

Our last newsletter reviewed the draft Public Health Assessment from Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The final report was issued in February and included comments from Amigos Bravos, Molycorp, the EPA, RCRC, and from the public. The following addresses common questions about the final report.

Were There Any Changes To The Draft Report?

There were a number of additions and corrections: most noteworthy was the change in the Health Hazard Category. The draft report listed the Molycorp site as a *past* and *future* health hazard, but not a danger at *present*. However ATSDR found that:

- Contaminated wells are a danger now.
- Ground water contamination has not been fully defined.
- Unstable waste rock piles are an ongoing physical hazard.
- For these reasons, ATSDR has pronounced the Molycorp site a *public health hazard*.

What Are ATSDR'S Findings on Water Quality in Private Wells?

- Some private wells have high contaminants and individuals who drank from contaminated wells in the past could have health problems.
- Contaminated private wells continue to pose a hazard and should be decommissioned.
- People who drink from private wells should have their wells tested regularly.

What Are ATSDR'S Findings on Water Quality In The Municipal Water System?

- Municipal water lines should be removed from tailings.
- The municipal water system is generally safe even though lines have been embedded in tailings.
- Tailings may get into the lines but amounts of tailings, even though they could make water cloudy, would not be harmful.

Will ATSDR Return To Do A Health Study In Questa?

ATSDR did not identify current or past exposures great enough to justify further investigation of the health status of the general Questa population.

However in response to public comments calling for health studies, the report states:

- Knowledge of health problems in a community is useful to public health authorities and to health care providers.
- Death and disease rates could give a fuller picture to the report, but an official date base of death and disease rates in Questa was not available.
- ATSDR will continue to review results of investigations by federal and state environmental and health agencies.
- ATSDR will provide health-related education activities if requested.

FREE DRINKING WATER TESTS! FREE DRINKING WATER TESTS! FREE DRINKING WATER TESTS!

Health Departments from six Rocky Mountain States are conducting research to find out if people who drink water in certain areas are exposed to heavy metals and arsenic. They have tested tap water in Taos, Arroyo Hondo and Arroyo Seco, and are looking for adults in Questa willing to participate in the study. The tests are *FREE!*

If interested, contact: Judy Espinoza, Phone: 1-888-878-8992, Email: jespinoza@doh.state.nm.us

The EPA is offering to test domestic water wells within two miles of the tailings facility, or the Red River Valley downriver of the mine. These tests are also free. Call: *Mark Purcell at 1-800-533-3508*

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A community based organization dedicated
to the reclamation of the Molycorp mine
and the restoration of the Red River in
Northern New Mexico.

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