







The Animas River typically turns brown during spring runoff as a result of snowmelt and sediment

# ANIMAS RIVER RISING SPRING RUNOFF UPDATE

Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) is continuing to monitor spring runoff of the Animas River in Durango to provide science people can use.

#### Why are we monitoring?

There is concern that during spring runoff, sediment deposited during the Gold King Mine release could potentially be re-suspended and negatively affect water quality in the Animas River. Our goal is to understand whether water quality this spring is any different than previous years and if metal concentrations in the river pose any threat to human health, agriculture, or aquatic life.

#### What is MSI monitoring?

MSI is currently monitoring Animas River water quality at Rotary Park in Durango and aquatic life, specifically, benthic macroinvertebrates, at sites along the river from Silverton to Durango. The monitoring program is a part of a partnership between MSI and the City of Durango to convey water quality information to the public about the stretch of river through Durango.

## How do we know whether the river is safe?

Animas River water quality is monitored by federal, tribal, and state agencies, as well as local, independent organizations like the Mountain Studies Institute. To determine whether water is safe for users, we compare observed contaminant levels in the Animas River to water quality benchmarks developed by the Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Colorado. To see graphs depicting current water quality conditions in relation to water quality standards, visit: www.mountainstudies.org.



WWW.MOUNTAINSTUDIES.ORG/ANIMASRIVER

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SPRING RUNOFF AS OF MAY 22? \_\_\_\_\_

#### HUMAN HEALTH

Metals of concern for human health (Arsenic and Mercury) were found to be at levels considered safe by CDPHE water quality standards.



City of Durango water is treated and meets drinking water quality standards. The City of Durango is required by the Safe Drinking Water Act to meet health-based water quality standards and provide results to the public. For City of Durango drinking water quality results, visit: www.Durango.gov/utilities.



All metals were at levels considered safe for garden irrigation and agricultural use by CDPHE water quality standards.



All metals were below EPA's recreational screening levels, which are protective of users who accidentally swallow river water (swimmers, rafters, tubers) or users who intentionally ingest river water (backpackers, overnight river trip users). It is always good practice to treat river water to remove bacteria before drinking.



Water quality guidance for adults and children that recreate on the Animas River should also apply to pets. Metals in water do not readily pass across skin to internal organs.



Metals thought to be most harmful to aquatic life (Copper, Zinc, and Selenium) were at levels considered safe by CDPHE. However, on several occasions this spring, concentrations of Aluminum and Iron surpassed chronic water quality standards set by CDPHE to protect aquatic life from persistent, longterm exposure to metals.

## Where does City of Durango get its drinking water?

The City of Durango primarily sources drinking water from the Florida River. During peak water use in the summer, the City of Durango also sources water from the Animas River, but not during spring runoff when the river carries a higher load of sediment and possible contaminants.

# How will I know if water quality conditions change?

In a partnership with federal, tribal, and local government, La Plata County has installed an emergency notification system for the Animas River, which uses real time instruments in the river to detect changes in water quality that could pose a risk to human health.



For more information, visit: www.MountainStudies.org/AnimasRiver www.LaPlata.co.us/emergency www.SJBHD.org www.DurangoGov.org/utilities

