



## PLUMAS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

---

DIRECTOR FERGUSON

[traceyferguson@countyofplumas.com](mailto:traceyferguson@countyofplumas.com)

555 Main Street, Quincy, CA 95971

(530) 283-6214

**DATE:** November 7, 2024

**TIME:** 5:00PM

**TO:** Atlantic Richfield Company (Applicant) and Jonathan Lee (Property Owner)

**CC:** Tim Evans, Plumas County Planning Department, Senior Planner- Extra Help; Debra Lucero, County Administrative Officer; Dwight Ceresola, Plumas County District 1 Board of Supervisor; and Kevin Goss, Plumas County District 2 Board of Supervisor

**FROM:** Tracey Ferguson, AICP, Planning Director

**RE:** Consideration of the Value of the Public Interest prior to approval of Building Permit #23-812 to demolish a historical building; application for the demolition of thirteen (13) Walker Mine Mill Site concrete structural remains on property zoned Rural (R-10) and Special Plan Historic Building (SP-HB), located at 12000 Walker Mine Road, Genesee, Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 009-100-009-000.

**SENT VIA EMAIL:** [eevans@woodardcurran.com](mailto:eevans@woodardcurran.com); [tim.hilmo@bp.com](mailto:tim.hilmo@bp.com); [kuedavid00@gmail.com](mailto:kuedavid00@gmail.com); [timevans@countyofplumas.com](mailto:timevans@countyofplumas.com); [debralucero@countyofplumas.com](mailto:debralucero@countyofplumas.com); [ceresolasuper1@yahoo.com](mailto:ceresolasuper1@yahoo.com); [kevin.goss4district2@gmail.com](mailto:kevin.goss4district2@gmail.com)

### **DECISION:**

The property known as “Walker Mine” (Assessor Parcel Number 009-100-009-000) is designated as a SP-HB (Special Plan Historic Building) pursuant to the County General Plan including the Designated Historic Buildings list, with the following statement of significance:

*“From the modest beginning of three houses and one bunk house in 1914, Walker Mine, noted for its rich copper yields, continued to thrive to the point where it reached voting precinct status in 1940. Walker Mine was widely known for its unique tram line to Spring Garden, a distance of 9 miles. The tram cars became the vital link to Walker Mine, especially over the winter months, as it carried a mail cage, groceries and supplies, even passengers. The production of copper from Walker Mine placed Plumas County first in the state for several years, and significantly contributed to the local County economy. However, as the price of copper fell, so did the production of Walker Mine.”*

Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.3703(b)(3) states, “Special plan reviews for historical buildings shall be the consideration of the value of public interest prior to the approval of a building permit to demolish a historical building.”

To determine the value of the public interest of the thirteen (13) Walker Mine Mill Site concrete structural remains located at Walker Mine proposed for demolition, a properly noticed public hearing was held and opened before the Planning Director on June 20, 2024 with the public hearing thereafter being continued to July 22, 2024; and then to August 12, 2024; and then to September 16, 2024; and finally to November 4, 2024, when the public hearing was closed.

