

ADEQ Update on Colorado Gold King Mine Spill

PHOENIX (August 17, 2015) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) officials announced today it has examined data provided by states upstream of Lake Powell and closer to the Gold King Mine spill. ADEQ’s analysis of data released by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality of samples collected about 100 miles from Lake Powell (closest Utah sample) shows that water quality conditions in the San Juan River upstream of Lake Powell are generally consistent with pre-spill conditions. “Based on what we’re seeing with the water flowing into Lake Powell, we don’t expect there to be noticeable change in water quality in Arizona,” ADEQ Director Misael Cabrera said.

“To put this spill into perspective, the three million gallon estimated volume of the spill represents a miniscule fraction of a percent (0.000071 percent) of the total volume of water in Lake Powell (more than four trillion gallons as of July 29, 2015) Cabrera said, adding that ADEQ does not expect this spill to have short- or long-term negative impacts to Lake Powell and the downstream Colorado River.”

ADEQ has been and will continue coordinating with public health and environmental agencies in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, as well as with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Navajo Nation officials to gather, analyze and share water quality data with each other and the public as it becomes available. Beginning August 14, these officials began lifting water use restrictions for the Animas and San Juan Rivers, because water quality conditions are returning to pre-spill conditions.

Last week ADEQ completed sampling to characterize baseline water quality in Lake Powell and the Colorado River at Lee’s Ferry and submitted these samples for analysis with the fastest possible turnaround time. ADEQ expects to receive lab results later today, Monday, August 17, which it will compare with Arizona surface water quality standards and historical data.

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If the general public has questions about the potential health effects, you can call the Arizona Department of Health Service Office of Environmental Health at 602-364-3118, the Arizona Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222, or your local county health department.

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