

The Georgetown Mine was reclaimed in 2003 and reseeded in 2004. Some erosion control measures were installed in 2006 and some maintenance was done on a channel in 2012. Since Georgetown Mine has passed the 12-year waiting period they are eligible to be released following 2 consecutive years of vegetation surveys. The original permit approved on January 7, 1999 did not list any vegetation standards but did establish a post mining land use of grazing. Modification 05-1 only released FA and also did not include vegetation standards. MMD must establish vegetation standards prior to any vegetation surveys since standards have not been defined in either of the two permit documents.

The Georgetown Mine is located on private land surrounded by USFS land. This forest has been impacted by historic mining and grazing. Georgetown Mine has been revegetated with forbs and grasses while the undisturbed area is mostly piñon and juniper. Google Earth was used to see if there were any areas nearby that appeared to have a vegetation make up as the Georgetown Mine reclamation that could be used as a reference area. During site visits on September 9, 2020 and June 23, 2021, MMD staff looked for areas that could be used as a reference area as well. After conducting these investigations, MMD was unable to identify a suitable reference area.

Since USFS land surrounds Georgetown, MMD looked at USFS vegetation guidelines for reclaimed disturbances to create a technical standard. USFS standards vary by district office and project site, so MMD picked a standard based on a USFS vegetation requirement for other MMD permits (SA001RE El Cajete Mine and SA004MN Copar South Pit Mine). Georgetown will have to meet a standard that is at least 70% of the assumed native live vegetation cover of 50%. This means the Georgetown site will need to have, at a minimum 35% live vegetative canopy cover, which will be determined through vegetation surveys, to be eligible for full financial assurance release. The survey results will also take into account cover that is composed of non-weedy, perennial native plants: grasses, forbs, and shrubs, and provides for a diverse, stable plant community. Since the post mining land use is grazing and the 2020 and 2021 site visits confirmed that the site is actively being grazed by cattle, the vegetation standard of 35% live vegetation is appropriate. Despite being heavily grazed, the site remains stable with little to no signs of erosion.

Part of the basis for release will be looking at erosion on site. If erosion is deemed to be significant, then the operator will have to take measures to address erosion. This may require waiting another year make another site evaluation.



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