

National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative (NOAMI)

Initiative Summary

The assessment and remediation of orphaned and abandoned mine sites across Canada has received increased National attention over the past two years. With establishment of the National Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Initiative (NOAMI) in 2002, Canadian Mines Ministers signalled their commitment to address this serious environmental issue. NOAMI is a co-operative Canadian program that is guided by an Advisory Committee consisting of the mining industry, federal/provincial/territorial governments, environmental non-government organizations and First Nations. The advisory committee's role is to assess key issues and put forward recommendations concerning collaborative approaches and partnerships in the implementation of remediation programs across Canada.

With adequate resources and resolve the opportunity exists to make significant progress in the clean up of many orphaned and abandoned mine sites within ten years.

Background

The legacy of orphaned/abandoned mines (O/AMs), with the associated environmental liability, human health concerns and the financial costs of clean up, is a serious issue facing Canada.

In 1999 and 2000, a number of stakeholders put forth requests to the Mines Ministers to establish a joint industry-government working group, assisted by other stakeholders, to review the issue of abandoned mines. The Ministers supported this initiative and requested that a multistakeholder workshop be organized to identify key issues and priorities.

The Workshop on Abandoned Mines, held June 2001 in Winnipeg, reviewed the issues for orphaned /abandoned mine sites and identified processes to move forward. Five major themes were discussed:

- Building a National Inventory;
- Community Perspectives;
- Setting Standards and Rational Expectations;
- Ownership and Liability Issues; and
- Identification of Funding Models.

Participants developed consensus, guiding principles and recommendations that were presented at the Mines Ministers' Conference, September 2001.

Ministers agreed on the importance of a large-scale program for the rehabilitation of orphaned/abandoned mines sites, and requested that the Orphaned/Abandoned Mines Advisory Committee be established.

For the first two years NOAMI has worked with an annual budget of about \$100K, contributed through its government and industry partners. Four task groups were formed to address the following program areas:

- Information Gathering
- Community Involvement
- Legislative Barriers to Collaboration
- Funding Approaches

Members of NOAMI's Advisory Committee are:

Christine Kaszycki (Chair) – Province of Manitoba
 Gilles Tremblay (Secretariat) – CANMET, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)
 Joanna Ankersmit – Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
 Louis Bienvenu – Province of Québec
 Scott Clausen/Rob Johnstone – NRCan
 Dick Cowan – Province of Ontario
 Jacinthe David – Health Canada
 Charles Dumaresq/Lisa Keller – Environment Canada
 Wayne Fraser – Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting
 Elizabeth Gardiner – Mining Association of Canada
 Gerald Harper – Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada
 Charlene Hogan (Secretariat) – CANMET, NRCan
 Robert Holmes – Government of Yukon
 Lawrence Ignace – Assembly of First Nations (AFN)
 Joan Kuyek – MiningWatch Canada
 Brennain Lloyd – Northwatch
 Chief Glenn Nolan – AFN
 Patrick Reid – Ontario Mining Association
 Gregg Stewart – Province of British Columbia

Program Status

Information Gathering. There is a need to develop capacity for a national inventory of orphaned and abandoned mine sites based on compatible federal/provincial/territorial inventories. Standardized "national" definitions are required for this task. A review of existing jurisdictional information to establish common parameters for a national system is underway.

Community Involvement. Case studies related to community involvement were completed for three Canadian mine sites. The “lessons learned” from these studies were developed into a series of guidelines and published in the pamphlet “Best Practices in Community Involvement”. While this program area has completed its objectives, NOAMI will continue to examine ways to foster meaningful community involvement and engagement in abandoned mine remediation.



Legislative Barriers to Collaboration. A review was undertaken to examine regulatory or institution barriers, liability disincentives and collaborative opportunities relating to voluntary remediation of O/AMs. The report findings provided background for a multistakeholder workshop held in Ottawa, 2003 that assessed the key barriers and developed approaches to overcome them. These recommendations were further developed for the action framework.

Funding Approaches A report was prepared that outlined a variety of funding approaches to be considered for the cleanup or management of liabilities related to O/AMs. Individuals with expertise in this area were surveyed, and the report incorporated their views as well as those of the authors. Advantages and disadvantages of each approach were evaluated and preferred options were recommended. No single funding approach will constitute a complete solution; a combination of a number of approaches will likely be required. Mechanisms to further discuss and develop funding approaches are underway.

Technology Transfer. All reports, newsletters, pamphlets and workshop proceedings are posted on the NOAMI web site at www.abandoned-mines.org. Activity updates are periodically distributed to the NOAMI Network.

Action Framework

In 2003, recommendations from the major program areas were integrated into an “Action Framework”. Implementation of the “Framework” will require the ongoing support and commitment of all stakeholders over the next several years. A cornerstone of this approach will be the continued commitment of Mines Ministers in working toward the common goal of orphaned/abandoned mine remediation.

Key elements of the framework include:

- Development of a policy framework that addresses legislative/regulatory issues associated with specific challenges presented by orphaned/abandoned mines. *Objective: To provide guidelines to jurisdictions in addressing regulatory requirements as applied to O/AMs.*
- Development of intergovernmental cost-sharing arrangements to address remediation at high priority sites. *Objective: In the short term to provide a mechanism to enhance capacity to address remediation at key sites. Over the long term to assess and implement a broad range of other funding mechanisms, as determined by individual jurisdictions, as per recommendations of the Funding Approaches Task Group.*
- Development of a series of guideline documents to facilitate O/AM reclamation across Canada. These include:
 - Guidelines for legislative review with respect to collaboration, liability and funding;
 - Guidelines for facilitation and co-ordination of voluntary reclamation;
 - Guidelines for site assessment and prioritisation; and
 - An ongoing commitment to fostering technology transfer and best practices approaches.

To obtain information on NOAMI activities or publications please visit the NOAMI web site at www.abandoned-mines.org

For further information on NOAMI, please contact Gilles Tremblay (Secretariat) at
Tel: (613) 992-0968 or
abandoned_mines@nrcan.gc.ca