

Summary for Upper Cement Creek Working Group

For March 15, 2012

ATTENDEES: Peter Butler, Bill Simon, Steve Fearn, Brent Lewis, Ken Portz, Craig Gander, Ray Ferguson, Todd Hennis, Chuck Wanner, Ty Churchwell, Lisa Richardson, Buck Skillen, Larry Perino, Dan Randolph, Kirstin Brown, Darlene Marcus.

Announcements:

Bill Simon discussed some of the lead issues we have seen in the lower Animas River below Bakers Bridge. He and Peter looked at data over the last five years and found high total lead concentrations during spring runoff (early June). There are also some high values in early August which may coincide with big rain events. In June 2008, a number of samples taken the same day around Durango showed total lead concentrations over 100 ug/l. The water supply standard is 50 ug/L. It is unclear if the lead source is above A72 (just below Silverton) or below that sampling station. We'll look at more data to try to understand the issue better.

There was a discussion at a Colorado Bar Association seminar about Good Samaritan issues. Bill listened in and noted that there are still some misunderstandings about the nature of the issue.

Craig Gander with CDPHE reported on a meeting with BLM, San Juan County, CDPHE, and other interested individuals about the eventual disposal of old ASARCO claims in Arrastra Gulch. CDPHE does not envision disposal of the claims until the ASARCO trust funds for environmental cleanup or mitigation have been utilized. So disposal could be quite a few years away.

Steve Fearn reported on an initiative by Southwestern Water Conservation District and a number of partners to look at a long-term monitoring program involving fish tissue sampling in reservoirs for mercury. The testing seems a little haphazard, and they would like to work with others to have a more standardized protocol.

Topics:

1. Bill summarized the new 2010 Macroinvertebrates Report. It essentially shows similar results to the 2010 Fisheries Report; namely that conditions have worsened in the Animas Canyon below Silverton and above Bakers Bridge. It also showed some improvements in conditions in the Animas River above Silverton and worsening conditions in South Mineral Creek. He pointed out the need to determine the cause of this worsening condition.
2. Brent Lewis said that BLM has been talking with USGS about developing a fate and transport model for metals in Cement Creek. USGS has done quite a bit of this work already, and this effort would update the model with more recent data. It could also be used to estimate the effect treatment(s) above Gladstone might have on the water quality at A72 below Silverton. He said he would circulate a draft Statement of Work for comment before the next meeting. BLM also has a consultant waiting to evaluate different treatment technologies once the group helps BLM in defining the scope of such work. The group decided that the technology work group needs to meet next month.
3. Kirstin Brown shared some updates she has made to the 3-D model of major mine workings and geologic faults in upper Cement Creek. She has added an overlay depicting the estimated water table surface based upon available data. Kirstin also distributed a draft agenda for the MSI mining conference in Silverton to be held on April 26th.

4. Larry Perino showed more of his metal concentration and loading analysis at CC48 and A72. As a first cut, Larry showed mathematically what the metal concentrations at those two monitoring stations would be if all the metal loading from the four major adits could be removed and if 100% of that load reduction was realized, in changed concentrations, at the monitoring stations. In reality, the reductions at the monitoring stations are expected to be less due to other factors. His results show that with the removal of the four adits, zinc and cadmium still clearly exceed water quality standards at A72, and iron and aluminum would exceed standards for just a few months of the year. The other metals would meet standards.

5. There are plans developing to do initial investigations for potential treatment of the mine pool at Mogul. DRMS is going to map fractures on the surface and possibly in the adit up to the bulkhead. We need to check to see if the valve on the pipe through the bulkhead is still operable or needs to be replaced. Todd Hennis, owner of the Mogul, said that any potential mining at the Mogul is at least ten years down the road and he doesn't foresee that in situ treatment of the mine pool should impact any future mining plans.

6. Lisa Richardson with BLM distributed maps of relatively flat BLM land that lies near Cement Creek. These are areas that could potentially be used for passive treatment. She identified about 4-8 acres that might be suitable. We will discuss some potential passive treatment options more in April.