

# LONG-TERM MONITORING PLAN

Evaluating the Effects of the Gold King Mine Wastewater Spill in Northern New Mexico

## MESSAGE FROM NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY RYAN FLYNN



Thank you for your concerns and for your attention to the long-term effects of the Gold King Mine Spill on the Northern New Mexico region. When Governor Susana Martinez named the multi-agency Long-Term Impact Review Team, including Environment, Health, Game & Fish, Agriculture, Homeland Security, and the Office of the State Engineer, she did so with key priorities in mind.

“As the river begins to clear up, there are still many questions left unanswered by the Environmental Protection Agency. New Mexicans deserve to know the long-term effects this environmental catastrophe will have on our communities, our agriculture and our wildlife,” Governor Martinez said. “That is why I have called on state agencies to come together to work with local and federal officials to investigate and shed light on the potential impacts this waste spill could have on our families in the coming days, months and years.”

- [www.env.nm.gov/OOTS/documents/150814PR-GSMGoldKingMineSpill-9a.pdf](http://www.env.nm.gov/OOTS/documents/150814PR-GSMGoldKingMineSpill-9a.pdf)

We look forward to working together in this important endeavor to protect New Mexicans and our unique environment. Our areas of focus will include water, sediment, agriculture/livestock, health, and wildlife.

The Long-Term Impact Review Team is pleased to offer this draft of the Long-Term Monitoring Plan for public review and comment. Written comments on the Monitoring Plan will be accepted until close of business on November 20, 2015, and should be sent, preferably by email to [NMENV-outreach@state.nm.us](mailto:NMENV-outreach@state.nm.us), or by regular mail to the NMED Office of the Secretary, PO Box 5469, Santa Fe, NM 87502-5469. Please do share this Monitoring Plan with your neighbors, friends, and families.

The Long-Term Monitoring Plan will be dynamic and subject to data-driven modifications as observations and test results become available. Please feel free to share any further questions or comments as the Monitoring Plan is implemented in the forthcoming months and years.

Yours truly,

*Ryan Flynn*

Secretary Ryan Flynn  
New Mexico Environment Department

October 20, 2015

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & BACKGROUND

On August 5, 2015, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency work crew digging into the Gold King Mine (GKM) triggered a discharge of impounded mine water into Cement Creek near Silverton, Colorado. More than 3 million gallons of acidic mine water containing sediment, heavy metals, and other chemicals discharged into Cement Creek flowing into the Animas River and then into New Mexico where the river joins the San Juan River before flowing into the Navajo Nation and Utah. Governor Susana Martinez declared an emergency, and created the multi-agency Long-Term Impact Review Team (LTIRT) which includes top scientists collaborating with New Mexico's institutions of higher education.

The Long-Term Monitoring Plan (LTMP) is a dynamic plan and subject to data-driven modifications as observations and test results become available. The LTMP will provide the matrix for effective collaboration as technical teams work to:

1. *Identify the impacts of the August 5, 2015 mine wastewater spill* on Northern New Mexico's downstream water quality and environment. To the extent possible, the plan seeks to differentiate the Gold King Mine Spill's wastewater impacts from previous spills, historical acid mine drainage; and from naturally occurring acid rock drainage over geologic time.
2. *Generate the data needed to perform a science-based assessment* of potential risks to public health, public and private drinking water sources, water-based recreation, livestock, irrigated agriculture, fish, macroinvertebrates, and other wildlife.

With multiple areas under scientific review, results will be focused into the following areas: water, sediment, agriculture/livestock, health, and wildlife. The LTMP was prepared by the six executive agencies (Environment, Agriculture, Fish & Game, Health, Homeland Security, and Office of the State Engineer) on the Long-Term Impact Review Team in collaboration with New Mexico State University, the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute, New Mexico Tech, the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, the University of New Mexico, San Juan County, the City of Farmington, and the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District.