

Elizabeth Mine, South Strafford, VT
Historical Interpretation Options
November 2012

Introduction

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Elizabeth Mine Superfund Site cleanup work is drawing to a close. There is renewed local interest in interpreting the mine's history and remaining landscape for the public. Historical interpretation options were presented in two previous official cleanup documents. One document was the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the mine cleanup drawn up between the local, Vermont State and Federal consulting parties. The other document was the *Elizabeth Mine Site Re-use Plan* generated by local stakeholders and EPA by John Milner Associates, Inc. The MOA was finalized in 2011, however many of the options were drafted before the cleanup site work actually began. The Milner *Re-use Plan* was written in 2004. Now that the site cleanup is largely complete, some of the interpretation options in these documents are no longer applicable. Some of them are no longer appropriate or feasible because of the changes that have taken place to the landscape and buildings at the site during construction of the remedy. Others have already been or are about to be completed. Many interpretation options remain potentially viable.

This document provides a brief review and status of the potential historical interpretation options that have been officially presented to date. It also presents the remaining viable interpretation options for public discussion. The EPA will be conducting a public meeting later this month where you will have an opportunity to discuss your responses to the options and identify the ones that appeal to you most. After the meeting, you will be asked to provide your responses in writing to EPA's Cultural Resources consultant, Matt Kierstead of Milestone Heritage Consulting (Milestone). Mr. Kierstead may follow up with you to discuss your comments by telephone or email. Once all comments have been received, Milestone will present them to EPA for consideration for possible future implementation based on available funding.

It is important to remember that at this time the mine site parcels remain private property. Land acquisition is an option the Town of Strafford may wish to consider on its own. Additional considerations for on-site interpretation and recreation facilities include safety, traffic, expense and maintenance. Most of the mine site's large-scale historic landscapes have been profoundly altered and most of the World War II-era buildings have been demolished.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Stipulations

The Elizabeth Mine MOA includes several stipulations for mitigating cleanup impacts to historic resources. The following discussion presents the current status of implementation of Stipulation VI, "Reports and Educational Products," which includes planning for future public interpretation.

Stipulation VI. B Popular Reports and Other Educational Products

VI.B.1: Popular Report

This stipulation states that "EPA will develop an illustrated popular report that describes the historic developments and mining processes at the Elizabeth Mine for the general public. The report will also include a discussion of the environmental impacts associated with the Elizabeth Mine and cleanup activities, using as context the interconnections between national and state 19th century industrial history and changed 20th and 21st century environmental attitudes. Consultation will be conducted with the Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) regarding the scope and length of the report prior to

drafting it. A draft will be provided to the Vermont SHPO and VT Division of Environmental Conservation for review and comment. EPA will provide a draft of the popular report to the Strafford Historical Society for review."

Work on this report will begin in January 2013. The work is being performed by Milestone Heritage Consulting. The Strafford Historical Society will be asked to provide preliminary input on report content.

VI.B.2: Internet Exhibit Content

This stipulation states that "EPA will prepare content for one or more exhibits on the Internet-based Vermont Archaeology Museum that interprets historical properties associated with copperas and copper extractive industries in the Orange County Mining District with an emphasis on Elizabeth Mine." Stipulation VI.B.3 stipulates that "maintenance of the Internet-based exhibit(s) is the responsibility of the Vermont SHPO."

The VT SHPO has stated in subsequent conversations that there are no longer any resources for the ongoing maintenance of this website. If "virtual" interpretation of the Elizabeth Mine via the World Wide Web is chosen as a mode of interpretation, then provision for ongoing website costs and maintenance will need to be taken into account.

VI.B.4: Interpretation Plan

This stipulation states that "EPA will develop a plan and/or materials for interpreting the historical properties associated with copperas and copper extractive industries in the Orange County Mining District with an emphasis on Elizabeth Mine. The plan will provide detailed content for possible interpretive exhibits and informational material that could be used on or off the Elizabeth Mine Superfund Site such as example maps with optimal locations for site interpretation, example story boards, recommended viewing spots on site, recommended signage, etc. The interpretation plan will clearly identify that the Elizabeth Mine Superfund Site is private property and public access is not currently authorized. Interpretive materials may include a 3-D model of Elizabeth Mine showing the original site topography and key site features such as the North and South Open Cuts, and TP-3, and so forth using available contour information; historic activity areas based on the GIS maps produced for Stipulation VI.A; and distinguishing the different eras of site use. Fabrication of a 3-D model is contingent upon the Strafford Historical Society providing suitable space to house the model indefinitely. Drafts of all interpretive products will be provided to the Vermont SHPO and VTDEC for review and comment."

Because of the recent groundswell of renewed local public interest in historical interpretation and re-use of the mine site, EPA has chosen to revise this step as an opportunity to develop a plan (and not materials at this time) with local input on interpretation preferences. The collaborative meeting and response process for this information gathering is indicated above. Construction and display of a physical 3-D model has been deemed impractical. If desired, technology now exists to create an electronic virtual 3-D computer model, which could be part of the universe of "virtual" interpretation if chosen.

VI.B.5: Funding for Interpretation

This key stipulation states that "it is unlikely that EPA will be able to secure adequate funding for all of the activities specified in Stipulation VI.B.4. EPA, the Vermont SHPO, the Strafford Historical Society and other interested stakeholders, as appropriate, will engage in collaborative discussions to decide which of these products will be completed, based on the availability of funds."

EPA will be gathering information and soliciting community input through February 2013.

VI.B.6: History Video

This stipulation notes that "EPA has provided funding for a Vermont Copper Mining Industry documentary video which is considered an education product under this MOA."

