Message

From: Piggott, Amelia [Piggott.Amelia@epa.gov]
Sent: 4/18/2016 1:34:14 PM
To: Jackson, Laurianne [Jackson.Laurianne@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Denver Post: U.S. EPA sues Mineral County mining company to recoup clean-up costs

FYI

Amelia Piggott
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1595 Wynkoop St.
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From: Mylott, Richard
Sent: Sunday, April 17, 2016 11:46 AM
To: McClain-Vanderpool, Lisa <Mcclain-Vanderpool.Lisa@epa.gov>; Jenkins, Joy <Jenkins.Joy@epa.gov>; Piggott, Amelia <Piggott.Amelia@epa.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Denver Post: U.S. EPA sues Mineral County mining company to recoup clean-up costs

FYI

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

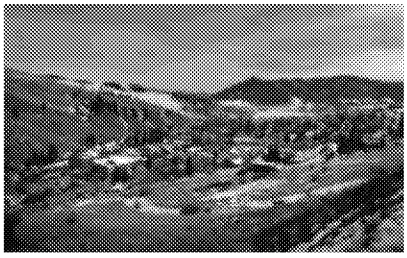
> **From:** Frank <homebythehills@comcast.net>
> **Date:** April 16, 2016 at 3:06:38 PM MDT
> **To:** homebythehills <homebythehills@comcast.net>
> **Subject: Denver Post: U.S. EPA sues Mineral County mining company to recoup clean-up costs**

U.S. sues Mineral County mining company to recoup clean-up costs

Environmental Protection Agency costs totaled nearly $10 million

http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_29771759/u-s-sues-mineral-county-mining-company-recoup

By Kirk Mitchell
The Denver Post
Posted: 04/15/2016 01:02:08 PM MDT | Updated: about 17 hours ago



The historic mining town of Creede, Co. can be seen from atop a hill Thursday, December 10, 2015. Even though the Nelson Tunnel and Commodore Mine area was classified a Superfund site, not much has been done in the 6-7 years the mine has been on the listing. Ever since the Gold King mine blowout, many small towns throughout Colorado are concerned about old mines nearby. (*Kenneth D. Lyons, The Denver Post*)

The Environmental Protection Agency has sued a mining company operating in Mineral County in federal court to recoup hazardous waste cleanup costs.
The U.S. sued Coca Mines Inc. for cleanup of hazardous substances in the Nelson Tunnel and the Commodore Waste Rock Pile Superfund Site.

The superfund site is in the San Juan Mountains less than 2 miles from the town of Creede. Shafts were dug in a series of hard-rock silver mines operated between 1889 and the 1980s tapping the "Amethyst Vein." Horizontal tunnels also were bored, including the Nelson Tunnel.

The Nelson Tunnel is partially collapsed but continues to drain acid runoff.

The Commodore Waste Rock Pile, just outside the entrance of the Nelson Tunnel, included a water conveyance system that failed around 1995, releasing mine waste containing heavy metals including arsenic, cadmium, lead, manganese and zinc into West Willow Creek.

The creek flows into the Rio Grande River 4 miles below the site.

In 2008 and 2009, the EPA conducted waste removal studies at the waste pile site.

The EPA is now in the process of completing a feasibility study of remedial actions for the site.

Through June 30, 2015, the EPA incurred nearly $10 million in costs. Some of those costs were covered by the Asarco Environmental Trust.

The lawsuit says the discharge each day from the Nelson Tunnel into Willow Creek carries 375 pounds of zinc, 1.37 pounds of cadmium and 6.39 pounds of lead. Zinc levels have hit 25,000 parts per billion, hurting fish reproduction for more than 4 miles down to a confluence with the main stem of the Rio Grande, where dilution eases the impact.

Since 1983, Colorado has had 22 sites listed as environmental disasters bad enough to qualify for Superfund cleanup, 10 of them caused by mining, according to EPA records. Only three cleanups have been completed.