

Impact Review Team to monitor EPA's mine spill lasting effects

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FARMINGTON— Gov. Susana Martinez announced the creation of a multiagency, long-term impact review team to monitor the effects of the massive 3 million gallon waste spill in the Animas River that EPA officials have admitted to causing Aug. 19.

After touring the spill by helicopter for the second time in less than a week, the governor made the announcement with cabinet secretaries and directors of the New Mexico Departments of Agriculture, Environment, Game and Fish, Health, and the Office of the State Engineer.

“As the river begins to clear up, there are still many questions left unanswered by the EPA. New Mexicans deserve to know the long-term effects this environmental catastrophe will have on our communities, our agriculture and our wildlife,” Martinez said. “That is why I have called on state agencies to come together to work with local and federal officials to investigate and shed light on the potential impacts this waste spill could have on our families in the coming days, months and years.”

Martinez continued, “And make no mistake about it: we will keep the EPA honest when they say they intend to hold themselves accountable at an even higher standard than a private business.” With today’s announcement, the long-term impact review team will conduct research, collaborate with local communities, federal officials, and members of the public, and share information to learn more about the potential long-term impact of the spill on local communities, wildlife, and agriculture.

“This long-term impact review team will allow us to continue to protect New Mexicans even as the short-term effects of the spill begin to fade,” said Environment Department Cabinet Secretary Ryan Flynn. “Through working together and sharing ideas and information based on different agencies’ areas of expertise, we’ll be able to better ensure that New Mexicans are protected from any potential long-term effects of this catastrophe.”

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Earlier in the week, the governor toured the area by helicopter, declared a state of emergency in response to the spill, met with local leaders and responders, and established a multiagency response team that has been assisting affected communities in responding to the realities of the spill.

The governor's executive order declaring a state of emergency frees up an additional \$750,000 in state funds. These dollars will be used to test water wells, study the potential long-term effects of the spill, support the efforts of the multi-agency response team, and provide other mitigation or response efforts that become necessary.

This is in addition to the \$500,000 in state emergency funds that NMED requested and received on Friday.