After weighing all the evidence presented including Building Permit #23-812 application; the email correspondence from Paul Russell, Museum Director, dated October 20, 2023; the California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region Cleanup and Abatement Order R5-2014-0039 et. al.; Walker Mine County Zoning Map; Walker Mine County Zoning Map-Historical; Plumas County 2035 General Plan; Plumas County General Plan Constraints and Policies Map; Plumas County Resolutions 83-3668, 83-3721, 85-3935, 87-4194, 88-4327, 89-4445, 91-5246, 92-5353, 92-5418, and 98-6132; Plumas County Designated Historic Buildings Location List; Genesee Valley Special Management Area Constraints Map; Class III Inventory/Phase I Survey and NRHP/CRHR Eligibility Site Evaluation for the Walker Mine Project, received March 22, 2024 and updated August 2024; Walker Mine Project Map; Letter dated August 3, 2023, RE: Signing Authority for Loren Burmeister; Comparison of Demolition Structure Name to Archeological Report Feature Designation Number Table for Plumas County, dated August 2024; Demolition Plan, dated August 2023; Demolition Plan – Portal Area, dated August 2023; Concrete Demolition Plan, dated July 2024; Access Agreement Recorded May 15, 2023, between Atlantic Richfield Company and Johnathan Lee, Property Owner; Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), Preparation Date June 30, 2023; Building Permit #23-637 Issued August 3, 2023; July 31, 2024, letter from Mooretown Rancheria Requesting Tribal Consultation; California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8, Industrial Relations, subchapter 4, Construction Safety Orders, Article 31, Demolition, Section 1735, Demolishing Buildings, downloaded from the Department of Industrial Relations website [www.dir.ca.gov](http://www.dir.ca.gov) on September 9, 2024; Walker Mine 2023 Surface Controls and Safeguarding Work Plan, dated April 2023; Archeological Reconnaissance of Walker Mine Timber Harvest Plan, dated September 20, 1997; June 20, 2024, Planning Director Special Hearing Staff Report; September 16, 2024, Planning Director Special Hearing Staff Report; November 4, 2024, Planning Director Special Hearing Staff Report and proposed Conditions of Approval; Meeting Minutes of the Special Hearing of June 20, 2024; Meeting Minutes of the Special Hearing of July 22, 2024; Meeting Minutes of the Special Hearing of August 12, 2024; Meeting Minutes of the Special Hearing of September 16, 2024; Meeting Minutes of the Special Hearing of November 4, 2024; Consultation request from Mooretown Rancheria, letter dated July 31, 2024; County staff and applicant emails dated September 9, 2024; September 16, 2024; and October 22, 2024, attempting to schedule a meeting with Mooretown Rancheria for Tribal consultation; the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and Plumas County Code Title 9 (Planning and Zoning) the Planning Director's decision is, as follows:

- I. Find that while there was evidence presented as to the thirteen (13) Walker Mine Mill Site concrete structural remains contributing some value of the public interest, the compelling weight of the evidence proved the thirteen (13) concrete structural remains proposed for demolition, those being STR-17, STR-26, STR-27, STR-28, STR-31, STR-32, STR-33, STR-34, STR-35, STR-36, STR-37, STR-38, and STR-39 as identified in the Class III Inventory/Phase I Survey and NRHP/CRHR Eligibility Site Evaluation for the Walker Mine Project, updated August 2024, lack individual historical significance and**

**sufficient integrity and no public comment was provided contrary; making public hearing findings 1. through 11., as provided below, thus weighing in favor of granting the Applicant, Atlantic Richfield Company, the demolition permit.**

- II. Find that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15330, Class 30 categorical exemption, making findings A) and B), as provided below, as the demolition of the thirteen (13) concrete structural remains of the Walker Mine Mill Site is a minor cleanup action taken to prevent, minimize, stabilize, mitigate, or eliminate the release or threat of release of a hazardous waste or substance which are small or medium removal actions costing \$1 million or less:**
- A) There is no substantial evidence in the whole record supporting a fair argument that the proposed project might have any significant adverse impact on the environment; and**
- B) The custodian and location of the documents which constitute the record of these proceedings is Plumas County Planning and Building Services, 555 Main Street, Quincy, California.**

**PUBLIC HEARING FINDINGS:**

Support for the decision is shown by the following public hearing findings:

