Subject: **Gold King Mine Release - Regional Update #12**

Date: **21 August 2015**

**NOTE: We do not plan to provide a Region 9 Update over the weekend. The next update is planned for Monday, August 24, 2015.**

## Background

The Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado has had a continuous discharge of acidic mine drainage that is a historic contributor of lead, arsenic, zinc, copper, and cadmium into the Cement Creek drainage of the Animas River watershed. On August 5, 2015, an estimated 3 million gallons of mine wastewater released into the upper portions of Cement Creek, and into the Animas River.

## Executive Summary

- **On August 20, all EPA field personnel working on the Navajo Nation, including teams sampling the San Juan River, were called back to the Farmington Incident Command Post (ICP) in order to re-evaluate further response activities and to ensure secure field operations.**
- **Feed is expected to be delivered to various Navajo Chapters during this operational period.**
- **Farmington ICP has committed to providing technical assistance to Navajo Nation for irrigation ditch flushing.**
- **Based on EPA surface water data collected following the August 5, 2015 Gold King Mine release, San Juan River water quality in Navajo Nation has returned to pre-event conditions.**
- EPA issued a press release on August 19, 2015 stating that water quality in the San Juan River has now returned to levels measured before the release entered the Navajo Nation. http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/6CA2EE5CC335927585257EA7001294F4
- Water Advisories Lifted: New Mexico announced that drinking water systems and recreational activity along the Animas and San Juan rivers can resume. The City of Durango announced that they had resumed pumping raw water for water drinking water treatment and distribution; and La Plata County announced that the Animas River was open to recreational use. The State of Utah also lifted their advisories for Utah Crop Irrigation and Livestock.
- EPA Region 9 continues to coordinate with representatives from the Navajo Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the States of AZ, Utah, NM, and federal agencies Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, and US Geological Survey.

## Current Actions

- **Feed is expected to be delivered to various Navajo Chapters during this operational period. Seven bales of alfalfa are anticipated to be delivered today to the Beclabito, Hogback, Upper Fruitland, and Nenahnezad chapters.**
- **Based on EPA surface water data collected following the August 5, 2015 Gold King Mine release, San Juan River water quality in Navajo Nation has returned to pre-event conditions. This determination is based on a review of water quality data collected from August 7-15, 2015 at EPA's sampling point near Hogback, New Mexico. Water quality has now returned to levels measured before the release entered the Navajo Nation. Water and sediments from the mine were last observed at Nenahnezad, New Mexico, east of Hogback, New Mexico, on August 8, 2015.**

- On 8/19, the Lake Powell Branch hosted EPA Region 9 Technical Specialists, USGS, State of Arizona, State of Nevada, and State of California in the daily conference call with the Utah Division of Water Quality, Department of Environmental Quality, for the purpose of collaborating on the interpretation of all available San Juan River response sampling data.
- **The Glen Canyon ICP OSC demobilized yesterday. The Liaison Officer will demobilize today. One START contractor on scene has been integrated into the USCG/NSP 14 day expedition and will depart today (8/21/2015) with that team.**
- **The EOC AC EU team reviewed the validated data on metals concentrations in San Juan River sediment samples collected on 8/15/15 and 8/16/15. Results were compared to the reported dissolved and total concentrations on metals in surface water to the health-based screening levels for a 64-day recreational exposure developed by R8 for this incident; they also compared the dissolved metals concentrations to federal MCLs.**
    - **All metals in surface water concentrations (both dissolved and total) were below the recreational surface water screening levels and all dissolved metals concentrations met (were below) federal MCLs.**
    - **The EU team also compared the reported dissolved and total concentrations on metals in surface water to current Agricultural and Livestock Watering screening levels developed by the Navajo Nation Water Quality Program. With only one exception, all metals in surface water concentrations (both dissolved and total) were below the Agricultural and Livestock water screening levels; the single exception was for dissolved aluminum at station SJPF (Piute Farms); dissolved aluminum of 7,800 ppb exceeded the Agricultural screening level of 5,000 ppb.**

  **Attached is a list of the sampling locations and maps.**
- **Farmington ICP has committed to providing technical assistance to Navajo Nation for irrigation ditch flushing.**
- **ATSDR personnel were deployed to the EPA Farmington Incident Command and provided EPA Community Involvement Staff with support on developing the health related messages to be used at Navajo Chapter House community meetings.**

- Utah DEQ posted both graphs of its data and explanations of this data yesterday afternoon, August 19th. DEQ scientists believe that the highest levels of contaminants associated with the initial spill event have passed through the San Juan River in Utah. To view detailed information see the link: http://www.deq.utah.gov/Topics/Water/goldkingmine/index.htm

- On Monday August 17, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) officials announced it has examined data provided by states upstream of Lake Powell and closer to the Gold King Mine spill.
- ADEQ's analysis of data released by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality of samples collected about 100 miles from Lake Powell (closest Utah sample) shows that water quality conditions in the San Juan River upstream of Lake Powell are generally consistent with pre-spill conditions. See more at: https://ein.az.gov/emergency-information/emergency-bulletin/adeq-update-colorado-gold-king-mine-spill
- The Attorney Generals of Utah and Colorado visited the Gold King Mine site on 8/19.
- On 8/18 EPA released additional water quality data from August 13, 2015, on the San Juan River between Farmington and Shiprock, New Mexico. Data can be found here: http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/gold-king-mine-data-august-18-2015

- Each surface water sample was analyzed for metals including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury. Due to the highly variable conditions typical of this segment of the river, additional testing will be conducted, and we continue to work closely with the Navajo Nation EPA on assessing drinking water, agriculture, livestock, and other critical water needs.

Public meetings and outreach:

- The Public Hotline number (1-844-607-9700) is being transferred to EPA HQ.
- Meetings at the Olijato, Aneth and Navajo Mountain Chapters have been cancelled.
- August 20, there was a public meeting/Open House in Durango hosted by San Juan County, CO. EPA has been invited to present an overview of the response and assist with directing people to focused, topic-specific tables.
- UAC provided assistance to local residents regarding claims processing related to the response on 8/18.
- Region 6, 8, 9 continue to hold joint Regional Response Team calls with State and Federal Agencies for situational updates. **The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 21, 2015.**

Personnel On-Site

**3 R9 OSCs**

1 R9 PIO

**3 R9 CIC**

**3 R9 LNC/LNO**

8 USCG PST

**21 START Contractors**

Key Issues

- None at this time