

# EPA: No health risks to wildlife after Colorado mine spill

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An Environmental Protection Agency official said Sunday she doesn't believe wildlife will suffer significant health impacts from the large volume of wastewater that spilled from an abandoned mine in southwestern Colorado.

The EPA also said the amount of heavy-metal laced wastewater that spilled from Colorado's Gold King Mine into the Animas River, turning the [water](#) a mucky orange and then yellow, is three times larger than its initial estimate.

The agency now says 3 million gallons (11.4 million liters) spilled into the river Wednesday and Thursday, instead of 1 million (3.8 million). The revision came after the EPA used a stream gauge from the U.S. Geological Survey.

Four days after the EPA-caused spill, the agency has been unable to determine whether humans or aquatic life face health risks. However, EPA toxicologist Deborah McKean said the sludge moved so quickly after the spill that it would not have "caused significant health effects" to animals that consumed the water.

The discolored water from the spill stretched more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) from where it originated near Colorado's historic mining town of Silverton into the New Mexico municipalities of Farmington, Aztec and Kirtland.

The leading edge of the plume was headed toward Utah and Montezuma Creek near the town of Bluff, a tourist destination. The town, which is populated by a few hundred people, is surrounded by scenic sandstone bluffs.

Local officials were preparing to shut down two wells that serve Montezuma Creek, said Rex Kontz, deputy general manager for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

To keep water flowing to homes, the residential tank in Halchita has been filled with clean water hauled 40 miles (65 kilometers) from Arizona.

Back in Colorado where the spill started, the EPA planned to meet with residents of Durango, downstream from the mine. The EPA water tests near Durango are still being analyzed.

The EPA has not said how long cleanup efforts will take. An EPA-supervised crew trying to enter the mine to pump out and treat the water caused the [spill](#)

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