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San Manuel a Legacy of Mining, Reclamation and Sustainable Development
BHP Copper, Pinal County, Arizona

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The BHP Copper San Manuel Plant Site is a former integrated milling, smelting and refining operation located in southern Pinal County, Arizona. BHP Copper Inc. suspended operations at this facility in June 1999 after 43 years of activity. BHP Copper subsequently announced closure of plant site operations in October 2003. The San Manuel Plant Site encompasses approximately 5,000 acres and includes parts of the San Manuel Town Site. The immediate plant site area includes approximately 600 acres of former milling, smelting and refining facilities. This effort represents the first operator-led full-scale closure of a mineral processing operation of this size and complexity under contemporary environmental regulation. Surface reclamation activities for the former plant area will be completed by mid-2007 and in a manner that promotes sustainable development of the former plant site.

BHP Copper employed the BHP Billiton Health, Safety, Environment and Community standard in accordance with the corporate Sustainable Development Policy. Extensive consultation between BHP staff and local communities provided substantive input to re-development strategies for the property. Following suspension of site operations in June 1999, BHP formed a community advisory group to assess sustainable land use options (including mineral processing) for the property. A number of collaborative opportunities were identified including mixed commercial and residential uses. The property features quality road and railroad access as well as electric, water and sanitation utilities. Accordingly, strategies regarding preservation of infrastructure and engineered closure of the former industrial plant area were developed.

In 2007, BHP Copper will undertake master planning of BHP Copper's titled property and coordinate the inclusion of such master planning with Pinal County's current Master Comprehensive Plan Amendment for all land within the County and complete a Planned Area Development for between four to five thousand acres which will include zoning entitlements. Successful completion of a master plan for BHP Copper property will be required for future development and will provide for appropriate coordination with Pinal County. Further the actions will support a viable and sustainable future for the local community and enhance the post-mining legacy resulting from the closure of operations at San Manuel.

This paper presents a summary of these closure and sustainability strategies designed to maintain asset value with respect to future development.