



CUSTER GALLATIN NATIONAL FOREST, SIOUX RANGER DISTRICT RILEY PASS NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2021

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This newsletter provides information on the reclamation work at the Riley Pass Uranium Mine Response and Restoration Project, located in the North Cave Hills portion of the Custer Gallatin National Forest's Sioux Ranger District. The site is located approximately 25 miles north of Buffalo, South Dakota, and consists of 12 bluffs mined for uranium bearing ore during the 1950s and 1960s. Waste materials associated with the historic mining pose a risk to human health and the environment, principally from elevated levels of arsenic and Radium-226. The Riley Pass Project is isolating the waste materials and reclaiming the site to a stable and productive state.

UPCOMING WORK

NE Quadrant of Bluff B Scheduled for Reclamation in 2022 - Upcoming work for the 2022 season includes excavation and transport of contaminated material from the northeast area of Bluff B (located immediately south of Bluff A) to be placed on top of Bluff B. Waste removal areas and waste consolidation areas will be covered with clean borrow material and reshaped to mimic the surrounding landscape using the Natural Regrade© design process. This is the same reclamation approach used on Bluffs A, CDE, F, G, and I.

Due to the size and volume of waste on Bluff B to be reclaimed, reclamation will be performed over the next 4 to 5 years. Reclamation of Bluff B will begin with the northeast area and continue south. Each scope of work will be limited by what can be completed in one season in order to avoid leaving disturbed areas open over winter. This year's work will involve reclaiming 26 acres of Bluff B and moving approximately 115,000 cubic yards of material. Work is estimated to last 4 to 5 months, and is expected to begin in the spring of 2022.

A pre-solicitation announcing the upcoming work was sent out on October 11, 2021. The formal bid solicitation is scheduled to be advertised in early November 2021. A pre-bid site visit is scheduled for November 17, 2021 at 1pm. Details can be found at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

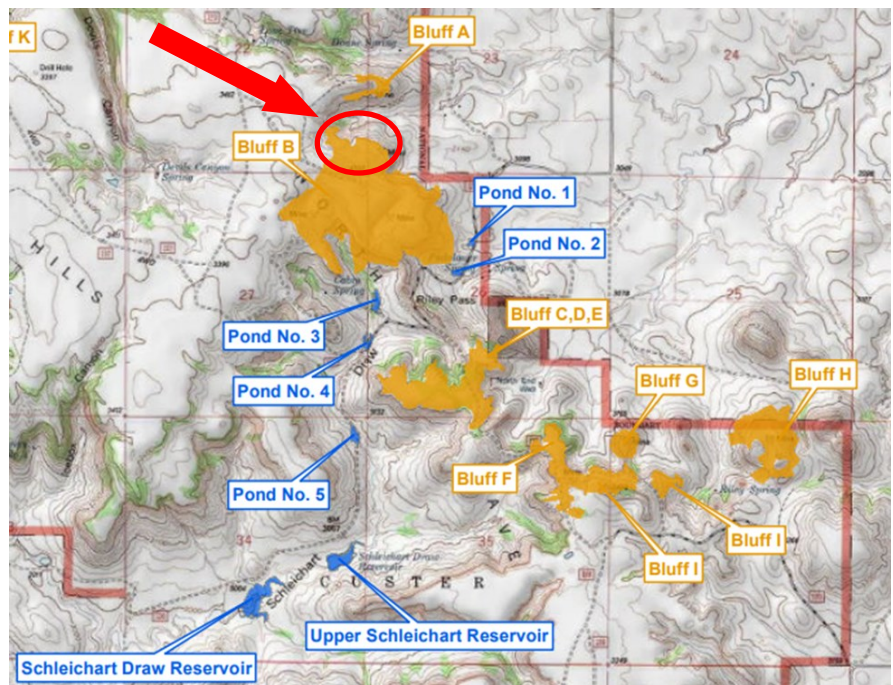
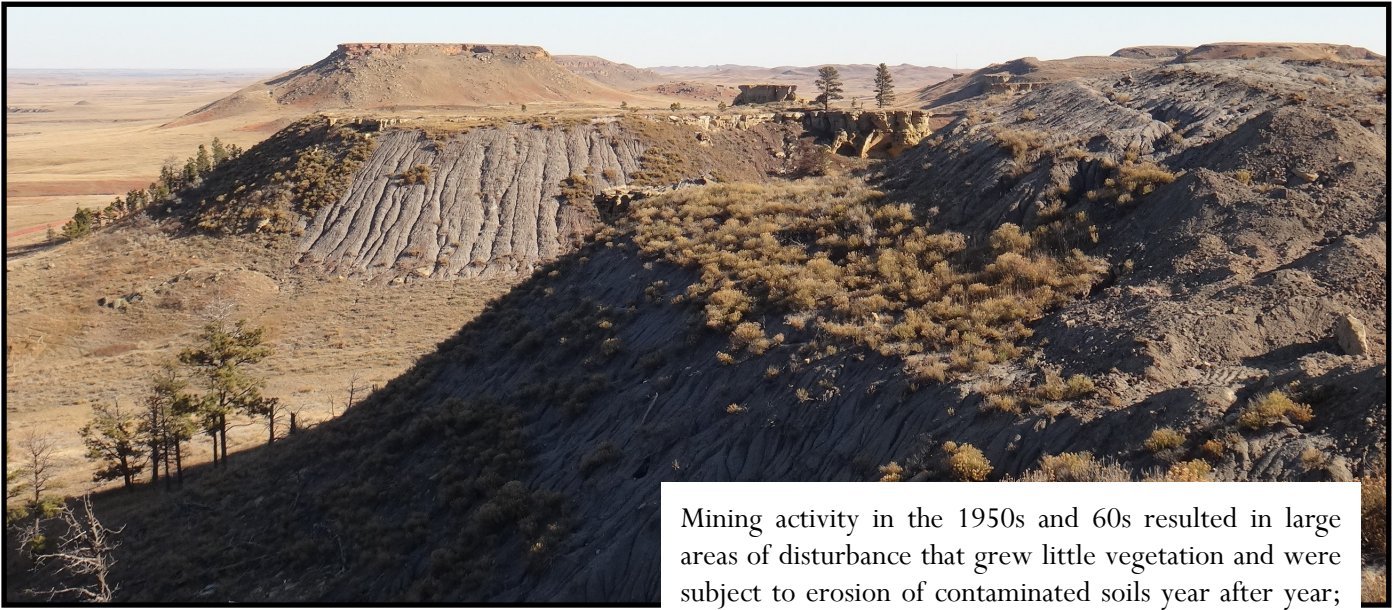


