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### PROJECT TO CLOSE 74 ABANDONED TOOELE COUNTY MINES

A project to close 74 abandoned mines in Tooele County has been slated to begin this fall. The project, known as Serviceberry Canyon, will seal open mine portals and shafts in a eighteen-square mile area near Ophir. The work is part of the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program.

“Ophir Mining District was one of Utah’s earliest mining camps dating from about 1863,” explained project coordinator Amber Fortner. “By the 1870s the Ophir Mining District was organized and A. W. Morris laid out the townsite of Ophir and within a short period four mills, four arastras and at least five furnaces had been built between the mouth of Dry Canyon and Ophir City.”

While eliminating public hazards is the prime objective of the Serviceberry Canyon project, historical and cultural values will be preserved. “Work is expected to last all fall because most of the mines have limited access,” added Fortner. “That means they’ll have to be closed the way miners opened them, by using picks and shovels.”

The 23-year old Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program works statewide to abate public health and safety problems created by past mining practices. The project is part of the division’s continuing mine reclamation effort in the Oquirrh Mountains and is funded by a tax on current coal production in the state.

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