

# Bonita Peak Mining District Update

April 2017



**COLORADO**  
Department of Public  
Health & Environment



## Upcoming Events

The Bonita Peak Mining District Site Team will be hosting a series of public meetings the week of April 24, 2017. During the meetings, the team will discuss planned activities at the Superfund site for the 2017 field season.

- Tuesday, April 25, 6:30 pm  
San Juan County Courthouse  
1557 Greene Street, Silverton, CO
- Wednesday, April 26, 6:00 pm  
Sonoran Conference Rooms  
San Juan Public Lands Center  
15 Burnett Court, Durango, CO 81301
- Thursday, April 27, 7:15 pm  
San Juan College School of Energy  
5301 College Blvd, Farmington, NM 87402

## Recent Activities

This spring, EPA is working with our partners to sample surface water in the Cement Creek, Mineral Creek and Upper Animas drainages from late March through May 2017. This sampling effort is part of the Bonita Peak Mining District Remedial Investigation and will inform the Site Team regarding fate and transport of water and metals during 2017 pre-runoff conditions.

Biweekly samples will be collected from 11 locations (2-Cement Creek, 3-Mineral Creek, 6-Upper Animas) for five sampling events. Twenty-eight locations, including the previously mentioned 11 locations as well as 17 additional locations (8-Cement Creek, 4-Mineral Creek, 5-Upper Animas), will be sampled during the final event. The surface water samples collected as part of this effort will be analyzed for total and dissolved metals and stable isotopes.

## Spring Runoff

In the spring, snowmelt in the Upper Animas River Basin can contribute to higher than usual runoff and flow volumes in Cement Creek, Mineral Creek and the Animas River. During these spring runoff events, sediments are likely to be resuspended in the flowing water. In addition, erosion of soil near the creeks and river may contribute

### *2017 Priorities for Superfund Site Work*

**Early Actions** – initiate interim response actions to address simple water management and waste pile stability concerns.

**Stability** – identify for future action those mine features that may be the most unstable and at risk of unplanned releases of contamination.

**Significant Sources** – identify for future action mine features with relatively high contributions of contamination.

**Human Health** – conduct a Human Health Risk Assessment.

to the volume of suspended solids in the water. Therefore, as has happened in the past, water in the creeks and river may appear to be muddy or discolored.

This year, snowpack is higher than average in the Animas River Basin, and the changes in the appearance of the water in the Animas River due to spring runoff may be more pronounced than usual. These changes may also be observed further downstream than is typical during this time of year. The high snowpack this spring also may delay the resumption of investigative and cleanup activities at the Bonita Peak Mining District.

## How does EPA hire local technical experts?

EPA has recently received questions about how local technical experts can be hired for work at the BPMD. EPA would first identify the specific technical expertise needed. For some investigations or decisions, we may need more technical expertise than others. Any technical expertise needed by the EPA would usually be subcontracted through one of EPA's contractors. EPA does not direct their contractors to enter into a subcontract with any particular individual or company. EPA does not typically hire individuals/companies directly and has no mechanism to pay individuals for information.

It is important to note, that in addition to EPA, BLM, U.S. Forest Service, and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment are also hiring individuals and businesses for work at the site. They each have their own processes in place for doing so.

EPA is keeping a database of contractors and vendors that would like to work at the BPMD. Vendors or contractors interested in doing business related to BPMD should send an email containing the following information to Cynthia Peterson at [peterson.cynthia@epa.gov](mailto:peterson.cynthia@epa.gov): name of company; point of contact; phone number; email; address; Website address; and description of products or services.

## BPMD Site Team Uses Local Knowledge

The Site Team is currently collecting data to determine the nature and extent of contamination related to the 48 source areas of the site. This information will be presented in a Remedial Investigation report. We have used data gathered over the past 20 years in planning and implementing the investigation and have reached out to local organizations and individuals to gain knowledge about the site.

As our investigation continues, we are identifying a number of early response actions that might be taken in the near term to address the 2017 Priorities (see sidebar). These actions will be described in a Focused Feasibility Study. The Site Team has welcomed the opportunity to talk to those who have knowledge of the area, and we have used data gathered by local organizations to help identify some preferred early actions. These actions will be identified in a Proposed Plan.

There will be a formal public comment period on our Proposed Plan, during which residents and organizations can provide input on the proposed actions. Once public comment is considered, we will decide which early actions to take. The selection of early response actions will be documented in an Interim Record of Decision. As always, any comments reflecting local knowledge of the area or past mining practices will be welcomed during the public comment period.

## For More Information

Visit the Bonita Peak Mining District website <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/bonita-peak>.