

The Issue

The Preliminary Assessment Program addresses sites that may be contaminated with hazardous materials due to mining and industrial activity. Idaho has more than 8,500 inactive and abandoned mines, mineral locations, and mineral discoveries. The state also has multiple abandoned or repurposed industrial facilities such as old landfills, repair/maintenance shops, dry cleaners/laundromats, rural airfields, railroad depots, and various manufacturers.

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Preliminary Assessment Program is working with owners of these properties to compile historic site information, identify physical and environmental hazards, and collect water, soil, and 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. This information can help prevent regulatory actions by state and federal agencies, make the property safer, and help avoid lawsuits from members of the public entering the property and injuring themselves.

Many properties are also slowly evolving into locations for residential and commercial development. Buyers and investors usually want to know of any outstanding problems or issues at the sites before they buy or invest in those properties. DEQ's assessments can help answer these questions.

For More Information

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DEQ Web Resources

Preliminary Assessment Program

www.deq.idaho.gov/preliminary-assessments

Voluntary Cleanup Program

www.deq.idaho.gov/voluntary-cleanup-program

Brownfields in Idaho

www.deq.idaho.gov/brownfields



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Preliminary Assessment Program for Mined Lands and Industrial Facilities



Helping Private Landowners Evaluate and Manage Human Health and Ecological Risks



Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
www.deq.idaho.gov



The Assessment Process



Assistance is available to property owners who intend to manage identified risks. 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 the preliminary assessment and site inspection process.

DEQ's research involves reviewing available historic data, information, and reports. Site inspections involve mapping and sampling; taking photographs; and identifying any physical hazards, and solid/hazardous wastes.

After the research and site inspection, DEQ writes a report that contains all of the information gathered, plus recommendations on how site-specific issues can be addressed. Many sites do not have any significant issues and this conclusion is stated in the final report. Copies of the report are provided to the property owner.

The Results

With the assistance of property owners, DEQ has completed assessments on over 430 mining claims, 100 major mine or mill facilities, 85 minor mine or mill facilities, and 10 other industrial facility complexes. Several owners are now actively managing their properties to reduce the threat from hazards. They are cleaning up trash, closing mine openings, and installing measures to control erosion.

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.**



Supporting Programs

DEQ has two programs through which it can work with groups or individuals to manage risk at mine and industrial facility 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 contaminated by hazardous substances or petroleum.

Landowners participating in the Voluntary Cleanup Program receive the following benefits:

- ✓ An expedited remediation process
- ✓ No adversarial enforcement action
- ✓ A 7-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
- ✓ "Lender Liability" protection

DEQ's **Brownfield Revitalization Program** funds and conducts environmental assessments of eligible brownfield sites when a lack of environmental information has complicated site redevelopment or reuse. Brownfield sites are abandoned or underused properties where reuse is complicated by actual or perceived environmental contamination.