

Restoration Project Is Funded

Dear Dr. Louthan:

An associate recently furnished me with a copy of an article titled "Old Mine Waste Threatens Soda Butte Creek" republished in the February 2001 issue of *Practical Failure Analysis*. While the article was well written, you should be aware of the background to the article and certain political aspects of the "story," which were not clearly obvious to an uninformed reader.

had constructed a diversion of Soda Butte Creek through the tailings pond via a "four-foot culvert." Such a diversion would have been a "unique" environmental protection at its time of construction. Such a diversion would obviously protect the stream's water quality by not allowing mixing of the fluids.



The U.S. EPA took over control of the McLaren tailings pond impoundment in the early 1990s and has done little to correct the problems enumerated by Mr. Glidden. This is truly unfortunate since the topping of the pond and residual drainage does impact the water quality of Soda Butte Creek.

restoration of the property. The restoration project is "funded": The agency bureaucrats only need to implement those plans in a timely fashion.

It is clear to a reader informed on the overall Crown Butte matter that Mr. Glidden's article was written because of his impatience in the field restoration of the McLaren tailings, not because funds or technical plans are not available for its resolution.

Crown Butte Mines, Ltd., the operator of the New World Project mentioned in passing in Glidden's article, proposed to remove the McLaren tailings and place it in their proposed tailings impoundment. Glidden was a leader in the successful opposition to the New World Project, including its handling

Sincerely,
Paul C. Jones, PE
Mineral Consultant
Golden, CO

The McLaren Mine, as the article indicated, was developed in the early 1930s and operated intermittently through the early 1950s at a time when the environmental concerns were not as important to the public as they are today. In addition, the laws and regulations governing mining at that time did not impose the stringent standards of those governing mining today. This article is clearly an article written on historic activities of the mining industry, not current day activities.

It is interesting to note in the article, however, that the operators of the property

of the McLaren tailings. As the article states, in August 1996 President Clinton signed an agreement with Crown Butte Mines to acquire the New World Project. In that agreement, \$22.5 million was allocated to correct the past environmental damage (pre-Crown Butte) in the area of the project, including the McLaren tailings. Congress later provided that funding by special legislation. The responsibility for the restoration activity of the area, including the McLaren tailings, is placed with specific federal agencies, including the Forest Service and the EPA. These agencies are governed by the same environmental laws and regulation which would govern any

Submissions

Share your thoughts; the editor's e-mail address is: McIntyre.Louthan@srs.gov

The fax number is 803/725-7369

Or, you can send your letter to:
Dr. McIntyre R. Louthan
Materials Technology Section
Savannah River Technology Center
401 Lake Side Drive
Aiken, SC 29802

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