

# Gold King Mine Spill's Long Term Effects on New Mexico Road Map Meeting

## San Juan College, Henderson Performance Center

### Public Comments from August 18, 2015

### Open House – San Juan Fairgrounds

#### **Agriculture**

1. There is an enormous economic pressure to turn on the Ag ditches. This must NOT happen until solid plans for mitigation are in place. Therefore government must provide financial assistance to those who rely on Ag water NOW not months from now – otherwise people will inappropriately apply polluted water to their land. EPA has been telling us for years how toxic and dangerous this mine waste is AND how important it is to spend mega-bucks to clean it up. How can EPA now say it is no danger to wildlife, livestock and crops?
2. What is/are the roles of horse health care facilities?
3. I live on the Animas and use flood irrigation from a ditch to water my fields. My crops desperately need water, but I Do Not want the ditches to be opened because the heavy metals will contaminate the ditch and irrigated fields. Are you planning on delaying reopening the irrigation ditches until we are certain containment levels are low? =-098765 4321`2. What immediate financial relief can be provided to farmers that lose their crops due to lack of water?
4. Ditches should be left closed and farmers making income from land (crops) be compensated immediately so that they can get by financially without polluting the land with unknown amount of toxins for years to come.
5. I have pastures and hay fields I lease out to horse owners. They depend on the ditch for water. We don't have the means or ways to haul water. Is there someone to haul water? Where can they get hay to feed? My concern is that these people have no other alternatives, and there is big stress! I feel responsible – I have no water tanks or hay.
6. What is the projected timeline for reintroducing irrigation water to farmers & crop land – city & county – how will safety levels be determined?
7. How long before the water is able to be used on agriculture? Months? Years?
8. Our water well is ¼ mile from the Animas River & 25'-30' deep – ground water. We use it for landscape and garden. What effect will this spill have? How long will the contaminants reside?

#### **Health**

1. What are the chemicals that were in the mine water? How often should we have our well tested and who will reimburse us? Will the State Environmental Dept. or the EPA test our wells, if so, when?
2. Will the EPA supply everyone in the Flood Plain with a domestic well a pH, conductivity/TDS meter to give early warning of changes in their well water once the initial testing is complete? These secondary standard tests are a good early indicator of well health.
3. The boundaries of Farmington end on Harper Hill then Kirtland into Navajo Nation. Navajo Nation is in NM, Utah & Arizona. The river knows not of these invisible lines. Many Navajo people are ranchers & farmers. Where will we get answers as to when the levels are safe or what we should expect in the long term?
4. How will contaminated soil be handled by each agency along the river bed after water levels are reduced?



5. I am a physician with background in clinical heavy metal toxicology. The Ag ditches should not be turned on until solid data about toxicity of sediments is available and a serviceable plan formed to deal with the fact that irrigation with contaminated sediments will gradually increase toxicity of the soils. Heavy metals toxicity can be acute but much more often is evolved over time. Metal toxicity syndromes are poorly recognized by the general medical community. Long term government commitments to this disaster need to include appropriate health monitoring of the population for DECADES.
6. Has there been an increase of abortions, stillborns, low fertility in this type spill?
7. Without the political rhetoric, please, what are scientists saying about this situation and the long term consequences?
8. Bitter illness has taken many love ones. Since the report is there has been leakage for years, is this the cause of their illnesses? What is the prognosis for our children, grandchildren? Will our lives ever be normal again?
9. I am a physician with a background in heavy metals toxicology, People need to know NOW what health risks they are taking or exposing their Ag clients to by using water with toxic sediments. I have not seen any official source talking about these very significant risks.
10. What is the capacity of municipal water filtration/purification systems to handle chronically contaminated river sediments?
11. We live 1000 ft. from the Animas River. Our well is 200 ft. from the Aztec ditch to 30 ft. from a Graves-Atteberry drainage ditch. What will be done to ensure no contamination will come to my well prior to irrigation ditches being turned back on?
12. When will the baseline data for the slurry and sludge that was in the mine be released? I am referring to the heavy metals, chemicals and compounds in the mine waste/water prior to its entry into the stream and Animas River. If this was an EPA project, I am presuming this testing at the mine waste was done.
13. What contaminants in mine waste are treatable? What ones are not? Is the White House involved? Federal aid or disaster declaration?
14. Where is the original mine waste data on contaminants taken before the spill?
15. Who is coordinating the long-term health effects?
16. Lead is poisonous and cannot be removed from the river bottoms and eventually will bleed/travel to my well, not overnight, but it will. What are we supposed to do?
17. The boundaries of Farmington end on Harper Hill then Kirtland into Navajo Nation. Navajo Nation is in NM, Utah & Arizona. The river knows not of these invisible lines. Many Navajo people are ranchers & farmers. Where will we get answers as to when the levels are safe or what we should expect in the long term?
18. Is the water ever going to be safe again?
19. How long before we know what's in the water? Is the water ever going to be safe again?
20. What is "normal" for the heavy metals in the rivers? What are they now? (Not 300x normal but what ppm/ppb are they?)
21. I understand the water tests are taking up to 72 hours to return. What websites will the results be posted? And will the date of the test be also posted?
22. I was told contaminants may take several months to leech down into wells along the river, so that they may pass water quality test now but become contaminated later. How long will the EPA be conducting water well testing?
23. A contact to have our well tested please.
24. What contaminants is the state testing domestic wells for? List?



