

Meeting Summary
Bonita Peak Community Advisory Group
September 23, 2021, 6:30—8:15 PM
Via Computer Conferencing

CAG Members in attendance: Peter Butler, Chara Ragland, Brian Devine, Melissa May, John Ott, Russ Anderson, Anthony Edwards, Charlie Smith, Marcel Gaztambide and Susan Livenick. Not in attendance: Ty Churchwell, Helen Mary Johnson, Levi Lloyd, Parker Newby, and Terry Morris.

Also in attendance: Tom Schillaci, Chris Stoneback, Ben Martinez, Rachel Vaughn, Larry Perino, Rob Parker, Taryn Chaya, Athena Jones, Samantha Wright, Selena Sauer, Katherine Jenkins, Mark Rudolph, Linda Figueroa, David Heinze, Scott Roberts, Ryan Bennett, plus a few others.

Introductions and Announcements.

Peter said he was contacted by a reporter about a public comment period related to work to be done on the London Mine. The CAG had no knowledge that this public comment was going on. He asked Rob to discuss the proposed work later in the meeting.

The San Juan Mining and Reclamation Conference is next week in Telluride. The MSI website has more information.

Peter gave a seminar to a class on Water and the West at Fort Lewis College regarding water quality and mine remediation in the upper part of the Animas River Basin.

Marcel was contacted by a staff of a New Mexico hazardous materials sub-committee that wanted an update on work related to the Gold King Mine spill. He gave an update to members of the committee on activities in the BPMD and on what the CAG is doing. The New Mexico Environmental Dept was interested in the CAG's sampling work.

A number of agency staff and a couple of CAG members toured a number of the 48 listed mine sites in the BPMD over several days. The objective of the tour was to collect a plethora of observational information about all the different sites. Kirstin Brown with DRMS led the effort. Susan and Parker went on different days and thought it was a very productive and helpful use of time.

September sampling was done by Peter and Helen Mary hiking down to Cascade, and John and Terry hiking down from Molas.

Update of Current EPA On-the-Ground Activities in the Watershed

Rob Parker started in providing updates. At the London Mine, EPA worked with property owner on a plan for the site. Notice about the work was published in both the Silverton Standard and Durango Herald. The administrative record is on the EPA website, <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.ars&id=0802497&doc=Y&colid=66792®ion=08&type=AR> The comment period will close on Oct. 11 and any comments or questions can be directed to Katherine Jenkins, Jenkins.katherine@epa.gov or 303-312-6351

Athena Jones discussed a “burp” at the Frisco/Bagley Tunnel. Discolored water was noticed by EPA contractors working below Animas Forks. It does not appear that any discolored water made it to Silverton. Most people think that it was caused by a sludge dam breaking free underground in the workings. Peter commented that this is at least the third burp in 25 years. The first documented belch in the mid-1990’s blew the closure gates at the entrance off their hinges. Chara asked about follow up sampling, to which Athena replied that sampling was done the day of and day after. The preliminary assessment was a bump of iron and then other metals, but both dropped quickly, and there has been no other sampling since.

Response Action Updates. EPA removed sludge from the beaver pond that captures the drainage from the Anglo Saxon. They also routed the drainage away from the crib wall.

Work has been completed at the London Mine (so much for the public comment period) which included extending the portal structure, diverting water around the waste rock and adding limestone to the drainage ditch inside to raise pH of water. Peter asked if there is a plan to periodically replace the limestone as it coats with iron. Athena responded that she will get back to Peter on that but not sure of any specific interval for replacement.

The lower pond at the Mammoth Mine has been scoured, but there is still a little work left to be done.

At the Bandora Mine, EPA attempted to drill into the tunnel behind the surface blockage five times, but was unsuccessful. The drill crew needed to leave for other work, so they will try again next year. EPA also put in a barrier keep adit water from releasing over the waste rock pile.

Characterization Updates.

