



Environment Department

SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR

Ryan Flynn, Cabinet Secretary
Butch Tongate, Deputy Secretary

NEWS RELEASE

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NMED's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

Contact: Allison Scott Majure
Communications Director
New Mexico Environment Department
505.231.8800 | Allison.majure@state.nm.us

Well Water Test Results Sent to 570 Residents Concerned about Gold King Mine Spill's Effects *Environment Department, Department of Game and Fish, and Other State Agencies Continue Work in San Juan County After Contamination Plume Passes.*

Santa Fe – Results of domestic well water testing are being mailed to approximately 570 concerned residents of San Juan County, New Mexico, following the EPA-caused Gold King Mine Spill of August 5, 2015. “We mobilized about 25 Environment Department staff in the wake of the Gold King Mine Spill for a variety of purposes, and we still have many in the field. Many of these Environment staff tested water on behalf of more than 500 domestic well owners who brought their ‘walk-in’ samples to the County Fair last week,” said Environment Department Secretary Ryan Flynn. “Many test participants received their ‘walk-in’ results the same day, as they returned to the Fair to discuss them. Today, we have completed mailing out the ‘walk-in’ test results to all of the citizens who participated.”

In a separate sampling initiative, Environment Department staff with EPA contractors took approximately 110 domestic well samples at the well locations in the Animas floodplain. Results of that more extensive testing are to be mailed to well owners via the EPA’s offices in the coming weeks.

Environment Department staff responding to the Gold King Mine Spill also took river water samples for more in-depth laboratory analyses, educated and advised concerned citizens about the contamination plume and its possible effects, fostered public communications through daily public meetings and news media, communicated daily with EPA in efforts to obtain their data, and coordinated with other state agencies such as Agriculture, the State Engineer, and Game and Fish, during the weeks following the spill.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish continue their sampling work along the Animas and San Juan Rivers to capture data which will create a baseline for measuring the future effects of the heavy metal contaminants on various wildlife and on the rivers’ macroinvertebrates. “Although the plume has passed, the sediments are still here and could possibly be transported into the food chain throughout the Animas and San Juan River ecosystems,” said Game and Fish Director Alexa Sandoval. “We remind citizens that their efforts to report or collect deceased wildlife are no longer needed as DGF field staff are able to properly prepare and store such samples, as needed, for later lab analysis.”

(more)

The Long-Term Impact Review Team announced by Governor Susana Martinez on Friday is developing a public involvement schedule to coincide with development of their strategic plan for future monitoring efforts. The multi-agency New Mexico team will work with citizen stakeholders, as well as community and civic groups, to determine robust and meaningful measures on behalf of the continuing safety and quality of life for New Mexico's people and ecosystems affected by the Gold King Mine Spill. Governor Martinez also announced Wednesday, that the state's Environment Department will lead an investigation into the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-caused Gold King Mine Spill, including details surrounding how EPA officials ended up allowing such a large amount of waste to flow out of the abandoned Gold King Mine into the waterways below.

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