

Photo: Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine, Lake County

## Mines Program Fact Sheet

Fiscal Year (FY) 19/20

### Overview of the Mines Program

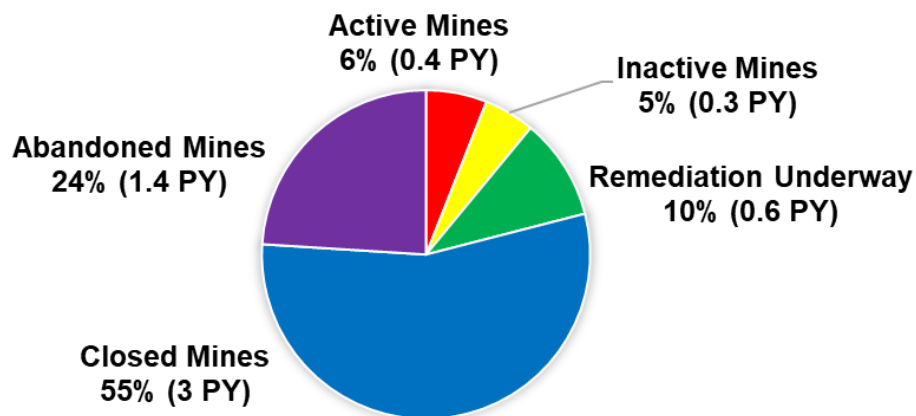
Central Valley Water Board staff regulate 105 mine sites with known or potential water quality impacts. This is a subset of the 47,000 abandoned mine sites with physical and/or environmental hazards identified throughout California by the Department of Conservation. Most mine sites regulated by the Central Valley Water Board are closed and abandoned mines that have not operated for decades or more than 100 years. Mine discharges can have devastating effects on receiving waters and can significantly limit or obliterate beneficial uses for miles downstream. Primary pollutants from mine sites include low pH and metals such as arsenic, copper, mercury, and zinc.

### Program Goals

The Mines Program oversees the discharge to land of mining waste from active and inactive mines. Discharges from active mines, or mines that are closing or under post-closure care, are regulated through the issuance of waste discharge requirements (WDRs). The ultimate programmatic goal for inactive mines (including abandoned mines) is to eliminate surface water and groundwater impacts from past mining and prevent further degradation of waters of the State. Mines are regulated primarily by Title 27, State Water Resources Control Board Resolution Order #92-49, and other laws and regulations for the closure of mine sites and cleanup. Enforcement of these laws and regulations may be voluntary or may be implemented through enforcement orders.

### Resources

#### Staff Time Spent on Mines Sites (5.7 PY)



PY = personnel year

## **FY 18/19 Accomplishments**

- Staff assessed seven mine sites classified as having “unknown status” on the Central Valley Water Board’s list of mines with known or potential water quality impacts. Three of these mines were reclassified as requiring no further action. Additional work has been identified for the other four mines.
- Staff inspected 27 mines within the Central Valley Region to assess site conditions and compliance, to assist with permit development, and to monitor construction activities.
- Staff issued revised Title 27 WDRs to the U.S. Mine lone Plant, amended Title 27 WDRs to Calaveras Cement, and a NPDES permit to Colombo Mine under the limited threat general order.
- Staff contracted with an engineering consultant to assess operation and maintenance (O&M) needs at Walker Mine.

## **Priority Projects for FY19/20**

- Assess the remaining nine sites classified as having unknown status on the Central Valley Water Board’s list of 105 mines.
- Conduct 21 site assessment, compliance, permit development and construction inspections.
- Issue two NPDES permits and one Title 27 WDRs. Conduct work to support NPDES permits and WDRs planned for FY20/21.
- At Walker Mine, conduct semi-annual inspections of site conditions and support the engineering consultant’s assessment of mine safety and O&M needs.
- At Bully Hill/Rising Star Mines, identify potential projects to address water quality issues.
- Update the Central Valley Water Board’s approach to ranking the water quality threat posed by mines on its list of 105 mines.
- Prepare a strategy for developing a conceptual management plan for abandoned mine discharges.