

Meeting Summary
Bonita Peak Mining District Community Advisory Group
July 15, 2025, 5:30 - 7:01 pm
Via Computer Conferencing and In Person
at Santa Rita Treatment Plant
Durango, CO

CAG Members attending: Chara Ragland, Parker Newby, Jason Fast, Susan Livenick, Chris Hill, Russ Anderson, Anthony Edwards and David Palmer.
Online: Charlie Smith and Ken Balleweg.

Also in attendance: Kirstin Brown (DRMS), Mark Rudolph (CDPHE), Vanessa Ledesma (CDPHE), Peter Butler, Scott Roberts (MSI), Wyatt Bair (Sen. Michael Bennett's Office) and James Livenick.
Online: Joe Gilbert (CDM Smith), Michelle Gorman (CDM Smith), Melissa Smeins (BLM), Rob Runkel (USGS), Mike Boulay (NMED), Tom Schillaci, Joseph Fox, Ryan Bennett, Jillian Kagle, Connor Newman and David Heinze.

EPA attendees: Ashlin Brooks and Joy Jenkins. Online: Jessica Duggan, James Hou and Athena Jones.

Introductions and Announcements

Introductions were made around the meeting room and some of the online participants were identified.

Chara thanked the Silverton Planning Group for the meeting in Silverton last month (June 26, 2025).

Presentations

Chara introduced Joe Gilbert with CDM Smith, a contractor to EPA, who gave an online presentation on Remedial Investigation (RI) activities in the Upper Cement Creek area. A draft RI report should be out later this year. The presentation was broken down into seven topics:

- Sources
- Discharges and Water Quality
- Base Flows
- Comparison with A72 Location (on Animas River below Silverton)
- Source Water Management and Options
- Conveyants
- Treatment Options

Select Sources (upper Cement Creek)

Cement Creek and tributaries above Gladstone IWTP are conveyed by gravity. Sources are compared to A72 for consideration of metals load and seasonal variability and impact to Priority Reach 1. Surface water inputs include: groundwater, rain and snowmelt surface runoff, and input from mine features/adits/runoff/ runoff.

Charlie commented that there were two extremes during the time period being studied: 2019 had an exceptional high flow, and 2020 had an exceptional low flow.

Joy (EPA) commented that some data are based on fall collections, and may result in order of magnitude changes, but still identifies major sources for the study area.

Base Flows

Base flows of Cement Creek include base flows between the Mogul Mine and American Tunnel, including the iron fens near the Mogul Mine; North Fork Cement Creek; Middle Fork Cement Creek; and South Fork Cement Creek. Joe commented that Prospect Gulch has the lowest flows.

Discharges and Water Quality

Joe presented a table summarizing discharges and water quality for Cement Creek drainage.

Susan questioned if the data indicated discharges were lower than 20 years ago, recalling an anecdotal comment.

Joe noted that discharges have fluctuated over time but not sure about the older data.

Parker asked where the measurements were taken?

Joe replied that measurements were taken upstream of American Tunnel and Red & Bonita Mine, and represents flow above the IWTP. They subtract known input from mines and adits that are discretely measured.

Joy provided additional comments to clarify the source table.

Source Area Load Summary (chart)

The load summary used zinc for analyses, but other metal loads are present in significant amounts: arsenic, cadmium, copper, iron, manganese and lead.

Load values were compared to analyses at A72 location. Most of the load reported at A72 comes from Gold King, Red & Bonita, American Tunnel, Mogul, Natalie Occidental, and upper Cement Creek (above Gladstone IWTP).

Charlie suggested putting Animas River data above Cement Creek data on the chart.

Source Water Management and Treatment Considerations

Conveyance options focused on gravity: pipelines, American Tunnel, and Cement Creek.

Local passive or active treatments may include wetlands, solar or flow-actuated treatments.

Water Treatment Options

Options to consider:

- Influent geochemistry – metals concentrations, pH, water temperature.

- Local flow variability/seasonal flow variability

- Sludge management

Active treatment options, such as a treatment plant (IWTP), are better for higher flows. Passive treatment options are better for lower flows.

Treatment options need to consider:

- Source control/water management using bulkheads, routing conveyances
- Biochemical reactors, i.e., in Mogul iron fen wetlands
- Alkalinity producing drainages, i.e., limestone cascade
- Passive engineered treatments

Susan had a question – she had not heard about the iron fens at the Mogul Mine?

Joe replied that it was a natural wetland to the south of the Mogul Mine.

