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DEQ's Diligence in Seeking Reimbursement for Gold King Spill Pays Off

Latest EPA payment brings total to \$464k, additional claims pending for monitoring

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) received \$39,055 from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), capping off reimbursements to DEQ for costs incurred during its initial response to the August 5, 2015, Gold King Mine spill.

Reimbursement payments from EPA now total approximately \$464,000 and fully compensate DEQ for all reasonable and necessary costs during the initial spill response.

“DEQ and our Attorney General’s Office have worked closely with EPA to ensure we were reimbursed for our agency’s costs during the spill,” said Alan Matheson, executive director of DEQ. “We appreciate EPA’s efforts to address and pay our claims.”

Other Utah entities that received reimbursements from the EPA last week included the Department of Public Safety (\$4,473), the Department of Natural Resources (\$5,811), the Attorney General’s Office (\$4,950), and San Juan County (\$19,360). DEQ coordinated the claims submissions for these entities and will distribute these funds to the recipients.

The Gold King Mine spill released three million gallons of metals-laden mine water into the Animas River. The contaminated water flowed through Colorado, New Mexico, Utah’s San Juan River, and terminated at Lake Powell. DEQ personnel rushed to the scene before the release reached Utah to conduct sampling and monitoring before and after the spill waters moved through the state.

Water-quality scientists returned to the San Juan River last spring to conduct sampling during the spring runoff. The [Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation \(WIIN\)](#) signed into law on December 16, 2016, enacted specific guidelines for response costs eligible for reimbursement, including water sampling and monitoring costs. The WIIN Act bodes well for reimbursement of DEQ's spring runoff monitoring as well as other eligible response costs.

“Our staff worked hard to document our claims and make our case before EPA, and this payment is a testament to their success,” added Matheson. “EPA’s decision to reimburse us in full for our initial response costs allows us to redirect this recouped funding to programs that protect our water quality and waterways.”

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About DEQ

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) mission is to safeguard and improve Utah's air, land and water through balanced regulation. 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](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)), or call 1-800-458-0145.