

Bonita Peak Mining District Update

May 2019



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment



<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/bonita-peak>

Upcoming Events

In 2019, EPA will continue its monitoring activities related to draining mines and the water budget in Cement Creek and the Upper Animas River. This work includes limited water quality sampling of surface water, seeps, springs, mine discharges, and other locations. Flow data will also be collected. It is anticipated that temporary stream gages will also be redeployed to obtain high resolution in-stream flow data to further support the characterization and loading study efforts. This work will begin in late May and continue throughout the field season. In addition, EPA will again be collecting surface water and sediment samples at a wide-range of locations across the Bonita Peak Mining District (BPMD) to characterize metal loading and concentrations during an extremely wet year. Further, EPA will be collecting additional baseline information on the extent and health of known fisheries within the BPMD through “electrofishing,” a technique that uses electricity to temporarily stun fish for collection and identification.

Spring Runoff 2019

This year, snowpack is higher than average in the Animas River Basin, and the changes in the appearance of the water in the Animas River due to spring runoff may be more pronounced than usual. These changes may also be observed further downstream than is typical during this time of year. In addition, those in Durango and downstream communities may observe higher than normal levels of sediment in the Animas River due to runoff from the 416 Fire burn area. The high snowpack this spring also may delay the resumption of investigative and cleanup activities at the BPMD.

In addition, due to the numerous avalanches in the mining district, there are a high number of locations with snow bridges and avalanche debris piles across waterways. As temperatures warm, these snow bridges will collapse and may temporarily back water up in the smaller creeks. When these temporary dams are breached, the impounded water will be released and resuspend material resulting in a discoloration of water. This has happened before in the BPMD, but this year may see an increase in these events.

View a map of the [Current Snow Water Equivalent in Colorado \(PNG\)](#) (1 pp, 167 K).
https://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/gis/images/co_swepctnormal_update.png

New on the Web

- [Bonita Peak Mining District Update, April 2019 – Spanish \(Novedades del distrito minero Bonita Peak, Abril de 2019\) \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 988 K)
<https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100006228>
- [Digging Deeper Presentations: Aquatic Baseline Risk Assessment and EPA’s Initial Goals \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 988 K)
<https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100006225>
- [Presentation to Tribal Council of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe \(PDF\)](#) (25 pp, 5.9 MB)
<https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/08/100006234>