

## The Issue

There are over 8,500 inactive and abandoned mines, mineral locations, and mineral discoveries in Idaho.

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is working with owners of these properties to map the mine sites, identify physical hazards, and collect water and mine waste samples. DEQ uses this information to make recommendations to property owners about how they can voluntarily manage risks on their property and control problems to help prevent regulatory actions by state and federal agencies, make the property safer, and help avoid lawsuits that can come from members of the public entering the property and injuring themselves.

Many mining properties are also slowly evolving into locations for residential and commercial development. Buyers and investors usually want to know if there are any outstanding problems or issues at mine sites before they buy or invest in those properties. DEQ's analysis and reports generated by this project can help answer some of these questions.



## For More Information

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### DEQ Web Resources

#### Remediation Activities

[www.deq.idaho.gov/waste-remediation-activities](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/waste-remediation-activities)

#### Brownfields in Idaho

[www.deq.idaho.gov/brownfields](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/brownfields)



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# Inactive and Abandoned Mined Lands Assessment Project



Helping Private Land Owners and Miners Evaluate and Manage Human Health and Ecological Risks



**Idaho Department of Environmental Quality**  
[www.deq.idaho.gov](http://www.deq.idaho.gov)



## The Process



Assistance is available to the owners of properties that contain inactive or abandoned mines and mineral

locations, who intend to manage risks associated with their mine wastes. In some cases, DEQ may contact the property owner to offer assistance; in other cases, the property owner may contact DEQ to request assistance.

Before DEQ can begin its research, the property owner must specifically provide DEQ with permission to access the property. Once this permission has been granted, DEQ begins research and conducts a field inspection.

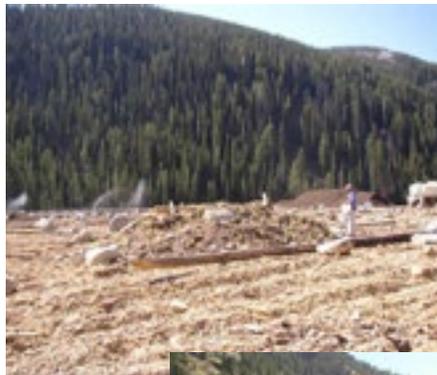
DEQ's research involves review of available geologic reports and data and a study of historic mining reports. Field inspections involve mapping and sampling; taking photographs; identifying physical hazards, adit discharges, and solid and hazardous wastes, if any; and identifying existing and potential beneficial uses of the property.

After the research and field inspection, DEQ writes a report. This report contains all of the information gathered, plus recommendations on how site-specific issues can be addressed. Many sites do not have any significant issues. When this is the case, that conclusion is stated in the final report. Copies of the report are provided to the property owner. Learn more at [www.deq.idaho.gov/mining-preliminary-assessments](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/mining-preliminary-assessments).

## The Results

With the assistance of owners, DEQ has completed assessments on 426 mining claims, 106 major mine or mill facilities, 85 minor mine or mill facilities, and 4 other industrial complexes. The owners of several of these are now actively managing their properties to reduce the threat from hazards. They have completed or are working towards cleaning up trash, closing mine openings, and installing measures to control erosion. Several are also cleaning up mine tailings.

DEQ is committed to working with property owners in a cooperative manner to solve problems. None of the property owners who have participated in the program are cleaning up sites because of regulatory action by DEQ.



## Cleanup Programs

DEQ has two programs through which it can work with groups or individuals to manage risk at inactive mine or mill sites.

In 1996, the Idaho Legislature created DEQ's **Voluntary Cleanup Program** to encourage innovation and cooperation among state agencies, local communities, and private parties working to revitalize properties with contamination from hazardous substances or petroleum.

Land owners participating in the Voluntary Cleanup Program receive benefits such as:

- ✓ An expedited remediation process
- ✓ No adversarial enforcement action
- ✓ A seven-year partial property tax exemption
- ✓ A "covenant not to sue" from DEQ
- ✓ Site-specific risk-based cleanup standards
- ✓ Use of institutional controls in cleanup plans

DEQ's **Brownfield Revitalization Program** funds and conducts environmental assessments of Brownfield sites when a lack of environmental information has complicated site redevelopment or reuse. Brownfields are abandoned or underused properties where the reuse is complicated by actual or perceived environmental contamination. DEQ is developing a comprehensive, statewide inventory of Brownfields. Learn more about Brownfields at [www.deq.idaho.gov/brownfields](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/brownfields).