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Article published Apr 24, 2016

EPA is coming to town

Agency officials will provide updates on Superfund site



Photo by:

Geoff Liesik/The Deseret News file via AP This aerial photo was taken Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2015, about a week after an Environmental Protection Agency team accidentally breached the Gold King Mine near Silverton. This week, officials with the EPA will meet with local governing boards to provide an update on the on the Bonita Peak Mining District, the recently proposed Superfund district north of Silverton.

Herald Staff Report

All this week, the Environmental Protection Agency will be dropping in on public meetings in communities affected by the Gold King Mine spill, providing an update on the recently proposed Superfund district north of Silverton.

At 3 p.m. Tuesday, EPA officials will attend the Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council briefing at the council offices in Ignacio.

On Wednesday, EPA officials will present information at the joint meeting of San Juan County commissioners and Silverton Town Board trustees at 7 p.m. at Silverton Town Hall.

And on Thursday, La Plata County commissioners and Durango city councilors will be joined by EPA staff members at 3 p.m. at the La Plata County Administration Building boardroom at 1101 East Second Ave.

“We will present information about the proposal to add the Bonita Peak Mining District site to the National Priorities List and discuss planned activities at the site for this spring and summer,” Cynthia Peterson, a community involvement coordinator with the EPA, wrote in an email.

In August, an EPA contracted crew breached the portal of an inactive gold mine about 10 miles north of Silverton, effectively sending an estimated 3 million gallons of heavy metal-laden water down the Animas and San Juan rivers.

The incident highlighted a long-standing problem in the watershed: hundreds of discharging inactive mines exacerbating the highly mineralized Silverton caldera.

The spill also set off a series of events that led affected communities to request the EPA’s hazardous cleanup program – Superfund.

In April, the EPA officially proposed the “Bonita Peak Mining District” Superfund site, which includes a cluster of 48 mining-related waste sites throughout the Animas basin.

The proposal is now in a public comment period until June 6.