1. On September 15, 2023, the Building Department forwarded the demolition permit application to the Planning Department for the review of the proposed demolition of the buildings and building remains located at 12000 Walker Mine Road, Genesee.
2. After Planning staff reviewed the demolition permit, it was determined from the zoning maps that the Walker Mine property has a combining zone of Special Plan Historic Building (SP-HB) and is designated locally as historic under the County General Plan including the Designated Historic Buildings list.
3. The Designated Historic Buildings list was not specific as to which structure(s) the SP-HB combining zone pertained to, and as a result, Planning staff must assume all structures on the Walker Mine parcel, are designated as Historic Building.
4. Due to the subject property having the SP-HB combining zone, Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.3703. - Special Plan Review applies. Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.3703(b)(3) states: "Special plan reviews for historical buildings shall be the consideration of the value of the public interest prior to the approval of a building permit to demolish a historical building." Therefore, the demolition permit, as required by Sec. 9-2.3703(b)(3), was reviewed by the Planning Director and a public hearing was held on June 20, 2024, with the public hearing thereafter being continued to July 22, 2024; and then to August 12, 2024; and then to September 16, 2024; and finally to November 4, 2024, when the public hearing was closed to determine the consideration of the value of the public interest prior to the approval of a building permit to demolish the thirteen (13) Walker Mine Mill Site concrete structural remains.
5. An excerpt from the correspondence from Paul Russell, Plumas County Museum Director, on October 20, 2023, stated:  
  
"Briefly, Walker Mine began operations in 1911 and consisted of about 200 acres of claims and 200 acres of USFS land from the top of Mt. Ingalls south to Little Grizzly Creek. The

mine produced copper some gold, some silver. In 1920 a 9-mile aerial tramway was built from Walker Mine to the railroad at Spring Garden where WPRR cars were loaded. After the Mine started in 1911, the town on Walker Mine grew up around it. Walker Mine was very productive in the 1920s but was adversely affected by the depression in the 1930s, although in 1937 it was California's largest producer of copper. It reached its peak in 1940 with 500 workers. Because of frozen copper prices, the Mine ceased operations for good in December 1941. Over the next several decades were filled with legal problems over toxic cleanup of the site. I can't identify any of the ruins as to what functions the buildings served - other than saying they are mill ruins."

6. The Planning Department requested an architectural history evaluation and received a Class III Inventory/Phase I Survey and NRHP/CRHR Eligibility Site Evaluation for the Walker Mine Project on March 22, 2024, and a subsequent update to the Evaluation dated August 2024. Concerning the state of Walker Mine, the Evaluation contains the following statement:

"The Walker Mine Site is in poor condition. The primary destruction of the mine and townsite occurred immediately following its closure when all standing features and machinery were dismantled and removed. Additional damage occurred over the following decades from artifact looting, and fire. Previous recordings of Walker Mine (P-32-001116 and P-32-003038) described abundant wooden remains and collapsed structures. Included in the site records are pictures of these collapsed structures and other wooden structural remains. Unfortunately, ASM experienced a much different environment at the site in 2023. The vast majority of the Walker Mine camp north of the main Forest road was burned as a result of the 2021 Dixie Fire, and much of the structural material, particularly all wooden materials, was completely destroyed. The exception to this is the southern portion of the camp to the south of the Forest road which was spared from the fire; however, because it was spared from the fire, the understory vegetation is very thick, making identifying and recording remnants of the camp quite difficult on the steep, wooded ridgeline."

7. The Evaluation concluded with the following statement:

"The Walker Mine Site (P-32-001116), which includes the Mill Site Parcel, does not meet any of the NRHP/CRHR criteria. The Walker Mine site has no known association with an important historical individual nor is it a good representation of any of the property types established in the Caltrans contexts for mining or camp sites, and as such does not meet NRHP/CRHR Criteria B/2 or C/3. Although the Walker Mine Site meets NRHP/CRHR Criterion A/1 under the theme of Economy, as one of the most profitable copper mines in California history, it lacks sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. Similarly, although the Walker Mine site is potentially eligible due to research potential of the extensive archaeological remains related to the townsites and mine operations, the destruction of the site has resulted in a loss of integrity. Moreover, the site has no potential research value not better provided in the numerous documentary sources available that explore mine operations and the work camp/townsite. Thus, the Walker Mine Site is not eligible under NRHP/CRHR Criterion D/4."

