



UPDATED:

Assessing the Safety of Using Animas and San Juan River Water on Your Crops

On August 7, 2015, the State of New Mexico advised farmers along the Animas and San Juan rivers to not use river water to irrigate their crops. **State officials announced on August 14, 2015, that they were lifting this precaution, effective on the morning of August 15, 2015.** We recognize that you still might have concerns regarding the potential risk to your crops. This document is to help you assess that risk.

An important thing to keep in mind: The data in the table below refers to **total metals**, which includes metals that are dissolved in the water (these are called **dissolved metals**) plus metals that are suspended in the water.

- *Dissolved* metals are what pass through a filter whose pores are only 0.45 micrometers in diameter – a hole that size is too small for even a single strand of human hair to pass through.
- *Total* metals include the metals that are dissolved in the water, plus the metals that are piggybacking on other substances in the water (algae, clays, etc.).
- Sometimes, *dissolved* metals and *total* metals are almost equal – this is the case in filtered drinking water. When there is a dramatic difference between *dissolved* metals and *total* metals, water quality needs to be investigated further.

The data in the table below shows the **Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL)** of six metals. **Water with concentrations higher than the MCL numbers listed should not be used for irrigation purposes.** The units shown in the table are parts per million (ppm). One ppm is roughly equivalent to adding one drop to 50 liters (about 13 gallons).

Data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (<http://nepis.epa.gov/Adobe/PDF/30006MKD.pdf>)

Element	Irrigation Water MCL	
	SHORT term (up to 20 years) mg/L (ppm)	LONG term mg/L (ppm)
Arsenic	2	0.1
Cadmium	0.05	0.01
Iron	20	5
Lead	10	5
Mercury	0.002	0.002
Zinc	10	2

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