EPA is taking surface and drilling samples in the fluvial tailings between Eureka and Howardsville. The bore holes in the river are difficult but they are finding a thin layer of tailings in the sediment. The borings are going down to bedrock material and all the cores are being logged.

USGS is deploying temperature cables and conducting a tracer study at the same time between Arrastra Gulch and Silverton. The object of the study is to identify groundwater inflows and groundwater metal loading

The Gold King horizontal borehole has been completed. It goes back 1300 feet and is currently capped. Cores were taken while drilling. No water was encountered. EPA is trying to determine if they should either shore up the current adit or drive a new adit to access the deeper workings.

Peter asked about what happened to the sludge that was removed from the Koehler pond. He also wanted to know how EPA was going to address arsenic in the area. Rob said that the sludge was placed off to the side of the pond and will eventually be trucked to the Mayflower repository. It doesn't have high metal content but the property owner asked for it to be removed. In terms of human health, EPA plans to cover key locations where their readings show high levels of arsenic.

Next week, geotechnical investigation of TP4 will start. EPA is also looking for borrow material for the repository. The bulkheads in the Gladstone area will be inspected next week as well.

Draft Proposal for Changes in Use Classification and Water Quality Standards for a Segment in Upper Mineral Creek.

The CAG is putting together a proposal to add an aquatic life use classification and accompanying standards to a section of Mineral Creek between Chattanooga and the Middle Fork of Mineral Creek. Over the years about a dozen mine remediation projects have been completed upstream. Before remediation, the creek was essentially devoid of aquatic life and now it supports it. Brook trout were first found in this segment in 2016. At the bottom of the segment, the Middle Fork of Mineral Creek contributes very high concentrations of mostly naturally occurring iron and aluminum to the mainstem, wiping out most aquatic life below the confluence.

Water quality in the stretch the CAG wants to address has improved dramatically over the past 20 years – a 95% reduction in copper and a 70% reduction in cadmium and zinc. Currently, all water quality parameters except cadmium and zinc, and possibly lead and copper, meet aquatic life water quality standards. The main question in developing the proposal is whether or not additional remediation can bring these four metals to a level that would be protective of most aquatic life. March through June is the most problematic time period for meeting standards.

Reasons for timing of the proposal:

Under the Clean Water Act, existing classified uses need to be protected, and aquatic life is currently a use in this segment. The Colorado Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) generally reviews standards in this part of the state only every five years, and the CAG doesn't want to delay changes for that time period. In addition, EPA, DRMS, and the CAG have collected significant amounts of water quality, leachate, fish, and macroinvertebrate

data within and above this segment. U.S. Forest Service has also collected data, but has not made available to the public. Moving through the water quality standards process provides a great opportunity for all parties to closely analyze data collected and to make decisions on appropriate remediation goals for the upper part of the Mineral Creek watershed.

WQCC must allow the conceptual proposal to move forward in a November meeting. Then a draft proposal must be submitted by mid-January to be included in a public notice. Hearing statements and supporting documents and data will be submitted in the spring. Changes can be made to the proposal, within the limits of the public notice, up until late May, and the WQCC rulemaking hearing will occur in June. CAG members discussed several specific issues that will need to be addressed as this proposal moves forward.

Administrative Items

- ✓ Meeting Summary. No corrections were made. Chara moved for approval. Marcel seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- ✓ Next meeting will be October 28th. Generally, the CAG doesn't meet in November or December on the fourth Thursday of the month, but often does one meeting in early December instead.
- ✓ CAG Discussion Time will be scheduled later in October to discuss the Mineral Creek proposal.
- ✓ Long-Range Schedule Future Agenda Items? *Macroinvertebrate Data, Mayflower Tailings, Site Specific Plans for Interim Remedial Actions, Report on Red & Bonita Bulkhead Test, etc.*

Tom Schillaci invited everyone to the Acid Mine Nation showing on Sunday at Animas Theater and invited CAG to join as experts.

7:45 PM - Adjourn