25. What medical problems could this cause?
26. Sampling and assessing is taking too long – Too much time on assessing and not giving us any number pph in each elements
27. When will soil samples be taken and by whom and how often?
28. Will the old or leaky head gates be repaired/replaced so they won't leak in future with heavy storms or snow melt?
29. Would you let your children drink and play in the river water N. of Durango?
30. Monitoring for, evaluating and treating humans with heavy metal exposure will require a contamination for decades. What are the plans for long term human metal toxicity assessment and treatment?

### **Sediment**

1. How are the rural water providers going to clean the heavy metals out of the water?
2. Preliminary estimate (Volume) of material to be removed of contamination, and where will it be disposed?
3. What are the results of sediment analysis? If you don't have them – WHY NOT?
4. When is the river bed going to be cleaned?
5. Have there been any discussions of cleaning river banks? Bed of sediment? Won't there be a risk of sediment getting stirred up and getting back into the ditches – ecosystem?
6. What is plan for dealing with sediment short & long term? How coordinate with CO to protect ourselves / NM from a "second wave" of toxins.

### **Water**

1. Long Term Monitoring! Both River & Wells. How long? How many Seasons (Runoffs) How Often? If the air has been tested, how do we access that data & results?
2. Will the EPA pay to have well owners hooked up to a reliable water source, like the City of Aztec, in a timely manner?
3. We hear you say determines how to clean a ditch you spill oil or diesel you have to dig so much area up how are you going to clean up the river and piping to wells and homes?
4. How long until we are back to normal?
5. Are we going to have any pollutants from the Animas River sludge into the city water?
6. What happens when our 90 day supply runs out? What are the state/government going to do about the river water in general? Is it ever going to be clean enough to the public again? Why was the EPA trying to keep it on the low?
7. What normally happens with this sludge H2O at the mine?
8. Why don't you want to save Lake Powell, is it because it will dilute the samples even more?
9. Was/is the City of Farmington doing about when Farmington Lake runs out? Can we pump from the San Juan River? What about water for Kirtland and that area?
10. We hear about water sampling, are samples of sludge and soil also being taken? If so, will the data be available?
11. Why are there no micro silvering nets across our river everywhere?
12. Aztec and Farmington only have a limited amount of water. In the future 60 days and after, where will our water come from?
13. How will you model the contamination of ground water? Specifically: Los Alamos Labs was modeling ground water contamination caused by rain water entering dumpsites approximately 20 years ago. Will you look to the science community to help determine the individual areas near the Animas?



14. Based on other events which involved heavy metal contamination of a major water source, what are the anticipated outcomes in regard to length of time before the water is safe at all levels?
15. Message to Mayor: With all the Legal battles on percentage of who gets water downstream is there any chance Farmington could get water from San Juan or more? Since Farmington city water serves more than just the city.
16. What residual effects will be left behind after the plume flows downstream?
17. Please conserve water in every way possible. We are here to assist in any way possible. - AV Water Company – Morning Star Water
18. What is the capacity of the pre-treatment equipment in terms of GAL/MIN?
19. Provide parts per millions of each element on the ditches you talked about. Question should be asked when on the topic?
20. What are you guys going to do about those rivers and the mines releasing toxins? Is it continuously going to happen again?