Figure 1. 2022 Remediation and reclamation activities to be performed on Northeast area of Bluff B.

PROGRESS IN PICTURES—BLUFFS G AND I

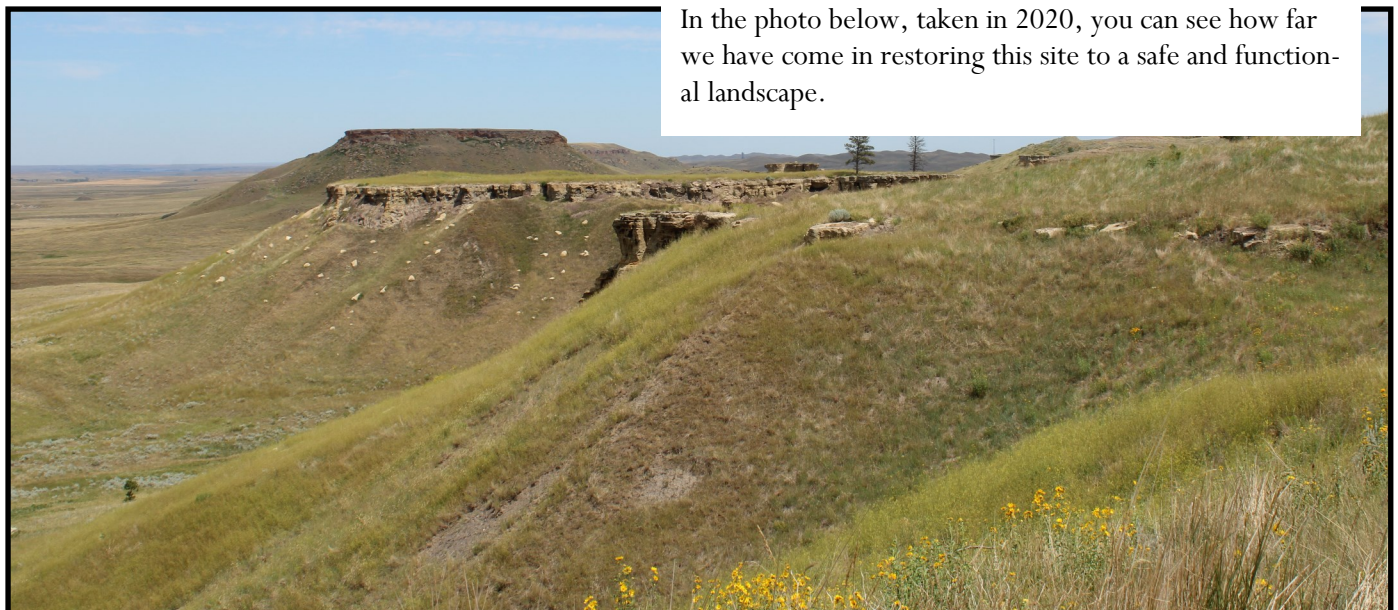


Mining activity in the 1950s and 60s resulted in large areas of disturbance that grew little vegetation and were subject to erosion of contaminated soils year after year; posing a risk to public health and safety. The above photo taken in 2013 shows mining spoils from Bluffs I and G (see Figure 1) more than 50 years after mining.



In 2016-2017 (left), the Forest Service began reclamation using the Natural Regrade© design process. In the background of each photo you can see an undisturbed bluff that illustrates how this process mimics what is found in nature.

Native grasses and wildflowers were seeded during the reclamation process and over the last 3 years, ponderosa pine, green ash and a variety of native shrubs were planted.



In the photo below, taken in 2020, you can see how far we have come in restoring this site to a safe and functional landscape.

MEET THE TEAM



Peter Werner
On-Scene Coordinator



Annica Brown
Assistant On-Scene Coordinator



David Shimek
Engineer



Brian Haas
Archeologist

There have been several changes to the Riley Pass Team in recent years so we would like to take this opportunity to reintroduce the team and welcome new members!

Peter Werner continues to lead the team as On-Scene Coordinator (OSC). As OSC, Peter leads every aspect of the project from site investigation and design through implementation and post reclamation monitoring to ensure the success of remediation and reclamation efforts.

Annica Brown is new to the Riley Pass team and the Custer Gallatin National Forest. She brings extensive experience in reclamation and remediation to her new position as Assistant OSC and works with the OSC to direct technical remediation work to achieve removal action goals.

David Shimek has been involved in Riley Pass for a number of years but only recently hired on as the Project Engineer. David will be working closely with contractors on the ground to keep work moving forward as well as providing recommendations on project design and implementation.

Brian Haas has been the Project Archeologist for 3 years now. Brian conducts cultural surveys, and coordinates with the team, the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices to protect cultural resources within and surrounding the project area.

The Riley Pass team continues to work with Sioux Ranger District personnel and architect and engineering firm, Tetra Tech, to best meet the needs of the community and forest through careful planning, monitoring and design.

COVID-19 - OUR APPROACH

