



# EPA Proposed Plan Summary Early Interim Remedial Action Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund Site

June 2018

## Introduction

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking public comment on a Proposed Plan for Interim Response Actions at the Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund Site. The proposed plan focuses on addressing environmental cleanup at 26 mining-impacted locations at the site

## Background

The site is located in an area where mining activities began in the 1860s. Completion of roads, railroads and a smelter in Durango encouraged mining, as did improvements to concentrate low-grade ore. Falling metal prices in the 1890s led to a decrease in mining and closed many small operations. Major operations in the Eureka district included Sunnyside and Gold King mines. By the 1970s, only one year-round active mine (Sunnyside Mine), which closed permanently in 1991, remained in the county.

The site consists of 48 historic mines or mining-related sources where ongoing releases of metal-laden water and sediments are occurring within the Mineral Creek, Cement Creek and Upper Animas River drainages in San Juan County, Colorado. Historic mining operations have contaminated soil, groundwater and surface water with heavy metals. The site was added to EPA's National Priority List in September 2016. A remedial investigation to determine the nature and extent of contamination is underway.

## Superfund Process

Superfund is the common name for the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA). The Superfund process begins with an initial site assessment. The site-wide remedial investigation identifies the nature and extent of contamination, while the site-wide feasibility study evaluates cleanup options. Preferred remedy options are shared with the

public in a proposed plan. EPA documents the site-wide remedy in the Final Record of Decision (ROD). EPA may also take short-term actions while the remedial investigation and feasibility study are underway. These efforts can include emergency and interim actions.

## Interim Remedial Action for the Site

The EPA and U.S. Forest Service have completed an initial characterization of mining-related sources at the site. Based on technical work and data, the agencies identified mining-related sources where smaller, more manageable interim actions might be beneficial. These interim actions are intended to provide risk reduction prior to the completion of a final site-wide record of decision.

## Proposed Plan

The Proposed Plan for Interim Response Actions is based on a focused feasibility study and identifies preferred options for interim remedial actions at 26 sources at the Bonita Peak Mining District site. Once public comments have been received and considered, EPA will prepare an interim ROD for these interim actions.

The proposed plan addresses five different contaminant migration issues:

1. Mine portal mining-influenced water (MIW) discharge
2. Mining-related sources/stormwater interactions
3. Mine portal pond sediments
4. In-stream mine wastes
5. Mining-impacted recreational staging areas

## Summary of EPA's Preferred Alternatives

EPA's preferred alternatives for interim remedial actions to address mining-related sources covered by the proposed plan will be a combination of alternatives as follows:

### **1. Mining Portal Mining Influenced Water (MIW)**

**Discharge** — EPA's preferred alternative is to use diversion and isolation to route mine portal MIW discharge around contaminated mine waste. This action will reduce the potential for uncontrolled releases of particulate and MIW from sediment in mine portal ponds that contribute to unacceptable ecological risks.

### **2. Mining-Related Source/Stormwater Interactions**

— EPA's preferred alternative is to use diversion and isolation to route stormwater around mine portals and/or contaminated mine waste. Subsurface components may be used to intercept stormwater that has infiltrated below ground and divert it around the mine portals or mine waste. It will reduce the potential for uncontrolled releases of particulate and MIW through the reduction of the contact between waste and stormwater.

**3. Mine Portal Pond Sediments** — EPA's preferred alternative is excavation and interim local waste management. This action uses excavation to remove pond sediments to allow continued pond function. It will reduce the potential for uncontrolled releases of particulates and MIW from sediment in mine portal ponds that contribute to unacceptable ecological risks.

**4. In-Stream Mine Wastes** — EPA's preferred alternative for in-stream mine wastes is excavation and interim local waste management. This action uses excavation to remove in-stream mine wastes that impede flow or are susceptible to erosion or leaching of contaminants. It will reduce the potential for uncontrolled releases of particulates and MIW from in-stream mine wastes that contribute to unacceptable ecological risks.

**5. Mining-Impacted Recreation Staging Areas** — EPA's preferred alternative is containment and isolation. This action reduces disturbances of mine wastes and migration of contaminants. It will break the pathway for soil ingestion and reduce the potential for uncontrolled releases of particulates that contribute to unacceptable ecological risks.

### **Upcoming Public Meetings**

EPA will provide a short presentation about the proposed plan for Interim Response Actions at a public meeting on June 21, 2018. Please join us. It's a great

opportunity to learn about the proposed interim remedial actions.

**Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund Site Public Comment Meeting**  
**Silverton Town Hall, 1360 Greene Street, Silverton, Colo.**  
**6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

If you like, you can provide your comments orally at the public meeting, and they will be recorded.

### **Written Comments**

The public comment period for the proposed plan runs from **June 14 to July 16, 2018**. Please send your written comments to:

Cynthia Peterson  
U.S. EPA, Region 8  
1595 Wynkoop Street (8OC-PAI)  
Denver, CO 80202  
peterson.cynthia@epa.gov

### **Administrative Record**

You may obtain a copy of the proposed plan on the EPA website at <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/bonita-peak> or by calling the EPA Superfund Records Center at 800-227-8917 ext. 312-7273. You also can view it at one of the following locations:

**Silverton Library.** 1117 Reese Street, Silverton, CO 81433, Jackie Kerwin, 970-387-5770.

**Durango Public Library.** 1900 East Third Avenue, Durango, CO 81301, Sandy Irwin, 970-375-3380.

**Farmington Public Library.** 2101 Farmington Avenue, Farmington, NM 87401, Kathi Browning, 505-599-1270.

**Diné College Shiprock Campus Library (Senator John Pinto Library).** BIA Road 0570, Shiprock, NM 87420, Samantha Hewakapuge, 505-368-3644.

### **Website**

EPA's website for the site is at:  
[www.epa.gov/superfund/bonita-peak](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/bonita-peak)



In May 2017, Administrator Scott Pruitt established a task force to restore EPA's Superfund program to its rightful place at the center of the Agency's core mission to protect health and the environment.



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