

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



Hecla Lucky Friday Mine, Silver Valley, Idaho

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

August 2004

EPA Proposes to Deny Hecla's Request for Water Quality Standards Variances Public Invited to Comment

THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) REGION 10 INVITES PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITS PROPOSED decision to deny Hecla Mining Company's request for variances from the water quality standards for the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River. Specifically, Hecla requested variances from the cadmium, lead, and zinc standards that are the basis for the discharge limits in their Lucky Friday Mine National Pollutant Discharge Elimination (NPDES) permit. The Lucky Friday Mine is located near Mullan in Idaho's Silver Valley. The public comment period runs from September 1 through September 30, 2004.

The variances would have allowed Hecla to release—for up to five years—more metals to the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River than allowed by their current NPDES wastewater discharge permit. The current permit was issued in August 2003. (Many portions of the permit, including the metals limits, were appealed by Hecla and are “stayed,” meaning that they are not in effect, pending the outcome of the appeal.)

Hecla requested the variances on three grounds summarized below:

1. That man-made causes of pollution prevent the attainment of the use of the South Fork as a cold-water fishery and cannot be remedied.
2. That hydrologic modifications (such as dams or diversions) prevent attainment of a cold-water fishery.
3. That costs to meet the standards would result in “substantial and widespread economic and social impacts.”

EPA did a thorough and careful review of the request and all supporting information. EPA found that Hecla failed to demonstrate that the company qualifies for a variance based on any of the above three grounds. EPA's public Administrative Record documenting the basis for the proposed decision will be available for public review beginning

**Send your written comments
by September 30 to
Lisa Macchio
US EPA, OW-131
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101-1128**

September 1, 2004. The public record does not include information which has been claimed as Confidential Business Information (CBI) by Hecla Mining Company. EPA prepared a Decision Document which outlines Hecla's variance request and discusses the basis for our proposed denial. The Decision Document is available either upon request from EPA or can be found on the EPA website at: www.epa.gov/r10earth. Click on “Water Quality” in the left column, then scroll down to “What's New.”

Installation of the necessary wastewater treatment at the Lucky Friday mine will reduce the levels of metals entering the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River. These further reductions of metals into the upper South Fork will benefit the water quality conditions and improve the ecological conditions for the existing aquatic life in the river, including a native population of west-slope cutthroat trout.

(Continued on back page.)



United States Environmental Protection Agency

1200 Sixth Avenue, ECO-081
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*HECLA LUCKY FRIDAY MINE
WATER QUALITY STANDARDS VARIANCE
PROPOSED DECISION FACT SHEET
SILVER VALLEY, IDAHO
AUGUST 2004*

EPA welcomes public comment on this proposed decision. EPA will hold a public hearing if sufficient interest exists. If you would like to request a public hearing, please mail or email your request by September 13 to Lisa Macchio, EPA, at the address noted. Written comments are due by **September 30** to Lisa Macchio, EPA, at the address at right.

Copies of the Decision Document may be obtained from Lisa Macchio or visit our website at: www.epa.gov/r10earth. Click on "Water Quality" in the left column, then scroll down to "What's New." The Decision Document and the public Administrative Record will be available for review beginning September 1, 2004 at the Wallace Public Library, 415 River Street, Wallace, Idaho and at the EPA Seattle Office (address at right).

For More Information, contact:

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Alternative formats are available. For reasonable accommodation, please call Andrea Lindsay.