8. Therefore, evaluation of the historical and archival records, as well as conducting a site survey, in relation to NRHP/CRHR Criterion A/1, B/2, C/3, and D/4, found the concrete structural remains proposed for demolition at Walker Mine those being STR-17, STR-26, STR-27, STR-

28, STR-31, STR-32, STR-33, STR-34, STR-35, STR-36, STR-37, STR-38, and STR-39 as identified in the Evaluation recommended as not eligible for NRHP/CRHR.

9. The Evaluation describes the thirteen (13) Walker Mine Mill Site concrete structural remains proposed for demolition, as follows:
  - a. STR-17: A concrete building measuring roughly 10-ft by 10-ft square on the northwest side of the main road on a lower terrace. It is approximately 15-ft tall and has a window measuring roughly 30-in wide by 60-in tall facing southeast. A broken stem wall extends northwesterly off of the northwest corner, and a single footer is located a few feet off of the southeast corner. The terrace on which this building sits is separated from the mill tailings pad by a low earthen berm. Artifacts in the area consist of a couple of red bricks, a meat tin, and some modern beer cans. This feature is believed to represent the substructure for a multi-room residence that is depicted in historic imagery.
  - b. STR-26: On the slope above and between the mill and adit, this is a three-walled concrete structure that measures approximately 25-ft wide by 50-ft long. The floor of the front elevation is raised and contains drainpipes that would have drained the interior toward the front downhill. Large eyelet bolts were mounted into the uphill wall to secure machinery within the structure.
  - c. STR-27: Roughly 12-ft by 12-ft square concrete building on slope above and between mill and adit with windows on the southwest and northeast faces and a door facing the mill toward the southeast.
  - d. STR-28: Low stem wall and foundation structure with partition walls on the interior. This structure is located on the upper mill crusher level on the opposite side of the road at the toe of the slope. The area was not closely investigated due to asbestos contamination, but general dimensions are approximately 10-ft wide by 50-ft in length. Numerous 10-in diameter asbestos pipes and broken fragments are in the area of this remnant structural feature.
  - e. STR-31: A concrete building measuring roughly 23.5-ft long (E/W) and 10.5-ft wide (N/S), with a footprint of approximately 247-sqft. Building wall heights range from 6-ft to 8-ft above ground surface. The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring the outer extents of the building's roof.
  - f. STR-32: A concrete building measuring roughly 58-ft long (E/W) and 65-ft wide (N/S), with a footprint of approximately 3,770-sqft. Structure wall heights range from 2-ft to 9-ft above ground surface. The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring the outer extents of the structure. The structure remnants are broken and leaning on a tree.
  - g. STR-33: A concrete structure comprised of remnant footings measuring roughly 53-ft long (E/W) and 5-ft wide (N/S), with a footprint of approximately 265-sqft. Structure wall heights range from 2-ft to 4-ft above ground surface. The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring around the outer extents of all four visible structures.
  - h. STR-34: Remnants of a concrete rectangular building measuring roughly 17-ft long (E/W) and 18-ft wide (N/S), with a footprint of approximately 306-sqft, and wall

