



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
**NEWS RELEASE**  
WWW.EPA.GOV/NEWSROOM

Contact: Lisa McClain-Vanderpool, 303-312-6077, [mcclain-vanderpool.lisa@epa.gov](mailto:mcclain-vanderpool.lisa@epa.gov)

## EPA awards over \$1.5 million to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and to Utah and Colorado for San Juan Watershed Monitoring Program

### Funds are part of \$3.6 million provided to collaborative program

Denver, Colo. (April 26, 2018) – Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and regional partners launched a program to develop and implement a long-term water quality monitoring program for the San Juan River watershed. EPA provided \$3.6 million to support the sampling, monitoring and assessment of the watershed, which includes the San Juan River, the Animas River and Lake Powell. The partnership brings together seven states and tribes: Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Navajo Nation and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe.

“The San Juan Watershed Monitoring Partnership will bring together states and tribes to collect and share information vital to the protection of the watershed and important economic activities in the region,” said **EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt**. “This partnership showcases the agency’s cooperative federalism approach and will improve environmental outcomes for the people and livestock that depend on these water resources.”

“This monitoring program is a great example of the states, tribes and EPA cooperating among broad jurisdictions to answer questions across the watershed,” said EPA Region 8 **Administrator Doug Benevento**. “And we’re committed to making the data that’s collected easily accessible to the public.”

Together, stakeholders will develop a comprehensive watershed-wide monitoring program to safeguard people and livestock using these water resources. Work funded through the San Juan River Watershed Program includes:

- \* Coordinating and sharing data to help inform watershed decision making;
- \* Conducting water quality, sediment and biological monitoring to understand watershed conditions and target additional monitoring;
- \* Implementing research activities to inform local stakeholders on watershed decision making; and
- \* Developing and launching a website to communicate results to the public about the condition of the watershed.

EPA awarded \$920,000 to the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (UDEQ) to implement two critical activities that include conducting a sediment coring study in the San Juan River and Colorado

River deltas of Lake Powell, and collaborating on communication and outreach activities with surrounding communities. The sediment coring study will be implemented over a three-year period to better understand the metals deposition and potential risks associated with low lake levels. Throughout the study, UDEQ will inform the public on the current status and on-going work.

"The Utah Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Water Quality is pleased to receive this EPA funding to conduct a sediment-coring study in Lake Powell," said **UDEQ Division of Water Quality Director Erica Gaddis**. "This study will improve our understanding of the impacts from the Gold King Mine spill on Lake Powell as well as the cumulative effects on the reservoir from decades of mining in the San Juan Mountains."

The Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) will use grants totaling \$227,754 to work with San Juan Basin Public Health to collect water quality samples for metals, as well as coliform bacteria, from private wells adjacent to the Animas River and other tributaries within the Upper Animas River sub-basin. This project is intended to inform homeowners of the quality of their drinking water and if additional measures are needed.

"The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) welcomes a Clean Water Act grant award over \$225,000 to protect water quality in the Animas River watershed. The funds will be used to continue long-term water quality monitoring in the area and also to create a communication and outreach liaison position based in the Town of Silverton," said **CDPHE Director of Environmental Programs Martha Rudolph**. "The liaison will work with all stakeholders and agencies to keep the public informed while ensuring that community members have meaningful opportunities to provide input on decisions that affect them."

In addition, CDPHE will collaborate with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to continue to operate and maintain water quality instruments near Silverton and Durango. This data will be used to activate an alert notification system, and to improve understanding of factors that impact water quality in the Upper Animas River Basin.

EPA also awarded \$380,000 to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe in grant funds - in collaboration with the Ute Mountain Ute and the Northern Ute Tribes - to identify the extent of cultural uses of waters in the Animas River to understand how contaminants may affect tribal uses. The Ute people have a longstanding history with the Bonita Peak Mining District region and still visit the region for cultural practices today. This study will highlight and translate the oral tradition of the Ute people to provide a better understanding of any potential toxicological risks as a result of coming into contact with plants of interest.

For more information, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/sanjuanwatershed>