This video, produced by Strafford resident Phyllis Harmon, is nearing completion.

Milner Re-use Plan Summary

The 2004 Milner *Re-use Plan* resulted in creation of a vision statement:

"The Elizabeth Mine site will be reborn as a prominent asset of the communities of Orange County and central Vermont. As a historical, environmental, recreational, and cultural asset, the mine will demonstrate the influence of the land on human activity and the impact of human activity on the land."

The report process included a community survey asking participants to rank future site uses. The use responses, in order of preference from greatest to least, were as follows: 1) conservation, 2) interpretation/education, 3) recreation, 4) municipal uses, 5) "no planned use," 6) cultural, and 7) commercial/industrial. The first three, conservation, interpretation/education, and recreation were seen to have common goals and implementation strategies, which were again ranked by respondents as follows: 1) trails with interpretation, 2) multi-use trails for recreation, 3) construction of an interpretive and education venue, and 4) educational programs. The completed and potential interpretation products discussed below could be integrated into some or all of these preferred site uses.

The Milner report noted the possibility of formation of an "Orange County Copper Mining District Coalition" that would include residents of the towns surrounding the Elizabeth, Ely and Pike Hill mines. Collaborative planning with these communities may be required to implement some of the more ambitious options. Joint historical interpretation planning with other communities would benefit from combined resources and would avoid duplication of effort.

Interpretation-Associated Goals

The Milner report identified several goals and pursuits for historical interpretation and public access.

Goal 1: Preserve historically significant resources and landscape features for present and future generations

- Identify and record resources and landscape features for preservation
- Stabilize and rehabilitate resources and features as necessary
- Establish a program of long-term maintenance

Goal 2: Increase knowledge and appreciation of the cultural and natural history and significance of the mine

- Encourage and organize research efforts about the mine, its history, and its legacies

- Provide high-quality interpretation of the mine's history and how the natural resources and human activity intertwined
- Develop educational programs with area schools, colleges, and universities
- Collaborate on programs and projects with other interpretive and educational organizations in the region
- Provide on-site public interpretive/educational experiences

Goal 4: Raise community awareness and appreciation for the mine as a community asset through recreation and on-site use

- Provide ways for the community to learn about and use the mine site
- Encourage residents and the public to visit the mine site and understand its history
- Create new recreational opportunities, establishing the mine site as a major passive recreational venue
- Honor the mine, its heritage, and its legacies with programs, publications, and other activities for the public
- Plan activities and events that focus on the mine site

Interpretation-Associated Options

The Milner report provided options (and cost estimates, not included here) for onsite and offsite recreational, interpretive, educational and preservation options. These areas are functionally interrelated. This section outlines those recommendations, and, where applicable, indicates ones that have already been accomplished as part of EPA cultural resource impacts mitigation. Readers are encouraged to refer to the Milner report text for additional descriptions and details for each bulleted option. Electronic and/or hard copy versions of this report are available from EPA.

Recreational

- Trail loop, 1.5 mi, connecting key historic areas and features
- Trail network, 5 mi, including three pavilions, footbridge over Ompompanoosuc, etc.
- Extensive trail network, 10 mi, part of regional effort to link to other mines

These onsite and/or offsite trail concepts could all potentially include interpretation components including exhibits, trailhead kiosks, wayside panels/signage, folding maps/narrative brochures, interpretive facility or park, etc.

Interpretive

- Exhibit(s) for temporary or permanent location(s) offsite
- Trailhead/roadside exhibit(s) at one or more selected trailheads
- Trailside interpretive signage along recreational trails
- Interpretive and educational facility in an existing building
- Interpretive park for Tailings Pile 3

Educational

Onsite

- Trail map(s) with trail and historical information
- Trail brochure(s) to interpret history, environment and landscape
- Guided tours by trained volunteer guides
- Mine guidebook focusing on historic resources and landscape features

Offsite

- Professional-quality published written history of the Elizabeth Mine

NOTE: This option is also an MOA stipulation and is being addressed (see above).

- Research and educational projects to raise the level of mine scholarship
- Educational Outreach to disseminate research results
- Curricula Development for regional school districts
- Website presenting above educational materials and information
- Video documenting the history and significance of the mine

NOTE: This option is included in the MOA and production is nearing completion.

Preservation

- Recordation of WWII resources using HAER standards

NOTE: This option has already been completed by EPA. However, the documentation package (narrative history, drawings and photographs) has not been submitted to the HAER repository (Library of Congress). Final editing/formatting and transfer to LOC should be considered as an educational/interpretation option.

- Building stabilization program to preserve existing buildings

Most WW II buildings were demolished during the cleanup. The Assay House remains an occupied dwelling and the Change House still stands and has been stabilized by the property owner. The Flotation Mill Building, Crushing Plant, and Thickener/Dryer Building concrete foundations, piers and machinery pads have been retained and surrounded with crushed stone.

The "Copper Castle" residence on Mine Road, which is the only other standing building from the late nineteenth-century Tyson-era mine activity, is vacant and deteriorating. Acquisition by the Town of Stafford for use as a mine-related or general community history facility and/or other function could be considered.

- Adaptive re-use of mine buildings in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

This option is largely moot for the WWII buildings as only two of them remain and are currently on private property. As indicated above, the historically significant "Copper Castle" could be considered for public acquisition.

Additional Ideas

The universe of interpretation options is also open to additional ideas that could add value to the historical record and experience of the Elizabeth Mine, just for example, a geological map of the remarkable expanse of exposed rock at Tailings Pile 3, or a professionally-produced artifact catalog of all the items excavated as part of site archaeological excavations. EPA welcomes all feedback.

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www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/sites/elizmine