

Meeting Summary
Bonita Peak Community Advisory Group
May 28, 2020, 6:30—8:30 PM
Via Computer Conferencing

In Attendance:

CAG Members: Chara Ragland, Ty Churchwell, Anthony Edwards, Melissa May, Marcel Gaztambide, Peter Butler, Levi Lloyd, Brian Devine, Parker Newby, Larry Perino, John Ott, Charles Smith, Terry Morris, Trevor Downing, Russ Anderson

Others in Attendance: Corey Stafford, Dennis McQuillan, Christina Progress, Susan Livenick, Marcie Bidwell, David Heinze, Pat Maley, Martin Litt, C Stoneback, Ryan Bennett, Forrest Vaughan, N Westesen, Brian H, Laura Dixon, Rob Parker, S Ruffatto, Greg Sopkin, Kathrine Jenkins, Gina Myers, Ian Bowen, Walt Brown, Annie Maxfield, D Daftz, Jim Morris, Curt, K Doebbler, Will Lindsey, Athena Jones, Melissa, P Parks, Jerry Jacka, Patrick Davis, Bill Simon, and possibly a few more people

Introductions and Announcements

✓ *May Samples taken at Cascade and below Elk Creek*

We started taking samples again below Elk Creek in May. We are also now taking samples above the confluence of Crazy Woman Gulch with the Animas when we hike down to Cascade. Crazy Woman Gulch is the first named tributary to the Animas River below Needle Creek. So that gives us an indication of water quality below the three largest tributaries in the Animas Canyon – Cascade Creek, Elk Creek, and Needle Creek.

✓ *Technical Sub-Committee Met*

The Technical sub-committee met two weeks ago via Zoom. We talked about what recent data should be added to the ARSG database. The group decided initially to limit the data to upstream of Bakers Bridge (including Bakers Bridge). Historically, with the exception of the Gold King spill plume, all water quality standards have been met at Trimble Lane (except the secondary manganese standard for drinking-water). Also, there are a lot of metals in the runoff from 416 fire in Hermosa Creek which makes any metal analysis downstream more difficult. The group also discussed data collection in canyon and the role of aluminum. Peter thinks it is an important metal because it's unclear how toxic it is. EPA's aluminum criteria indicate its quite toxic, but most of the aluminum does not come from mining sites. If it is toxic in canyon, then reducing other metals like zinc, may show little aquatic life improvement, and vice versa. New Mexico's aluminum standard shows little toxicity in the canyon and Colorado's is in between. We will discuss the issue further at a later meeting.

✓ *New Mexico Water Quality*

The New Mexico Environmental Dept. called Peter with questions about dissolved lead concentrations from around 12 years ago. NM may list the Animas River below the Colorado state line for dissolved lead. We have not seen dissolved lead above detection limits in the Animas River Canyon below Silverton.

Administrative Items

✓ *EPA Site Strategy Update*

The CAG has drafts of Chapters 2 and 4 of EPA's Site Management Strategy to review. CAG will meet in a week to discuss. No objections to meeting next Thursday at 7:15 (CAG only). John Ott asks about recording the current meeting. The CAG recorded the April Zoom meeting because the public was not invited. We weren't sure how well a Zoom meeting work with a lot of people. Generally, the CAG has been reluctant to record meetings in order to allow for more open discussion. No CAG member asked to record the current meeting. Because the April meeting was recorded and a link has been posted on our website, we did not develop a meeting summary.

✓ *CAG Membership Size*

We have had two vacancies for a couple of months from our original 17 members. We have not filled those positions. At the last meeting, we discussed going to 15 to make the group more manageable and because that was the initial target size when the CAG was first initiated. Generally, the group was receptive to going to 15 people. One consideration was to include someone appointed by the So. Ute Tribe. Peter has had some discussions with them and if any appointment is forthcoming, it won't happen soon. We could accommodate their request if needed. Some CAG members have also mentioned the desire to have someone living in NM on the CAG. We have one member who works there, but lives in CO. There is some discussion about if meeting quorum (11 members) has been difficult to meet. It has been on occasion. Peter will make a formal proposal for 15 making some slight changes in operating procedures for a vote at the next meeting.

✓ *Consideration of Progress Table*

Susan suggested a couple of months ago to make a progress table for public information. Peter will table discussion on it until the next meeting. EPA's site strategies might satisfy some of the need for a table. He asked people look at those draft chapters with that in mind.

