

BLM announces BOF open house

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The Bureau of Land Management will hold an open house for the residents of Big Oak Flat, Groveland and surrounding communities on Thursday, Feb. 10, to discuss the status of the abandoned mine investigation project on public lands at the Longfellow Mill at Big Oak Flat in Tuolumne County.

The open house, which will be part of a series of BLM meetings to keep residents informed of the investigation project at the Longfellow Mill, will be held at the Groveland Community Hall, 18720 Main St. (Highway 120), from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

"Public health and safety is our top priority, so we want the local community to be fully aware of our plans and actions and address any comments or questions the residents may have," said William Haigh, BLM Mother Lode Field Office manager. "We are pleased with the success of our community-based process to date to resolve the historic and modern-day problem of abandoned mines."

Testing around the Longfellow Mill site by BLM in late May 2010 indicated unusually high arsenic, mercury, lead, and zinc levels in the tailings piles and soils on the site.

Using emergency funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the BLM will be performing additional analysis and a risk assessment for the site, as well as on adjacent land with the permission of the land owner.

The Longfellow Stamp Mill was built in 1873 and was family operated until the 1890s. Mining ceased at the site around 1948 and the presence of the naturally occurring arsenic associated with mining activity has long been known.

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