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## NEWS ADVISORY

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### **Ban on Drawing Canal or River Water into Ditches in San Juan County Lifted by New Mexico Departments of Environment, Agriculture, and State Engineer** *Strategic Plan for Flushing Ditches Initiated Along Animas & San Juan Rivers to Hogback*

**(Aztec & Farmington, NM)** – New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ryan Flynn, Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte, and State Engineer Tom Blaine today initiated the plan to flush irrigation ditches, in order to reduce the Gold King Mine Spill’s potential contamination effects on San Juan County’s crops and livestock.

“Today we are initiating a strategic plan for flushing ditches as a safety precaution prior to resuming irrigation,” said Blaine. “As part of the Gold King Mine Spill’s Long Term Impact Team announced by Governor Susana Martinez this morning, our agencies are approaching this with the same synchronized communication, expertise, and caution used throughout our response.”

“We encourage San Juan County Ditch Superintendents to start flushing ditches immediately. Flush from the diversion to the first sluice for 12 hours. All head gates should be closed and only return gates should be open during this flushing operation,” said Blaine. “12 hours following flushing, normal irrigation and livestock watering operations may resume.” Revised safety precautions concerning the Gold King Mine Spill are posted at [www.NMEDRiverWaterSafety.org](http://www.NMEDRiverWaterSafety.org).

The operation will begin at the New Mexico state line along the Animas River down to the confluence with the San Juan River. It will include ditches below the San Juan River out to Hogback. Representatives of the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer’s Aztec district office are communicating with Ditch Superintendents.

All other safety precautions remain in place as follows:

- Do Conserve Water
- As Needed, Do Get Potable Water from Water Stations
- Do Not Ingest Fish from the Rivers

New Mexico agency representatives on the Long Term Impact Review Team for the Gold King Mine Spill (Environment, State Engineer, Agriculture, Game and Fish, Health, Homeland Security, and others), along with the US EPA and local officials, continue assessing the full impact of the August 5<sup>th</sup> event on the state for the development and recommendation of safe practices for the San Juan County region.

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