- heights ranging from 3-ft to 6-ft above ground surface. The trapezoidal remains on the south side of the area has approximate dimensions of 33-ft along the northern wall, 39-ft along the eastern wall, 58-ft along the southern wall, and 43-ft along the western wall. The footprint of the trapezoidal building is approximately 1,750 sq ft. Structure wall heights range from 5-ft to 8-ft above ground surface. The depths of the tanks appear to be at least 8 ft. from the top of wall (visual approximation). The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring the outer extents of the structure.
- i. STR-35: Remnants of concrete structural debris in an area measuring roughly 22.5-ft wide by 22-ft. long. Dimensions measured using visible debris in aerial imagery.
  - j. STR-36: Remnant walls and floor of a concrete structure measuring roughly 16-ft long (E/W) and 115-ft wide (N/S), with a footprint of approximately 1,840-sqft. Structure wall heights are approximately 8-ft above ground surface. The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring the outer extents of the structure.
  - k. STR-37: A concrete building measuring roughly 16-ft long (E/W) and 14-ft wide (N/S), with a roof footprint of approximately 224-sqft. Structure wall heights are approximately 8-ft above ground surface. The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring the outer extents of the building.
  - l. STR-38: Remnants of a concrete structure measuring roughly 245-ft long (E/W) and 55-ft wide (N/S), with a footprint of approximately 13,475-sqft. Structure wall heights are approximately 1-ft to 15-ft above ground surface. The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring around the outer extents of the visible structure walls and/or exposed footers. This structure appears to be remnant foundations from mill facilities.
  - m. STR-39: Remnants of a concrete structure measuring roughly 170-ft long (E/W) and 60-ft wide (N/S), with a footprint of approximately 10,200-sqft. Structure wall heights are approximately 4-ft to 10-ft above ground surface. The dimensions provided were determined using georeferenced aerial imagery and measuring around the outer extents of the visible structure walls and/or exposed footers. This structure has multiple open tanks used for milling, as well as remnant foundations from mill facilities.
10. The following are the relevant policies and implementation measures from the 2035 Plumas County General Plan with consistency review:
- a. Conservation and Open Space (COS) Element: Policy 7.5.4 Protection of Potentially Historic Sites. Demolition permit applications on designated or potentially important historic sites shall be subject to County discretionary review.
    - i. The subject property has the Special Plan Historic Building (SP-HB) zoning district and pursuant to Plumas County Code Sec. 9-2.3703. – Special Plan Review, subsection (c)(3), “special plan reviews for historical buildings shall be the consideration of the value of public interest prior to the approval of a building permit to demolish a historical building.” A complete historical analysis of the building(s) and building remain(s) was requested by Planning

staff and provided by the applicant in the Class III Inventory/Phase I Survey and NRHP/CRHR Eligibility Site Evaluation for the Walker Mine Project (Evaluation) prepared by Peter A. Carey, M.A, RPA, and K. Ross Way, A.A., ASM Affiliates, a cultural resource management firm. A staff recommendation based on the analysis of County records, Evaluation, etc., by Planning staff, and the public hearing held by the Planning Director to determine the value to public interest, will serve to address the discretionary review.

- b. Conservation and Open Space (COS) Element: Policy 7.5.5 Assessment of Impacts to Cultural and Historical Resources. The County shall encourage cultural resource preservation and ensure that new development does not adversely impact important resources. Discretionary projects involving ground disturbance shall have evaluations to determine cultural and historical significance.
    - i. A complete historical analysis of the buildings and building remains was requested by Planning staff and provided by the applicant in the Class III Inventory/Phase I Survey and NRHP/CRHR Eligibility Site Evaluation for the Walker Mine Project prepared by Peter A. Carey, M.A, RPA, and K. Ross Way, A.A., ASM Affiliates, which is a cultural resource management firm.
11. Neighboring property owners within 300 feet of the proposed project were notified by mail of the June 20, 2024, public hearing, and subsequent continued public hearings were notified by email with the posting of agendas, staff reports, and associated meeting minutes. Public comments were received at the various public hearings and the Planning Director considered all public comments received.

**RIGHT TO APPEAL:**

All decisions of the Planning Director may be appealed in writing to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors within ten (10) calendar days of the date of the decision. If the tenth day lands on the weekend, the end of the appeal period will be the next working day. The appeal will need to be based on relevant information stated or submitted at, or prior to, the November 4, 2024, public hearing by a commenting public member or representative, or certain County department heads as stated by County Code. There is a filing fee for the appeal. Fee information is available at the Planning Department. For more information, refer to Plumas County Code, Title 9 (Planning and Zoning), Chapter 2 (Zoning), Article 10 (Appeals).