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For Immediate Release

Feb. 22, 2016
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**Silverton and San Juan County Vote to Pursue
Superfund Cleanup of Mining Sites**

**Letter from Town and County Requesting Superfund
to be Sent to Gov. Hickenlooper**

SILVERTON, Colo. – Elected leaders of Silverton and San Juan County in a joint public meeting tonight unanimously voted to seek placement of 46 mining sites and two studies areas on the National Priorities List, known as Superfund, to improve water quality in the Animas River and its tributaries.

The vote came after months of negotiations between representatives of the town and county, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

“Our main goals are to clean up the environment, protect our community and our downstream neighbors, and to ensure that a disaster like the Gold King spill never happens again,” said Ernie Kuhlman, chair of the San Juan County Commissioners. “Through our negotiations with the EPA, we will have a seat at the decision-making table throughout the entire process going forward.”

“Our team put in hundreds of hours negotiating with the EPA to ensure our community will be protected throughout this process. The team gained significant concessions from the EPA, including the Superfund boundaries and the name of the site,” said Silverton Mayor Christine Tookey.

“Silverton and San Juan County won’t be alone as we move forward through this process. We have been working closely with Gov. Hickenlooper, his staff and our congressional delegation, and they have said they will be with us as we work with the EPA moving forward,” said Scott Fetchenhier, San Juan County Commissioner and a member of the negotiating team.

“On behalf of the commission and town board we want to thank the governor and the congressional delegation for their support in getting us to this point and their help going forward,” Tookey said.

The Superfund area will be called the Bonita Peak Mining District Site. It was important to the community that the words “Silverton” and “San Juan County” not be part of the name.

The EPA process requires that the governor send a letter to the EPA requesting that the area be listed on the National Priorities List. After the vote, the town and county sent a letter to the governor asking him to make that request. The governor has until Feb 29 to send his letter to the EPA.

Millions of dollars have been spent over the last 25 years to clean up acid mine drainage but the problem has persisted. The issue made national and international headlines on Aug. 5, 2015, when an estimated 3 million gallons of tainted water burst from the Gold King mine after an EPA contractor breached a bulkhead.

In the aftermath of that spill, Silverton and San Juan County worked with the State of Colorado and the congressional delegation to find money to do a large-scale cleanup of the mines in the watershed. It was determined that Superfund is the only program that has the resources to do such a cleanup.

The letter to the governor, a letter from the EPA to the town and county, documents detailing the negotiations with the EPA, a list of the 46 mines and two study areas and a map showing those sites are posted on the Silverton town website – <https://www.colorado.gov/townofsilverton> – and the San Juan County website – sanjuancountycolorado.us.