Rob Runkel (USGS) talked about the Red & Bonita fens. He commented that there will be a feasibility study (FS) following the RI report, which will have detailed planning criteria.

Joe commented there is no date yet for the draft RI, but it will be out in 2025. The FS will then follow the RI.

Peter Butler had two comments:

- 1) the data are consistent with past data trends;
- 2) September is a low flow period (not the lowest flow) thus the toxicity is low then and it has the best water quality due to the concentration of hardness. Hardness is the key to toxicity. He has noted that toxicity has increased in the past 10+ years.

Joy commented maybe more lime has been added compared to the old Sunnyside treatment operation.

Peter noted that also there is a larger load from the Animas River than Cement Creek.

Joy said the RI will have all the information compiled, then they can decide what to do:

- Active treatment is the #1 option.
- Passive treatment would be best for lower loads and flow rates.

Charlie suggested we may consider using the American Tunnel for capture and sizing the treatment options.

EPA Updates and Questions

Chara requested three updates from EPA regarding ongoing projects:

1. *Bandora Mine Monitor Well Installation.*

Jessica (EPA) reported that the drill rig is situated at the mine but power issues have delayed the start, and are being worked on now. She expects they will start drilling next Tuesday (July 22).

Joy mentioned that the monitor well is being installed to understand what is going on in the Bandora Mine regarding fluctuations in water level.

Anthony commented that EPA should maintain contact with Jim Donovan regarding the project activities, and to please update himself and the Silverton public information officer.

2. *Insitu Treatment at Mogul Mine.*

Joy stated that the project has been delayed at this time due to agency personnel losses, specifically EPA has lost some contracting officers. As a result, the project will not be conducted this field season.

A tracer study is in progress at Lake Emma and Sunnyside by DRMS. Tracer was injected last week and monitoring will continue until the snow stops in the spring. The tracer being used is organic, and it is mixed with granular activated carbon.

3. *Waste Sludge Repository*

Joy reported that an award for further work is imminent, probably next week (July 22). They will try to get the remaining work done this season to finish the project. EPA will communicate to Silverton officials what will happen regarding activities that may impact the town (trucks, etc.).

Susan asked about Lake Emma.

Joy said Lake Emma will be in a separate RI report.

Activities and Questions for EPA Regarding BPMD

Chara presented several topics for discussion:

1. Tracer Studies at Lake Emma
2. Water Quality Reduction Potential
3. Howardsville Update
4. Cement Creek Hydrology
5. What Should be Treated?
6. How Much Money is Left?

Joy reported on EPA's top three projects:

1. Upper Animas River fluvial tailings remedy – EPA is trying to move fast
2. OU2 Tailings impoundments 1, 2 and 3 – EPA contractor is working on finishing the draft RI, including infiltration data. Mayflower is not started yet, and it needs a source control remedy – no decision yet on a remedy.
3. Cement Creek, draining adits – Red & Bonita valve closure to reduce loading. They need to figure out bulkheading and source control before designing a new WTP.

Joy noted that federal funding is insecure at this time, and everyone is concerned.

Anthony commented that the Mayflower metal loads may be migration from below the tailings, coming from underground. Will capping the tailings be the only treatment looked at? Should EPA consider moving the complex?

Joy expects that a phased approach will be conducted: 1) infiltration study, and 2) groundwater monitor wells.

Anthony had additional ideas to consider, such as a diversion ditch, or sequestration, or other means of looking at source control.

Joy commented that they may need another funding source - a PRP other than Sunnyside.

Russ suggested the CAG respond to decide what we can do, i.e., an approach to see our goals met.

Administrative Items

Chara announced the next CAG meeting will be held September 16, 2025 in Silverton.

She asked if anyone else wanted to be included as a participant on the Howardsville Water Quality team. Susan Livenick and Helen Mary were added to the team.

Chara mentioned that a new CAG representative is needed for La Plata County since Brian Devine is gone.

A CAG tour of BPMD sites is tentatively scheduled for September 18, 2025. It is possible the tour may go further afield, perhaps in a different direction to see the Bandora and Brooklyn mines.

Joy commented that Bandora is on hold for now but may be available in September. The site currently has exposed waste rock piles that have been treated with a spray coating, and may not be suitable for contact yet.

Tom Schillaci announced that a film will be presented for viewing on August 5th at the Powerhouse in Durango. The film will be on the 10th anniversary of the Gold King Mine spill. The film will begin at 6:00 pm and last an hour. It is Episode 7 of the Acid Mine Nation series.

7:01 pm

Adjourn