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Governor Susana Martinez Announces Investigation into EPA-Caused Toxic Waste Spill

Santa Fe, NM — Today, Governor Susana Martinez announced that she has ordered the New Mexico Environment Department to launch an investigation into the recent massive 3 million gallon waste spill that impacted the Animas River in Northwest New Mexico and Southwest Colorado.

The investigation will seek to determine the specific cause of the spill, and all details surrounding how Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials ended up allowing such a large amount of waste to flow out of the abandoned Gold King Mine into the waterways below. Additionally, the investigation will examine how affected residents, businesses, and communities along the river were notified in the aftermath of the spill. For example, the State of New Mexico was not informed of the spill until nearly 24 hours after its occurrence, and the first notification came from an official with the Southern Ute Tribe.

“New Mexicans deserve answers as to why this catastrophe happened and why the EPA failed to notify us in a timely manner,” said Governor Martinez, adding that the EPA has hounded private citizens and businesses for doing far less.

The New Mexico Environment Department will be the lead agency in the investigation. The Governor has also spoken to the Navajo Nation president about the investigation and will ensure that officials are aware of its progress every step of the way.

In addition to the investigation, Governor Martinez recently announced a multiagency long-term impact review team to monitor the effects of the spill. The team will conduct research, collaborate with local communities, federal officials, and members of the public, and share information to learn more about the potential long-term impact of the spill on local communities, wildlife, and agriculture.

The Governor has also toured the affected area by helicopter, declared a state of emergency in response to the spill, met with local leaders and responders, and established a multiagency response team that assisted affected communities in the immediate aftermath of the spill.

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