✓ *Long-Range Schedule-*

In June, EPA will discuss their feasibility study for a repository on the Mayflower tailings. The discussion with the CAG would not be part of the public record, and EPA will have an official public meeting separately. Anyone may submit comments to the document or make comments at the meeting EPA will hold. There will also be a discussion with EPA of testing the bulkhead in the Red and Bonita this summer. In July, the trust formed to dispose of ASARCO lands in the Animas Basin will discuss their work in Arrastra Gulch.

✓ *Future Agenda Items? Sludge Repository Location, BPMD Site Strategies Updates, Macroinvertebrate Data, Tour of Gladstone Treatment Plant, Site Specific plans for interim remedial actions, Terrestrial Baseline Risk Assessment, Sampling and data analysis, Little Dora and North Star Remediation, etc.*

Susan asks Christina to paginate and date draft documents in the footers.

EPA Overview on Mayflower Tailings Ponds.

Rob Parker gave a presentation for EPA after Christina gives an introduction of EPA people on the meeting. Rob is an EPA program manager working with Sunnyside Gold

Corp. (SGC) on characterization of the Mayflower Tailings. This area is referred to by EPA as Operational Unit 2 (OU2). The purpose of the investigations is to characterize the site: physical, source, nature and extent of contamination, and contaminant fate and transport with the goal of improving water quality in Priority Reach 2 (not sure why Priority Reach 1 was not also mentioned).

Sunnyside has completed infrastructure installations (wells) in 2015, 2017, 2019 with monitoring in subsequent years. Contamination occurs upstream and within the reach of the Animas River by the tailings. The majority of the metal loading near the tailings appears to occur near or below tailings pond #4 (TP-4). Historical photos from 1972 before the pond was constructed show that the river and the main road were moved to the south to accommodate the pond so that part of the pond sits on top of old alluvial deposition of the river.

Sunnyside Gold Corp's Presentation on Investigation and Characterization of the Mayflower Tailings Ponds.

Pat Maley with SGC made the presentation. SGC has been at this work for 5 years and has spent over \$10 million dollars on studies. They say there is no evidence that the Mayflower Mill/Impoundments are the source of anything but minimal metals in the Animas River. The study area is from just above Arrastra Creek to USGS Gauging station in Silverton.

SGC operated the Sunnyside Mine and Mayflower Mill for only five years, 1986-1991. They complied with all environmental requirements and have spent more than \$30 million on reclamation and remediation. Much of that remediation included materials that SGC had not mined.

The area around the Mayflower has seen a lot of mining history. The Polar Star mill was constructed at the head of Little Giant Basin but moved to Boulder Creek in 1892. That was active until 1900. A couple of other mills constructed and operated along the Animas River just below the confluence with Arrastra Gulch in the early 1900's as well. The Mayflower Mill was constructed in 1929. Starting in 1936, TP1 and TP2 were constructed. Before that time, all tailings were simply dumped into the river. In 1975, there was a breach in TP-1. Then tailings went to TP-3, while TP-4 was permitted and constructed as a permanent impoundment. Reclamation of the Mayflower tailings occurred in 1991-2006 with some operational maintenance in recent years.

Since 2015, SGC has undertaken extensive investigations of the Mayflower area. An outside review by a consultant (David Bird, Knight Piesold) stated that the Mayflower tailings contribution to loading is negligible. There is loading around the Seep 6150 which is next to TP-4. There is also loading on the same river bank downstream of TP-4. SGC contends that loading is not from TP-4, but potentially from historic tailing deposited in the river alluvium or from geologic faults that meet the river around Seep 6150.

A goal is to figure out what is happening at the Seep 6150. SGC has submitted a work plan to EPA for this year where they would do additional geophysics and drilling to better characterize the right bank fluvial area and some Polar Star Tailings.

SGC believes that Impoundment 4 is an ideal sludge repository and have provided their scoping drawings to EPA. It was used by SGC as a repository for sludge from the Gladstone treatment plant that SGC ran until 2002.

Many questions were asked after the presentation by a number of people. It appears that the focus of future work will be on TP-4 and at this time EPA and SGC are not in agreement as to whether or not these tailings are a large source of metals to the river.

8:35 PM Adjourn