

Gold King Mine Emergency Response in Navajo Nation

On August 5th, while conducting an investigation of the Gold King Mine in Colorado, an EPA cleanup team triggered a release of approximately three million gallons of mine wastewater into Cement Creek. Cement Creek is a tributary of the Animas River which flows into the San Juan River at Farmington, NM. EPA is working closely with responders and Navajo officials to monitor river water and collect river sediments impacted by the release.

EPA regrets and deeply apologizes for the potential impact this is having on the health, finances and culture of Navajo communities. EPA recognizes the San Juan River as not only an important water resource for agricultural use, but as of cultural significance for Diné people. We are committed to working closely with Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management to provide alternative drinking, agricultural, and livestock water, and livestock feed, and restoring the river to pre-release conditions.

EPA has activated its Emergency Operations System to ensure coordination among its regions, laboratories and national program offices in Washington, D.C., and is closely coordinating with officials in Navajo Nation, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and the Southern Ute Tribe.

EPA staff are partnering with various Navajo officials, Navajo incident command, and other responding agencies to ensure comprehensive outreach to all affected Navajo Chapters.



What has been done?

- EPA has taken emergency response actions at Gold King Mine to capture and treat any remaining discharge, limiting the risk of additional downstream impacts.



- EPA constructed four ponds at the mine site in order to treat water, lower acidity levels, and remove dissolved metals.
- EPA has implemented a sampling plan to track pollutants and test the water quality.

- A joint EPA and Navajo EPA river sampling program has started, focusing on the San Juan River between Hogback, N.M. and Mexican Hat, UT, and will continue for the foreseeable future.



What is happening now?

- EPA working with Navajo Nation Emergency Management to provide alternative drinking, agricultural, and livestock water and feed.
- Experts are working to understand and validate data from August 7th, 8th, and 9th sampling efforts. As soon as this data is available, EPA will publish the information widely and with affected Navajo communities.
- EPA teams are attending chapter meetings across Navajo Nation to share information and keep community members updated with the latest information.
- The States of Colorado and New Mexico are sampling fish tissue and have yet to see any impact to fish populations from the spill.

What will happen next?

- EPA and participating agencies will continue to treat the mine discharge in the constructed ponds, sample the river and the river sediments, provide water and livestock feed, and share information as it becomes available.
- EPA is coordinating with Navajo Department of Emergency Management, attending specially held community meetings, chapter meetings, and working to protect the health of Navajo Nation members.



What about my water?

While the situation is improving, precautions still must be taken. EPA strongly recommends residents:

- Stay out of the San Juan River and its tributaries.
- Do not drink water from the river.
- Wash with soap and water immediately, if you come into contact with the San Juan River water

EPA is working with the Navajo Department of Emergency Services to provide alternative drinking, agricultural, and livestock water, and livestock feed. To arrange for any of these, Please contact:

- your local Navajo Tribal Utility Authority district office for Drinking Water needs
- your Grazing Official for Livestock Water and Feed needs
- your Farm Board Official for Agricultural Water needs

How can you learn more?

For more information, please visit the Gold Mine Release Incident website: <http://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine>. You can also contact us through email (r8eisc@epa.gov) or call this toll-free hotline, where operators will take your message and you will be called back with information related to your question or comment: 1-844-607-9700. A Joint Information Center (JIC) has been set up to handle local and national media inquiries. Reach the JIC at 970-812-3351 or email press@epa.gov.

In addition, the Navajo Nation Emergency Operations Center maintains a contact number for community members' questions and requests. To contact the Navajo Nation directly, please call 505-371-8415 or 505-371-8408.

