreviated Preliminary Assessments for the two Sites during the summer of 2002 to determine the need for further site characterization. A Niton XRF field unit

was used for in-situ field screening of the waste pile for any potential contaminants. Water and sediment samples were not collected at that time.

Arsenic concentrations in the mine dumps at both Sites exceed EPA Region IX Preliminary Remediation Goals (PRG) as to acceptable industrial levels in soil. The mine waste rock at Ajax also exceeds the PRGs for iron.

Based on the metals concentrations and proximity of both Sites to Lucas Gulch, a Site Investigation (SI) to cover both Sites was recommended.

Site Investigations

An SI was conducted to cover both sites in June, 2003, and documented in a final report in January, 2004. The purpose of the SI was to assess the immediate or potential threat that mine related wastes at the Sites may pose to human health and the environment. In addition, information was collected in support of a decision to be made regarding the need for further action under CERCLA and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA). Potential contaminant sources identified at the Magnolia and Ajax Mine Sites included waste rock and mine water discharge. The results of this investigation indicate that arsenic is the primary contaminant of concern, and that arsenic is present in the mine waste rock and mine discharge water, and was detected in Lucas Gulch downstream from the Magnolia Mine in concentrations exceeding background and Oregon State surface water quality standards. Other metals, including mercury, cadmium, iron, and zinc are also present and may pose a threat to the environment.

FOREST SERVICE ACTIONS TO BE COMPLETED

Engineering Evaluation/Cost Assessment (EE/CA)

An Engineering Evaluation/Cost Assessment (EE/CA) will be completed to cover both Sites during the 2004 field season. This evaluation will address concerns raised in the SI, and will present a determination if removal or remedial actions are necessary at the Sites. This evaluation will include a Forest Service proposed removal or remedial action, and alternatives to that proposed action based on public and internal comments and concerns solicited during a 30 day public scoping period. When the draft document is complete, public notices will be published indicating its availability for further public comments. Based on those public and internal comments, an alternative will be selected and a Decision made by the Regional Forester, to be implemented at the Sites.

Removal/Remedial Actions

Based on the EE/CA, removal or remedial actions will be implemented at the Sites if necessary. They will be designed to address the potential contaminants found at the Sites to prevent any further degradation indicated in the EE/CA. Public notifications will be made in the event that these actions become necessary.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The North Fork John Day District Office in Ukiah, Oregon maintains a current mailing list of all of the members of the public, and other State and Federal agencies who have expressed interest in Forest Service activities on that District. They also maintain mailing addresses of the landowners in the vicinity Granite and the mine Sites. From these lists, a comprehensive list of potentially interested members of the public was developed, and will be maintained for the duration of this project. The complete list is included at the end of this Plan.

The spokesperson for this project is Greg Visconty, Area Mining Geologist, located in the Wallowa Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office at:

1550 Dewey Ave.
P.O. Box 907
Baker City, Oregon 97814
541-523-1251

Also available for public questions concerning this project is Caty Clifton, Umatilla Forest Hydrologist at:

2517 SW Hailey Ave
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-278-3822

Craig Smith Dixon, District Ranger at the North Fork John Day District will also be available to respond to public concerns, at:

P.O. Box 158
Ukiah, Oregon 97880
541-427-3231

An Administrative Record File will be maintained at the Wallowa Whitman Supervisor's Office and at the North Fork John Day District Office for public viewing and copying. A copy of the pertinent documents will also be available for viewing on the Umatilla's internet website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/projects/readroom/ajax-magnolia/>, for those who have internet services.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Public notices of upcoming Forest Service actions associated with this project will be placed in the local newspapers. These notices will briefly describe the activity and expected duration, list the responsible official and where comments can be sent, and describe where additional information can be obtained. Public comment periods usually run for 30 days following the publication in the local newspaper.

PUBLIC MAILING LIST

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ECOSYSTEM DEFENSE
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GRANT SWCD
721 C CANYON BLVD
JOHN DAY OR 97845

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AND MINERAL INDUSTRIES
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