

FAQ

Overview

In the fall of 2023 the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining & Safety (DRMS) is planning mitigation of the Lewis Coal Mine Fire on private property in unincorporated Boulder County. Hazards associated with underground coal mine fires include ground surface instability, ground subsidence, emission of toxic gases, high ground surface temperatures and potential surface wildfire ignition. All of these hazards are present at the Lewis Site.

Additionally, portions of the Davidson Ditch are subsiding, potentially compromising the integrity of the ditch creating a potential for service disruptions and flooding.

Where is the Lewis Site?

The Lewis Site is northeast of the intersection of Marshall Rd. and Cherryvale Rd. The Lewis Mine Fire extends under two privately owned properties. The Davidson Ditch, a water supply ditch, crosses both private properties at the Lewis Site.

What is the scope of the work?

The mitigation efforts will involve excavating 30 feet below ground surface to just below the coal mine workings and removing any burning or smoldering coal. The burning/smoldering coal will then be blended thoroughly with the removed rock or soil. The temperature of the blended material will be monitored until it is less than 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The extinguished material will then be returned to the excavation and graded to match adjacent natural contours and revegetated with native vegetation.

Why does this work require an emergency declaration?

The emergency declaration allows the state to perform the work as quickly as possible by expediting Boulder County's land use review process, which will allow the work to be completed before the spring when Davidson Ditch will fill with water – making the mitigation work impossible.

There is another underground fire on City of Boulder property. Why is this site prioritized in the work over the Marshall Mesa Trailhead site?

Observations at the Lewis Site since the Wildfire in December 2021 have indicated increased mine fire activity at the Lewis Site including increased surface subsidence, surface fracturing and cracking, and higher surface temperatures. The exceptionally rainy weather in 2023 has added to the severity of these conditions. This increased activity poses an increased risk of damage to the Davidson Ditch and increased wildfire ignition potential at the Lewis Site. Testing and ongoing monitoring at the Marshall Mesa Trailhead location have not exhibited any significant changes in temperature or surface expression since the Colorado Underground Coal Mine Fires 2018 Inventory Report. For this reason, Colorado DRMS

has prioritized mitigation efforts at the Lewis Site. Mitigation efforts at the Marshall Mesa trailhead location are tentatively planned for mid-2024.

Will there be road closures or other things that the community should know about?

No, the mitigation work will not require road closures or require restrictions on the use of the City of Boulder OSMP trails to the north of the construction area.

Will there be materials leaving the site?

No excavated materials will leave the site however a 300-foot concrete-lined section of the Davidson Ditch will have to be removed. The concrete and steel reinforcing material will be recycled or disposed of offsite in accordance with State and County regulations.

How will the area be revegetated?

The final grade will closely resemble the surrounding undisturbed topography. DRMS is working with local natural resource experts at the county to revegetate with native seed mix. It is estimated that approximately one and three-quarter acres of regrading, re-contouring and re-vegetation may be required.

What's the timeframe for the work and what should neighbors expect?

DRMS is expecting to begin work in mid- October and have it completed in March 2024. A link for construction updates and project milestones will be posted on the [Colorado DRMS website](#) prior to the project breaking ground.

What are days and hours of the work?

Mitigation work is currently scheduled for Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. In the event of lengthy weather delays or unforeseen ground conditions these hours may be extended in order to ensure the March 1 completion date.

What type of equipment is necessary?

Heavy construction equipment will be required to perform the Lewis Coal Mine Fire Mitigation work. Equipment will include excavators, bulldozers, vibratory compactors and dump trucks to remove the concrete lining material.

Number of workers on site?

Up to ten to twelve personnel may be onsite during work activities depending on the work being done.

Staging areas?

All equipment and materials needed to complete the Lewis Mine Fire Mitigation Project will be stored on-site.

Are there any risks during this work?

Excavation of burning or smoldering material exceeding 100° F will be halted in the event of a Red Flag Warning issued for the area of the Lewis Site by the United States National Weather Service. Additionally

if sustained on-site surface winds or frequent gusts exceeding twenty five miles per hour (> 25 mph) are recorded, excavation of material exceeding 100° F will be suspended. In the event that excavation operations are halted for high winds the excavation and all excavated material shall be immediately checked for any material that exceeds 100° F. Any material exceeding 100° F shall be immediately covered with a minimum of two feet (2 ft) of cold rock or soil.

Will there be someone onsite 24/7 monitoring or how does that occur?

The Lewis Site will not be monitored 24/7. Before departing the Lewis Site the excavation and excavated materials will be checked for any areas or excavated material exceeding 100° F. If any cut face or excavated materials exceeding 100° F are to be left while the Lewis Site is unattended they will be covered with two feet (2 ft) of cold rock or soil.

How often does DRMS typically monitor legacy coal mine fires?

Every five years. Observations at the Lewis Site following Marshall Fire and High Wind Event in early 2021 indicated increased subsurface fire activity and surface expression, which were not present in the 2018 monitoring report, including increased surface subsidence, surface fracturing and cracking, higher surface temperatures (greater than 120 degrees F), increased venting and gas emissions and stressed and dying vegetation.