



OPEN SPACE & TRAILS DEPARTMENT

970.668.4060 ph | 970.668.4225 f
www.SummitCountyCO.gov

0037 Peak One Dr. | PO Box 5660
Frisco, CO 80443

For Immediate Release

September 27, 2017

For More Information

Contact: Brian Lorch at (970) 668-4067

EPA Commencing Cleanup Work at the Jumbo Mine

Mine cleanup advances efforts to address water quality impacts in Summit County's Snake River Watershed

Summit County, Colorado - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced this week it is taking immediate action to perform mine cleanup activities at the Jumbo Mine in Summit County's Peru Creek Basin approximately seven miles east of Keystone Resort. The Jumbo Mine, which operated from 1915 to 1918, produced quantities of gold, copper, lead, and silver. Historic mine operations also generated significant volumes of waste rock and tailings piles. Inactive and abandoned for a century, the mine site was identified in the early 1990s by the EPA, the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE), as well as in the Snake River Watershed Plan, as a significant point-source contributor of metal-contaminated flows into Peru Creek and the downstream Snake River.

Historic hardrock mining in the Peru Creek Basin left a legacy of contaminated and abandoned mine sites, whose acid mine drainage significantly degrades water quality. Much has been done to study the problems in the Snake River watershed, beginning at the early 1970s. Most studies have focused on the Peru Creek drainage, which is home to the largest, longest operating mine in the watershed, the Pennsylvania Mine. In coordination with Summit County and the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety (DRMS), the EPA completed cleanup actions at the Pennsylvania Mine in 2016. The Jumbo Mine is another high priority abandoned mine site in the Peru Creek Basin identified by the EPA as a remediation project site capable of significantly improving water quality in the Snake River watershed.

Summit County purchased the land surrounding the abandoned Jumbo Mine in early 2016 for public open space. A restrictive covenant placed on the adjacent property containing the abandoned mine site allows for the EPA's cleanup actions to occur, but also limits the County's liability for the existing environmental issues and associated cleanup actions. "We had been looking to acquire this piece of property for a long time, recognizing that it meets many open space values," said Brian Lorch, Summit County Open Space and Trails director. "However, before we could take steps to purchase the property, we needed to ensure that the property could be cleaned up in an economical manner." The EPA is implementing the cleanup work as a time-critical removal action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and is fully funding the project.

The EPA initiated work earlier this week, which it plans to complete in about 3 weeks. Cleanup activities involve diverting clean water draining from a mine adit around an adjacent tailings pile towards a limestone-lined ditch. According to EPA studies, water quality of the adit drainage degrades as it crosses the mine tailings, contributing high levels of lead, zinc and other metals to the stream. Therefore, diverting drainage around the tailings into a lined ditch should greatly improve water quality. "The overall approach will help reduce the discharge of metals into Peru Creek", said Lorch. "A passive treatment approach at the Jumbo Mine site is quite similar to numerous mine cleanups performed elsewhere by the County."

Since 2001, Summit County has worked with the EPA to identify and prioritize mine sites in need of cleanup in the Peru Creek Basin. The County's proactive coordination with the EPA facilitated recent cleanup efforts at the Pennsylvania Mine, and numerous other sites in the area. "We are happy to see the EPA continue their mine cleanup efforts in the Peru Creek Basin," said Summit County Commissioner, Karn Stiegelmeier. "The Summit County community is very supportive of our efforts to clean up abandoned mine sites on County property, voting to fund a mill levy in 2015 that dedicated funding for cleaning up mine-impacted sites."

For additional information regarding this project contact Brian Lorch at Summit County Open Space and Trails Department (970) 668-4067.

###