### **Wildlife**

1. My concern is for overall long term environmental effect on the river corridor's ecosystem – including fish, waterfowl, birds etc.
2. How will the consumption of heavy metals affect the wildlife population immediately and long term?
3. With hunting season coming are the Fish & Game doing anything with the exposure of wildlife? Waterfowl?
4. When and if are the wildlife going to be watered? With clean uncontaminated water? Part 2: Game & Fish & The Army Corp. of Engineers should be called at once; is this not common sense?

### **Long Term Efforts**

1. How long will it take to clean it up?
2. How long do we have to file a claim?
3. How many years will this last?
4. What kinds of remediation actions are currently envisioned?
5. When are we, the concerned citizens, going to get actual answers?
6. Why isn't the EPA blowing up the Entrance to plug the mine off?
7. Thank you NM State Env. Dept. Chris Dennis, Congressman Lujan, Gov. Martinez, Jenna and Tom at the EPA – staff follows through, professionalism, doing good job in difficult situation. These good people doing good work have relieved stress and helped. We need to trust process going forward: long term commitment, well testing, ditches closed until sediment tests ok, quick payment to farmers for loss, plan for continued public meetings and info long term, please don't disappear when the panic is over but the real work and potential harm just becomes evident. Do you have the start of a long term plan?

### **Misc.**

1. When will the EPA have someone help us fill out the Form 95-Workshop? If we file for this are we signing away future claims?
2. What steps can be taken to hold the mine owners and /or original stake holders of the mine responsible for this disaster?
3. Who will be prosecuted because of this disaster?
4. How do we get involved with volunteering?



5. Are the EPA and contract workers OK? Thanks to the EPA and the state agencies for a prompt response
6. Does EPA presently have funds available for reimbursement for damages? Does it take an act of Congress to appropriate and approve funding?
7. Industry is held to standards that demand multiple layers of fail saves to be in place. Why would the same entity that holds us to these standards not use this practice themselves?
8. How many other spills have there been that we were not told about?
9. I have a ditch that ran water through it in the summer. The City came in, made a place to catch water like a reservoir, now it has flooded my place a couple of times ruining my backyard. They haven't cleaned up my area and now I get flash floods through my backyard 18 ft. deep 30ft. across. I hope you don't want to run any water through it from the spill. When are they going to fix that mess as well?
10. To the EPA are you confident in the job the NMED and other contractors are doing with the collection of domestic water well samples and the testing of the samples for heavy metals? Did you have confidence in the contractors at the King Mine?
11. Who are the contractors for the EPA to clean the ditches? Will you start with the worst ditch? When?
12. I need one web site for all info
13. What steps are the State of NM, The County of San Juan, and the affected cities and the nation taking to insure we get full compensation from the EPA, The State of Colorado, the Town of Silverton and Durango, who fought getting on the superfund list?
14. I want a full list of discharge including all metals, dissolved and suspended, pH, conductivity hydrocarbons etc. The EPA had to have this before the spill – they wanted to put the mine on superfund list.
15. What long term plans are in place to address lifelong issues arising from this disaster?
16. What disciplinary measures are being taken in the hierarchy of the EPA to address this fiasco?
17. Who will be arrested, imprisoned, fired and/or criminally culpable for this act?
18. Will the EPA reconsider declaring Gold King Mine hazardous waste site to be eligible for federal funds?
19. Why don't we have the greatest minds in the world working on this problem other than EPA?
20. Why haven't we declared this a national disaster?
21. When will EPA cooperate and share info? We need transparency!!
22. As I understand it the EPA ignored local hydrologists, engineers, biologists etc. and launched an inadvisable plan that led to this disaster. What does this say about the Federal Government where bureaucrats have ceased to regard themselves as public servants and instead behave as if they are the overlords of US citizens?
23. Has NM received any NM data from the EPA?
24. We dodged a bullet this time. What about next time? With the number of mines in CO, NM, there will be a next time.
25. Since this catastrophe, how can each of your organizations spend money in the near future to address shortcomings that you are experiencing now?
26. How will this impact the economy in Farmington?

