



State of Utah

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NEWS RELEASE

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Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Navajo Nation Prepare for Spring Runoff of El Niño Snowpack Preparedness Plan Brings Greater Uniformity to Monitoring of Animas/San Juan Watershed

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) latest data collected on the San Juan River shows no exceedance of water quality standards. DEQ's Division of Water Quality (DWQ), however, will continue to collect weekly data as part of a multi-state coordinated monitoring plan during the spring runoff event over the next few months.

“Spring 2016 will be the first snowmelt runoff season in the Animas and San Juan watersheds after the 2015 Gold King Mine release and there is concern that heavy metal concentrations in the river will rise as flows increase, posing a risk to downstream communities and aquatic life,” said Walt Baker, water quality director for DEQ.

As government agencies tasked with protecting environmental quality and the public interest, the states determined that risks posed by the upcoming spring runoff event is significant enough to warrant monitoring and reporting on the condition of the river in a meaningful, timely and consistent manner. Accordingly, the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and the Navajo Nation collaborated with local counties, municipalities, and other tribes to develop a Spring Runoff Preparedness Plan.

The Preparedness Plan includes installation of sensors that will provide real-time data on an array of scientific parameters including turbidity, flow levels, conductivity and pH. The plan also calls for water quality sampling at regular intervals to track the condition of the river and all data will be available to the public through the USGS website. The Plan's uniform regional monitoring will enable informed decision-making on behalf of downstream communities in Colorado, New Mexico, the Navajo Nation and Utah.

DEQ has also finalized a Long-term Monitoring and Assessment Plan for the San Juan River and Lake Powell that includes water quality and sediment monitoring, inventory of mining sources in the San Juan River watershed, and an assessment of the risks posed to the environment and human health associated with metals in the system.

For more information: <http://www.deq.utah.gov/Topics/Water/goldkingmine/>

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About DEQ

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) mission is to safeguard public health and quality of life by protecting and enhancing the environment. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah's air, land and

water. For more information, visit www.deq.utah.gov, follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](#)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](#)), or call 1-800-458-0145.