

Bonita Peak Mining District CAG

Meeting notes – July 27, 2023

By: Ty Churchwell

In attendance: Russ, Ty, Jason, Brian, Dave, Susan, Terry, Charlie, Parker

Absent CAG members: Peter, Emily, Chara, Anthony, Sara, Helen Mary

Others in attendance: Athena Jones, James Hou, Jessica Dugan, Joy Jenkins, Tom Schillaci, Melissa Smeins, Tony Blevens, Julie Babcock, Michelle Furi, Mark Rudolph, James Livenick, Kirsten Brown, Ben Martinez, Todd Hennis and his colleague.

Intros and announcements:

Russ opened the meeting with some notes from Peter to help the group in his absence.

Mark R. announced a site tour of the Summitville facility in the fall. Terry mentioned how we can learn from this site and encouraged joining the tour. Todd H. asked where a treatment facility was going to be built for BPMD. Several in the room advised it's unclear yet if a treatment facility will be built and no location has been selected.

Ty advised the CAG website has been updated.

No quorum existed, so approving previous meeting notes was postponed.

Discussion of EPA presentation earlier in the month of July regarding tracer studies of the Mayflower stretch of the mainstem of the Animas:

As both Russ and Ty were not at the special July meeting, it was encouraged that those who were in attendance help provide the group with summary statements.

Susan asked J. Dugan what the planned approach was for this area, now that the tracer study was completed; what is the logical approach now? Jessica responded by noting that CDM/Baywest had been contracted to perform work that is outlined in a workplan for a period of five years going forward. EPA will advise the CAG as soon as they can. Joy noted that the EPA will advise the CAG of the RI/FS timeline outline soon, in the next few months.

Terry noted that the data provided at the earlier July meeting was clear and easy to understand. He feels 2-3 more years of study in this area is too long, that there should be enough data now to move forward with actions or plans. He also suggested that there are facts we are not absorbing, that some issues could probably be explained with the data we have already. It's taking too long.

Tom S. noted that the data gleaned from this study doesn't move us any closer to a plan of action.

T. Hennis was concerned bromine was used as the tracer, and noted bromine is naturally occurring in the district. M. Rudolph confirmed the tracer was a salt, not bromine.

K. Brown noted that a recording of the meeting was available to all. Ty said he'd email the recording our everyone.

B. Martinez asked if the adaptive management plan had been updated. Joy said it's due to be.

Presentation on A-68 water quality data:

It was decided that Peter should present this data to ensure accuracy of message. The CAG agreed to table this presentation to another future meeting.

Howardsville mill site discussion led by site owner, Todd Hennis:

The Pride of the West (POW) mill is part of the CO Goldfields assets. Todd bought the site.

A bit of history: POW was built in 1942. There is the original tailings pond (TP) from this time to this day. The POW operated into the 1950s. In the 1980s, the mill was rebuilt and a new TP was developed (triangle shape on overhead map (an overhead map was provided to the CAG and made as a visual aid for Todd's presentation.)).

The POW operated from 1980-85. Steve Fearn (previous owner before Hennis) built a new TP in 2003-05. In 1997 Sunnyside Gold (SGC) was supposed to move the tailings from the POW to the Mayflower repository as part of their consent decree. It wasn't done. Todd does not feel there are base metals in SGC's TP, as it's quartz material in general. He believes the drilling into SGC's TP punctured the bentonite liner and compromised its integrity. He noted that the brook trout fishery greatly improved when old tailings were removed. Todd believes there is a high iron-sulphide vein running under the mill and site in general, from the hillside down to at least the river. He also noted there is a noticeable seep at the hillside between the original TP and Fearn's triangle TP. He believes the zinc loading is coming from the original TP, but not likely from SGC's quartz-heavy TP downslope. He criticized the State of CO for burying materials instead of moving off-site. Todd suggested the drainage ditch at the site needs to be cleaned out. He also suggested the EPA divert hillside water away/around the TPs and site in general. His map noted a suggested location for a diversion ditch for surface water above the site. Mistery Hennis and Morris, both the long histories in the district, had a good and clarifying discussion about history of the site, regarding SGC in particular, and came to some agreement on facts or understandings.

Verbal Updates on EPA Activities this Field Season - EPA

From J. Jenkins and EPA – EPA has completed drilling into Lake Emma (OU3). They did hit level F. Results of cores are coming.

Terry suggested the whole CAG and the public could benefit from elevation diagrams to help visualize EPA's update. J. Hou of EPA said he will make diagrams for the near future. T. Hennis suggested this also include Gold King level 7, the Mogul, Am. Tunnel, etc. (the SGC mine pool, in total).

A. Jones of EPA updated on the progress of construction of the permanent repository at Mayflower TP #4. Contractors have begun to scrape off overburden material, making berms with tailings. There are 15-20 people on-site and lots of activity. Things are progressing well and as planned.

At the 'campground' site, EPA has covered the entire site with clean cover materials to mitigate exposure to contaminants. Also, boulders have been placed to prevent motor vehicle access and camping on the site.

Administrative items and/or other update and input:

It was brought to everyone's attention by K. Brown and M. Rudolph that the 5 continuous water quality sensors in the Animas basin are in jeopardy. USGS has informed the State that at the end of this fiscal year, the EPA does not plan to fund the operation and maintenance of those water-quality sensors. Fortunately, this change will not have an impact on the stream gages or real-time flow data at those locations. The functions to be lost are continuous measures of pH, specific conductance, temperature and turbidity. USGS advised that, unless they find new funding partners, or the EPA changes their plan, they will discontinue the operations of the water-quality sensors on September 30, 2023. Funding previously had come from a WIIN grant.

The CAG was not pleased to learn this information and noted as a group how important that data is in a variety of ways. Brian noted it's tied to our emergency notification system, and Jason says the City uses this data constantly in the water treatment operations. Local river recreation entities use this continuous data to determine recreational use considerations.

In a quick discussion about a possible CAG discussion time in the near future, all generally agreed this is time well spent and likely necessary.

Any discussion about long term schedules was postponed until Peter's return.

It was noted that a possible non-public site tour will be given by EPA on 9/27

The meeting was adjourned.