

Meeting Summary
Bonita Peak Community Advisory Group
Dec. 3, 2020, 6:30—8:15 PM
Via Computer Conferencing

CAG Members in Attendance: Peter Butler, John Ott, Ty Churchwell, Levi Lloyd, Russ Anderson, Chara Ragland, Larry Perino, Anthony Edwards, Brian Devine, Melissa May, Terry Morris, Parker Newby, Marcel Gaztambide (Not in attendance: Charlie Smith).

Other Attendance: Scott Sudweeks, Paul Montoia, David Heinze, Barb Horn, Ben Martinez, Melissa Smeins, Win Wright, Brian Sanchez, Rob Parker, Bradley F, Chris Stoneback, Kirstin Brown, Michelle Furi, Ryan Bennett, Neil Westesen, Shannon Baum, James Hou, Christina Progress, Marcie Bidwell, Mark Rudolph, Steve Monroe, Katherine Jenkins, Christin Kapata, Selena Sauer, Athena Jones, Katherine Jenkins, Jim White.

Introductions and Announcements

EPA Regional Administrator, Greg Sopkin, has stepped down from his position. No idea who or when the Biden administration will appoint a new administrator for Region 8.

San Juan County is close to approving an ordinance designed to protect remediation at mine sites in San Juan County. Essentially, a landowner has to discuss any work they may do on their property that might affect the remediation with CDPHE before they go before the county commissioners to seek approval.

Peter sent the CAG letter to the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) for the Issues Scoping Hearing regarding the June 2022 Rulemaking for the San Juan and Dolores River Basins. He spoke briefly to the Commission via Zoom. Marcel also spoke to the Commission about a potential Outstanding Waters proposal that several conservation groups are developing.

The Technical Sub-Group met about two weeks ago to discuss an overall approach for developing a water quality standards proposal regarding the Animas Basin. Peter drafted a discussion memo for the meeting. He will provide it to the rest of the CAG.

There is newly released study by the Bureau of Reclamation on water quality in lower Animas and San Juan Basins for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. It involves potential impacts on water treatment plants. The thrust of the study is to see if high sediment loads correspond with high metal loads. Their powerpoint presentation on the subject suggests that iron and aluminum jump with a weather event or high-water flow. It doesn't appear that the jump is related to the GKM spill.

Marcie Bidwell announces that MSI has kicked off first innovation boot camp and has invited seven companies.

EPA: Baseline Terrestrial Life Risk Assessment

Brian Sanchez: Bonita Peak Mining District Terrestrial Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment. USEPA Region 8

This study has been going on for several years. It assesses the ecological risk in the BPMD for terrestrial wildlife caused by metals in relation to mine site. Transport mechanisms are mechanical via wind, infiltration/seepage, erosion, receptor exposure (birds or other users that carry contamination). Target receptors include herbivores, terrestrial and aerial insectivores, omnivores, and carnivores. The study

breaks down the assessment in categories such as the Mineral, Cement, and Upper Animas sub-watersheds. The assessment is also divided into floodplain exposure units (EU). The assessment included waste rock EU for pika and marmot.

Some of the results included:

Terrestrial Plants: the floodplain analysis saw high to moderate risk for Mn, Pb, Mo, Zn in certain areas.

Terrestrial Invertebrates saw moderate Mn and Zn exposure in areas.

Pika, Marmot, Gopher, Low risk for Pb (pika, gopher),

Waste Rock dose response saw high/moderate risk for Pb (pika, marmot), moderate for Arsenic and low for Antimony (pika only).

Low risk for robin, cliff swallow, mountain bluebird, montane shrew, deer mouse, coyote, golden eagle, lynx, moose, northern goshawk, white-tailed ptarmigan, beaver and fringed myotis bat.

There were a number of questions from both CAG members and members of the public which Brian responded to.

This report should be on the EPA website very soon.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Fish Survey

Biennial fish survey in the Animas Canyon and Howardsville area

Jim White (CPW):

Baseline levels for fish population were taken in the 1990's. This year surveyed four sites: A72, Elk Park Wye, Teft spur, and Howardsville. Brook trout are the species most prevalent. CPW does two electroshocking passes to get the confidence intervals. Teft spur is the furthest downstream – it's just above the confluence with Cascade Creek. This site saw increase in brook trout from two years ago, but not as good as in the late 1990's when the water was being treated at Gladstone. Water levels vary year to year and that may affect the distribution of the fish.

At the wye which is upstream of Elk Creek, CPW caught 7 fish – 3 rainbow and 4 brookies. The rainbow trout were 'catchable' size fish like those that CPW has stocked in South Mineral Creek. Only two fish were caught at A72 which is not surprising considering the high concentrations of metals in this area.

There are much higher fish populations at Howardsville than at the lower sites. There are also much lower concentrations of metals in the water. The 2020 survey saw a decrease in fish populations from 2018, but populations were similar to earlier surveys. San Juan County was full of visitors in 2020, so this stretch might have been fished more heavily than usual.

