



CITY OF TUCSON

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Fernando Molina
Tucson Water Public Information Officer
(520) 837-2185; (520) 349-0982 (cell)
Fernando.Molina@tucsonaz.gov

Date: August 10, 2015
TDD: (520) 791-2639

Animas River Contamination Not Expected to Impact Tucson Water Supply

On August 5, 2015, a contractor for the Environmental Protection Agency accidentally released three million gallons of waste water into the Animas River. The source of the contamination is an abandoned gold mine, and includes heavy metals such as lead and arsenic.

While the Animas River is a tributary to the Colorado River, the principal source of water for Tucson, Tucson Water officials do not anticipate local water contamination issues as a result of the problem in Colorado. Interim Tucson Water Director Albert Elias stated that the contamination plume will not have any detrimental water quality impacts on local water supplies. “The Colorado River plays an important role in ensuring a long-term supply of renewable water for our community. The communities that are affected by this event are those located along the Animas and San Juan River systems in Colorado and New Mexico. Lake Powell and Lake Mead provide a buffer that will substantially dilute any contaminants long before they reach the intakes for the Central Arizona Project downstream in Lake Havasu.”

Communities in Colorado and New Mexico are seeing the effects of the contamination plume as it flows down the Animas River on its way to the San Juan River in northwestern New Mexico. The San Juan River flows into the Colorado River and then into Lake Powell. Lake Powell is a 28 million acre-foot reservoir holding water for the upper Colorado River basin states of Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming and Utah. Water from Lake Powell flows into Lake Mead, which serves as a 28 million acre-foot reservoir for the lower basin states of Arizona, California, and Nevada. An acre-foot (af) of water is equivalent to 325,851 gallons.

Tucson Water monitors water quality at all wells that provide water for the community, as well as at points throughout the distribution system. More than 14,500 tests are performed annually.

###