The Forest Service is committed to ensuring a safe and secure working environment at Riley Pass. The Forest Service is also acutely aware of the risks associated with the virus being introduced into the local community during the course of its Riley Pass reclamation work. To minimize the risk to those working at the site, and to the local community, the following protocols have been put in place:

- Contractors are required to develop and implement a COVID-19 specific Health and Safety plan that conforms with CDC guidance and Executive Order 14042.
- Forest Service personnel are following CDC, state and local guidance. This includes self monitoring, social distancing, utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment, cleaning protocols for shared spaces such as office trailers, equipment and vehicles, and assessing the need for and limiting travel to and from the work site for personnel travelling from out of state.
- Please find up-to date protocol here: [Forest Service Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Updates | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/forest-service/coronavirus)

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Custer Gallatin National Forest
USDA Forest Service
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PUBLIC SAFETY CLOSURE ORDER IN EFFECT

Riley Pass mine waste contains hazardous substances including arsenic, molybdenum, thorium, radium and uranium. Due to the human health, safety and environmental concerns related to elevated levels of these substances, the Forest Supervisor has closed the bluffs and some adjacent areas to all public entry through a special order. Following reclamation and establishment of native vegetation, bluffs will be reopened to public entry. The special order has been placed on signs in the Riley Pass area and throughout the North Cave Hills. The order and closure maps are posted at the Sioux Ranger District Office and are also available upon request.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Documents, maps, and photos regarding site history, human health, environmental concerns and ongoing reclamation at Riley Pass are available for download from the Custer Gallatin National Forest website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/custergallatin/landmanagement/resourcemanagement/?cid=stelprd3833606>

A mailing list is also being maintained for this project. You can stay informed by either checking the website at your convenience, or signing up for our mailing list to receive future editions of the Riley Pass Newsletter in hard copy or electronic format.

For specific requests, additional information, or to be added to the Riley Pass newsletter mailing list, please contact On Scene Coordinator, Peter Werner, at peter.werner@usda.gov or (406) 587-6962.