

# Abandoned Mine Land Overview

August 2015

## ***CURRENT STATUS***

Current Abandoned Mine Land (AML) field activities throughout the state include a waste rock removal projects near Crested Butte (Gunsight Pass); securing 26 openings of abandoned uranium mines within the Tres Rios Field Office (Fawn Springs), as well as continuing efforts to update a statewide inventory and prioritize all AML sites.

The BLM also continues to assess the environmental impacts from historic mining sites in the San Juan area. We anticipate having several more cleanup projects in the upcoming years focused in that area. The BLM is working with the Environmental Protection Agency to characterize surface water and waste rock piles in the Upper Animas. Based on this data, the BLM will assess the risks and will prioritize these sites.

## ***BACKGROUND***

The BLM Colorado AML program addresses two issues relating to abandoned mine sites: environmental impacts and hazardous mine openings.

The BLM has spent approximately \$2.9 million since 1989 in the Upper Animas in cleanups, mitigating physical hazards and monitoring water quality. These efforts are done to protect and restore the environment and local resources as well as improve safety for recreationalists in the area.

With an annual budget of about \$1.3 million, the BLM has implemented 18 Comprehensive Environmental Restoration Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) cleanups since 2005 in the Upper Animas.

The BLM has also inventoried more than 2,800 hard rock abandoned mines with more than 10,000 hazardous openings on public lands, and closed more than 1,183 hazardous mine openings - including Uranium sites - in Colorado.

Of the more than 8,600 openings remaining, BLM focuses on areas with high public use or proximity to public waterways. The BLM has identified three high priority watersheds: the upper Animas River, the Lake Fork of the Arkansas and the Lake Fork of the Gunnison. The BLM uses a risk-based approach to select sites for each cleanup.