There were several questions for Jim which he responded to. He will develop a more detailed report in the future and welcomes any future questions.

Year-End Review by Different Agencies

Katherine Jenkins went over what is completed in 2020 by EPA. It was outlined in a powerpoint presentation which will be posted on the CAG website.

Christina said that the Adaptive Management Site Management Plan is finalized and should be on the web soon. As part of that is Site Strategy, EPA will focus efforts on upper Cement Creek and upper Animas River. She also noted that the Terrestrial Baseline Ecological Risk is finalized (as discussed earlier).

James Hou: Remedial Investigations for Operating Unit 1 (OU1) will focus on the on Upper Animas. EPA will share its workplan in 2021. He is working to include additional metals in loading tool. EPA is continuing to collect data throughout the year. They plan to do an update to seeps and springs report. They are also working on a Water Balance Report for the end of 2020. The Red and Bonita Bulkhead test ran from July to October 2020, and they hope to have a completed report on the test by the end of 2020.

Christina noted that EPA is continuing with the response actions pursuant to 2019 IROD and is funding ongoing Water Treatment Plant operations. They are also developing wildfire response procedures as result of Ice Fire.

Athena said that EPA completed work at Natalie/Occidental to redirect the water that was flowing over the waste rock pile to now totally off the pile. At the Koehler/Junction area, they did partial remediation as the pond was found to be deeper than expected.

Rob summarized the Mayflower Remedial Investigation. SGC installed 20 additional wells for monitoring. Other areas of investigation were Seep 6150, Slough at 7690, Industrial Park area, Polar Star Tailings and porewater sampling. Hope to have results in winter/spring 2021.

EPA completed the sitewide repository feasibility study. The plan was altered due to comments and begin with Impoundment 4.

Athena said that data management and access is moving along. There is also work on consent for access, cultural resources surveys, story map and WQX development – for use by stakeholders.

David Heinze with Ramboll said they are working with CO School of Mines on techniques to stabilize mine waste. Geopolymerization and geocementation – did not work as well as hoped, so they are looking at other ways to stabilize mine waste at the Aspen/Amy complex. They may go straight to vegetation.

Katherine said that Community Involvement has been sidelined with COVID. Tips and helpful advice are appreciated. EPA will post several items on the website and will let people know when they are posted.

Mark Rudolph (CDPHE) reported that the State did a Health and Safety training. Kirsten and Mark did additional sampling of dispersed campgrounds 4 and 7. Kirsten also did work at Ben Butler Mine on private land and is currently working on additional contracts for next season.

USFS: Ben Martinez says they are doing work on Brooklyn Mine and are providing Mineral Creek sample data to EPA.

BLM: Melissa Smeins said they this summer they focused on maintenance at Mayday Mine, Forest Queen Mine and touch up at Lewis Lake, and Wynona Mine.

Planned 2021 Activities.

EPA: Remedial Investigations are continuing. Response Actions may occur at the Koehler Mine, Terry Tunnel, Yukon Tunnel, Bandora Mine, Silver Wing Mine, London Mine, Anglo Saxon Mine, Ben Butler Mine, and Mammoth Tunnel. Sitewide Repository work will continue. The Interim Water Treatment Plant (IWTP) should stay up and running. EPA is looking at transferring operations to the US Army Corps. There will also be work on developing a data access and story map for informational purposes (reach out to Athena if you have any ideas about this).

The State will work on campgrounds, do further characterization, provide underground assistance, support cultural resource assessments, and develop 2022 work plans.

USFS: Mineral Creek watershed assessment, Brooklyn mine Interim Remedial Action (IRA) work.

BLM: Coordinate on Mammoth, Vermillion, Grand Mogul with EPA, characterize drainage above Red Cloud, possibly do characterization in Prospect Gulch depending on budget, and possibly work at Forest Queen.

Stakeholder Involvement: contact Katherine Jenkins, Laura Dixon, or BPMD Superfund website. Ideas for Digging Deeper appreciated.

Administrative Items

Meeting Summary. Chara asked for clarification on the SJ county ordinance in the summary. Marcel moves to approve both the September and October meeting summaries with clarification. Levi seconds. All approve.

CAG Member Reappointments. The operating procedures for the CAG specify that a third of the CAG (five members) should be up for reappointment after two years. Subsequently, those appointments will last for three years. That third of the CAG includes the appointees of La Plata and San Juan Counties, so the CAG only has to be concerned with expiring appointments for three members. Peter suggested that the current CAG vacancy be one of those three appointments. Peter asked CAG members if they want to get off the CAG or want volunteer to reapply to let him know before Christmas. Otherwise, he will pick names out of a hat to reapply.

Future Agenda Items? *Ben Butler Remediation, Macroinvertebrate Data, Tour of Gladstone Treatment Plant, Site Specific plans for interim remedial actions, Sampling and data analysis, Little Dora and North Star Remediation, etc.*

8:15 PM

Adjourn