

# Iron Mountain Mine dredging ahead of schedule; legal fight continues

**Dylan Darling, Redding Record Searchlight, 11-22-09**

While a dredging project to remove Iron Mountain Mine tailings from Keswick Lake is ahead of schedule, legal documents continue to pile up in the dispute between the federal government and the mine's owner.

Started early last month, the dredging should be completed by Dec. 12, said Rick Sugarek, project manager for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"Everything is going very smoothly there," he said.

The crew has already pulled up 85,000 tons of tailings this fall, hitting its goal, said Cynthia Wetmore, an EPA environmental engineer. The crew will likely pull up 15,000 additional tons before shutting down for winter, she said.

Dredging is set to start again next April, she said. In all, the EPA aims to remove 175,000 tons from the Spring Creek Arm of Keswick Lake.

Scientists have been running daily tests of the water, which flows into the Sacramento River north of Redding, she said.

"We've had no impact on the water quality," Wetmore said.

Once the dredging work is finished in December, she said the EPA will reopen the Keswick Lake boat launch along Iron Mountain Road, which has been closed since early September.

While the EPA continues its effort to clean up the defunct Iron Mountain Mine, which produces what scientists say is the world's worst water, Ted Arman continues to fight the agency over the mine he owns.

Earlier this month, Arman crafted a list of 18 grievances against the agency that he had notarized.

"I'm letting the world know that they are not going to step all over me and get away with it," Arman said.

John Hutchens of Canyon, who for close to two years has served as Arman's spokesman and Web site designer, said he sent Arman's list through e-mail to EPA officials and others involved with Iron Mountain Mine.

"We could be putting thousands of people to work," Hutchens said.

Along with plans to produce fertilizer and extract minerals from the mine, Arman also says he wants to erect a 230-foot Italian marble statue of Jesus Christ atop Iron Mountain. The 3,500-foot peak is visible from much of Redding.

Sugarek said he had yet to see the list from Arman.

"We haven't really had any contact with him," he said.

Last month, a federal judge dismissed complaints filed by Arman and Hutchens, including a demand for \$7 billion in damages, saying they amounted to rants. The pair say the EPA has blocked numerous economic ventures possible for Iron Mountain Mine and are trespassing.

The EPA continues to pursue legal action of its own against Arman. Since 1990, the EPA has sought \$60 million it says Arman owes for cleanup costs.

Arman bought the mine in 1976 after active mining had stopped. In 1986, the EPA declared it a Superfund site. The EPA's Superfund program manages cleanups of uncontrolled hazardous waste sites.

Sugarek said Arman owes part of the cost of the cleanup because of the highly acidic water that seeped into the Sacramento River in the first decade he owned the mine.

"Even though the mining stopped prior to his purchase of the property, the pollution didn't," Sugarek said.