

ANN KIRKPATRICK
1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

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Congress of the United States
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August 11, 2015

Gina McCarthy
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
William Jefferson Clinton Federal Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. (1101A)
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy,

I am writing to express my urgent concerns about the more than 3 million gallons of toxic wastewater spilling from Gold King Mine into the Animas River and now impacting the San Juan River, an important water source for Arizona's tribal and non-tribal communities, agriculture, recreation and small businesses. I share the outrage of my constituents in northern Arizona and on the Navajo Nation, where 215 miles of tribal land along the rivers could be impacted by this terrible situation.

I am also deeply concerned about the impact this contamination will have on Lake Powell and our northern Arizona communities and economy. The harmful chemicals that are moving toward Lake Powell threaten the tourism industry, local businesses, free-roaming livestock, and farmland irrigation that is so important for the livelihood of folks living in northern Arizona. It's critical that the EPA is clear and forthright about what it is doing and about the potential impact on the families, farms, livestock and environment in these communities.

On Aug. 8, the Navajo Nation declared a state of emergency in response to the potential health risks posed by contaminated water traveling toward their essential water sources. Water is life for these communities, and it is crucial that the EPA addresses their concerns and is held responsible for not only the cleanup of this contamination but also the long-term mitigation of the harm caused by this disaster. As you know, the federal government has historic obligations and responsibilities to protect our tribal nations' land and natural resources. I support any efforts by the Navajo Nation to hold the federal government legally responsible for damages caused by this spill.

I am hearing reports that this spill has already devastated many families, farms and livestock. As the congresswoman for this region, I need answers about what the EPA is doing right now to protect the public health of my constituents and to mitigate the spreading of contamination through the San Juan River and into Lake Powell.

I expect the EPA to provide a detailed mitigation plan and to conduct and make available an analysis of the potential impact this disaster will have. I urge you to do everything in your power to immediately address this tragedy and provide support to the tribes, local governments and residents of these impacted communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ann Kirkpatrick". The signature is stylized and cursive.

The Honorable Ann Kirkpatrick
U.S. Representative, Arizona District One