

# Bonita Peak Mining District Update

November/December 2018



**COLORADO**  
Department of Public  
Health & Environment



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

## 2018: A Year in Review

During 2018, the BPMD site team, consisting of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), completed investigative and response activities within the mining district. The site team would like to express its appreciation for those who have attended meetings, shared ideas or participated in site activities this past year. We are grateful for the many contributions of our community partners. ***Thank you!***

- EPA delineated mining related features associated with source areas identified in the BPMD site.
- In conducting the Human Health Risk Assessment, EPA completed activity-based air monitoring to assess possible human exposure to heavy metals and conducted a bioavailability study to better understand exposure impacts.
- EPA continues to engage the Biological Technical Advisory Group in preparation of the Aquatic Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment. EPA conducted high- and low-flow sampling of surface water and sediment, and fish population studies were undertaken. EPA continues oversight of an administrative order on consent with Sunnyside Gold Corporation for the remedial investigation of the Mayflower Mill Tailings.
- Samples of soil, invertebrates and vegetation were collected as part of the Terrestrial Risk Assessment. These samples were collected in floodplains, upland areas and the “halos” around source areas.
- The state of Colorado began its assessment of all accessible bulkheads at the site to assess stability.
- The U.S. Geological Survey and USFS collected LiDAR data, which will provide high resolution topographic information for the mining district.
- As part of its investigation of the Bonita Peak Groundwater System, EPA sampled seeps, springs and groundwater, and collected precipitation data. EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order to Sunnyside Gold Corporation for remedial investigation of the Bonita Peak Groundwater System.
- BLM undertook supplemental site investigation of all source areas it manages. It also conducted operation and maintenance at the Lark, Joe/John and Forest Queen mines.

### *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.

## Interim Water Treatment Plant

- EPA continues to treat mine-impacted water from the Gold King Mine at the Interim Water Treatment Plant (IWTP) at Gladstone.
- EPA established an interim sludge management location at the Kittimac Tailings area. At this location, 14,000 cubic yards of sludge from the IWTP were mixed with 20,000 cubic yards of tailings. A berm was created with the sludge/tailings mixture, which will help prevent trespass activities at the location. In this innovative approach, the sludge will immobilize heavy metals found in the tailings, thereby reducing human health and environmental impacts. EPA will use monitoring wells to ensure there are no negative impacts from the interim sludge management location. EPA continues its efforts to secure a location for a permanent, site-wide waste repository.

## Proposed Plan for Interim Remedial Actions

- While the site-wide remedial investigation is ongoing, mining-related sources in the BPMD were identified where contaminant migration issues could be addressed through interim remedial actions. EPA issued a proposed plan for these actions on June 14, 2018, for public comment. EPA presented the proposed plan at a public meeting and, by request, extended the comment period from 30 to 60 days. The proposed plan identified a preferred alternative for each of five types of contaminant migration issues and compared it to the “no action” alternative. EPA will issue an Interim Record of Decision after all comments have been considered.

## Innovation

- EPA is investigating instream water monitoring sensors to better understand contamination sources.
- EPA’s Office of Research and Development is maintaining a database of innovative technologies and vendors.
- EPA explored the use of fluidized bed technology as a viable alternative to activity-based air monitoring.
- The site team participated in meetings of the steering committee for the creation of a Silverton innovation center.

## Community Engagement

- The site team continued its routine meetings with the Silverton/San Juan County Planning Group and local officials in La Plata County and Durango.
- The site team participated in the site tour organized by the San Juan Historical Society to discuss identification of cultural resources in the BPMD. The site team is also supporting the San Juan County Historical Society’s ongoing underground mapping project.
- EPA has released a new web-based story map that combines narrative, photos, interactive maps, and analytical data collected at the site. Access the story map at <https://bit.ly/2PqTV1y>.
- Anthony Edwards was appointed the Bonita Peak Mining District Communications Liaison. He will share information about the site cleanup and the work of the Silverton/San Juan County Planning Group with the local community as well as foster communications with downstream stakeholders.
- At the request of Silverton/San Juan County, EPA created a web-based calendar listing all field activities in the mining district. Access the calendar at <https://www.epa.gov/co/bonita-peak-mining-district-calendar-activities>.
- In cooperation with local emergency response agencies, EPA participated in the revision of the Animas River Alert and Notification Plan for use at the site.

## Coming in 2019 – Community Advisory Group Formation

- A Community Advisory Group (CAG) is being formed for the Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund site. The purpose of a CAG is to provide a forum for stakeholders and the site team to share information and discuss issues related to the Superfund decision-making process. If you are interested in applying for membership in the CAG, please visit [www.BonitaPeakCAG.org](http://www.BonitaPeakCAG.org).