

Ross Adams Uranium Mine

by Bretwood Higman, David Coil, Elizabeth Lester

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Ground Truth Trekking

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Background



ROSS ADAMS URANIUM MINE — USGS photo from the 1960's — Get Photo (/photos/ross-adams-uranium-mine/)

The Ross Adams Mine operated sporadically from 1957 to 1971. The only commercial uranium mine in Alaskan history, the mine produced around 1.3 million pounds of uranium ore, which was shipped out of state to be processed. Newmont Mining Corporation (http://www.newmont.com/) operated the mine most recently, and is therefore the "responsible party" under EPA Superfund regulations for hazardous sites.

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The US Forest Service, EPA and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) performed (http://seacc.org/mining/proposed-southeast-mines/bokan-mountain-mine) a preliminary site inspection in 2004, finding higher than normal radiation levels at the mine site, waste rock piles, and roads nearby. Levels (http://www.epa.gov/radiation/docs/tenorm/402-r-08-005-voli/402-r-08-005-v1.pdf) within the Ross Adams mine of radioactive radon, a decay product of uranium, are 50-125 times the upper limit for legal indoor exposure. Levels of radiation in the general area are 2-100 times background. The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) is concerned (http://seacc.org/mining/proposed-southeast-mines/bokan-mountain-mine/RadioisotopesandSalmon.pdf) that radiation could threaten commercial fisheries downstream of the mine.

Current Status

In 2009, Newmont agreed to conduct a detailed survey of the site in order to prepare a possible reclamation plan. Reclamation of the Ross Adams mine would be less complicated and expensive than many other abandoned uranium mines because no processing (http://seacc.org/mining/proposed-southeast-mines/bokan-mountain-mine), which would have concentrated radioactive materials, took place on the site.

Both Newmont and Ucore Rare Metals Inc., the company currently exploring the nearby Bokan Mountain REE project (/Issues/MetalsMining/BokanMountain.html), stress that the reclamation project doesn’t affect the status or likelihood of a

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new mining project. However, SEACC has suggested (http://seacc.org/mining/proposed-southeast-mines/bokan-mountain-mine) that a new project be contingent on the completion of reclamation at the old mine.

Reclamation assessment by the U.S.D.A Forest Service and Newmont was ongoing as of late 2010 (ftp://ftp2.fs.fed.us/incoming/chugtong_r10/RossAdamsMine/hydaburg%20open%20house%20121410/Brochure_12-10-2010.pdf).

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