

Bonita Peak Mining District Update

March 2018



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment



<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/bonita-peak>

Recent Activities

- The federal and state agencies engaged at the Bonita Peak Mining District (BPMD) Superfund site – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management – welcome input from all interested parties throughout the cleanup process. The Site Team recognizes the significant work done by those that have taken part in the Citizens Superfund Workgroup meetings over the last six months. As the Workgroup completes the development of its “citizen goals” for the BPMD, the Site Team would like to thank all those that have participated.

Although a representative of the Site Team has attended all of the Workgroup meetings, this has definitely been a community-driven effort, and we appreciate the thoughtful contributions of those that have been involved. We would also like to commend the Animas River Community Forum, Animas River Stakeholders Group, Animas Watershed Partnership and Trout Unlimited for organizing the series of Workgroup meetings that will culminate in a list of desired outcomes for the BPMD.

Although not all the recommendations can be implemented immediately, the Site Team will take them into account as work continues at the site. Currently, the Site Team is investigating the nature and extent of contamination in the BPMD through the remedial investigation. EPA is also assessing risks posed by that contamination to human health and the environment. When those investigations are completed, the Site Team will use the data gathered, as well as the input from the Workgroup, the Silverton/San Juan County Planning Group and other interested parties, to develop risk management strategies for the BPMD. This is an iterative process that will begin this year.

The Site Team is committed to active and meaningful engagement with all interested parties, and we will consider recommendations of the Workgroup and others related to local input as we plan ongoing outreach activities at the site.

- Water sampling was conducted during the summer low-flow period in 2017 by the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) at two sites, the Brooklyn and Bonner Mines, both located within the Mineral Creek watershed. Members from both state and local agencies assisted in the sampling, which was designed to assess inputs from the two mine sites into nearby stream channels in order to determine the need for future restoration actions.

In August of 2017, the SJNF teamed up with the Rocky Mountain Research Station to conduct aquatic habitat surveys on Mineral Creek. The work included evaluation of physical habitat and water quality conditions. The field crew also conducted eDNA (environmental DNA) sampling at each site, which can determine the presence and species of fish within the stream channel by taking a filtered water sample and identifying the DNA present in the sample.

2018 Priorities for Superfund Site Work

Continuously **improve environmental conditions** in the mining district by implementing identified early, interim cleanup actions and prioritizing additional response activities for future years.

Increase overall understanding of the mining district through ongoing investigations, site modeling and adaptive goal development.

Involve potentially responsible parties (PRPs), property owners and others in site investigative and cleanup activities.

Continue to **foster active engagement** with all interested parties.

Text and photo provided by Jackson Leonard, Research Ecologist, U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

- During a recent site visit, Patrick Davis, Senior Advisor to the EPA Region 8 Administrator, was asked several times about the EPA—and specifically the Superfund—budget. Below is his response.

In fiscal year 2019, which begins in October 2018, the EPA budget funds the Superfund program at \$1.089 billion, which will provide support to states, local communities and tribes in their efforts to assess and cleanup many of the worst contaminated sites in the United States and return them to productive use. EPA will maximize the dollars appropriated by Congress to reduce administrative costs, identify efficiencies, and prioritize the cleanup of sites. The Bonita Peak Mining District was recently named a site for immediate and intense action by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.



SJNF water sampling at the Brooklyn Mine site.

- In late 2017 and early 2018, EPA finalized the Terrestrial Screening Level Ecological Risk Assessment (SLERA) and Terrestrial Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment (BERA) Work Plan for the Bonita Peak Mining District. The primary goal of the SLERA was to identify terrestrial Contaminants of Potential Ecological Concern (COPECs) in mine wastes, overbank soils and campsites that will receive a more focused evaluation in the Terrestrial BERA. Although the SLERA identified several metals as COPECs (e.g., arsenic, cadmium, copper), it identified lead and zinc as the primary drivers of terrestrial ecological risk in the BPMD.

[Terrestrial Screening Level Ecological Risk Assessment \(SLERA\) \(PDF\)](https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100003122) (157 pp, 4.9 MB)

<https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100003122>

The Terrestrial BERA Work Plan builds on the SLERA and provides a clear scope of how terrestrial ecological risk within the BPMD will be evaluated. Among other goals, the Work Plan aims to more fully describe how terrestrial ecological receptors may be exposed to COPECs, how that exposure will be estimated and identifies additional data required to complete the Terrestrial BERA. The EPA expects that the Terrestrial BERA will be completed in 2019.

[Terrestrial Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment \(BERA\) Work Plan \(PDF\)](https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100003112) (153 pp, 2.7 MB)

<https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100003112>

Planned Activities

- On Monday and Tuesday, April 16 and 17, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment will host two FREE 8-Hour Health and Safety Refresher Trainings. The content of the training will be the same both days and is designed as a refresher for those who have previously taken the 24-hour training. The trainings will be held at Silverton Town Hall from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or to register, contact [Mark Rudolph](mailto:mark.rudolph@state.co.us) (mark.rudolph@state.co.us) or 303-692-3311.
- The BPMD Site Team's next site visit will be the week of March 12th. During that week, members of the site team plan to attend meetings of the La Plata County Commissioners, San Juan County/Silverton Planning Group, U.S. Geological Survey and Animas River Stakeholders Group.

New on the Web

[Bonita Peak Mining District Update, January 2018 – Spanish \(Novedades del distrito minero Bonita Peak, Enero de 2018\) \(PDF\)](https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100003053) (2 pp, 1.5 MB)

<https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100003053>