



ACCOUNTABILITY · INTEGRITY · RESPECT

Board of County Commissioners
Matt Salka, Chair
Marsha Porter-Norton, Vice Chair
Clyde Church, Commissioner

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Durango, CO 81301
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September 24, 2024

Senator Michael Bennet
Senator John Hickenlooper
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for the Gold King Mine Compensation Act

Dear Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper:

On August 5, 2015, approximately three million gallons of acid mine drainage (also referred to as the Gold King Mine spill) was accidentally released into Cement Creek in San Juan County, Colorado, contaminating the Animas, San Juan and Colorado Rivers as it traveled through Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and the Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Navajo reservations.

The ensuing environmental, economic and cultural impacts on downstream communities, businesses and state, tribal and local governments were significant. There have since been many wide-ranging responses to remedy the issues that led to and resulted from the spill, most notably the designation of the Bonita Peak Mining District Superfund site, which aims to address the complex of mining-related sources that are releasing metal-laden materials into Mineral and Cement creeks and the Upper Animas River drainages.

However, many downstream businesses suffered losses as a result of the spill and were never compensated for claims made in its aftermath. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has consistently indicated its intention and desire to make these businesses whole but has lacked a procedural mechanism for doing so. The Gold King Mine Compensation Act would, at long last, provide a path for compensating the businesses that rely on a healthy Animas River.

We are in full support of this important and long-awaited legislation that will provide relief for the businesses in our and neighboring communities impacted by the historic Gold King Mine spill

Sincerely,

LA PLATA COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


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Chair


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