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# Danger to river short-lived

## Independent study confirms low toxicity after Gold King spill

BY PETER MARCUS  
HERALD DENVER BUREAU

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**MOUNTAIN STUDIES INSTITUTE REPORT**

Read the entire report at [durangoherald.com](http://durangoherald.com)

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nity, no matter what," she continued. "I can't answer the question for people whether they should trust their government on that versus everything else."

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on Aug. 5. During excavation work to begin restoration of Gold King, the team accidentally released about 3 million gallons of old mining sludge into the river.

Early tests released by federal, state and local government agencies found initial spikes in metals, including lead, arsenic, cadmium, aluminum and copper. But the river returned to either

See DANGER, 6A



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Brewing Co., 3000 Main Ave., www.durangobrewing.com.

**Kirk James Blues Band performs at the El Rancho Street Party**, 6-9 p.m., 10th Street and Main Avenue.

**Third Time Charmed**, rock, 6 and 9 p.m., Four Corners Motorcycle Rally Main Stage, Sky Ute Fairgrounds, 200 E. Colorado Highway 151, Ignacio.

**Funked-Up Friday featuring Bootyconda**, 7-10

**Bacon with special guest Jamie Olinger**, funk/grove/ska, 10 p.m., Balcony Backstage, 600 Main Ave., Suite 205, www.facebook.com/baconfunk.

## SPORTS

**Bayfield High School boys soccer vs. Montezuma-Cortez**, 3 p.m., Wolverine Country Stadium, BHS.

**Durango High School football vs. Aztec**, 7 p.m., DHS.

...ive community to live in. Proposing to raise taxes by referring this to the voters is a big deal. That said, I believe that it is a modest proposed tax increase of up to 2.4 mills."

Commissioner Brad Blake agreed.

Voters will also decide this fall whether to restore the county's rights to provide high-speed Internet, telecommunications services and/or cable televi-

...mission. "Over the last couple years, this has gained momentum in both cities and counties as they identified a need to expand broadband infrastructure," County Manager Joe Kerby said.

"The county has no interest in providing that now, but we do have an interest in having public-private partnerships do that."

With voters' consent,

tendorff said. "If that's laying fiber in an existing right of way, that's an option we should have. We're working with the Economic Development Alliance to do what's right and not be in competition with local Internet providers."

A similar question will be put to voters in Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio.

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## WEEKEND EVENTS

### SATURDAY

**Elks Lodge barbecue with Jelly Belly Boogie Band**, 5-9 p.m., Elks Lodge, 901 East Second Ave.

### SUNDAY

**Burrito breakfast benefiting Homes for Heroes**, 8-11 a.m., Durango Transit Center, 250 W. 8th St.

**Motorcycle and Classic Car Parade**, 11 a.m., Main Avenue.

### Ignacio

### FRIDAY-SUNDAY

Four Corners Motorcycle Rally. For more information, visit [fourcorner-smotorcyclerrally.com](http://fourcorner-smotorcyclerrally.com). Most events will take place at the Sky Ute Fairgrounds, 200 Colorado Highway 151, Ignacio.

## Danger: Samples taken at Rotary Park

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nondetectable or pre-plume levels within a week.

Tests released Saturday by Mountain Studies Institute reflect similar data distributed after government testing. The results represent sampling at Rotary Park from Aug. 6 through Aug. 11. The data results are from samples taken from the Animas before the arrival of the Gold King plume, during the event and several days after the plume passed.

MSI was the only group taking samples from Rotary Park. It has been contributing as part of a unified response effort along with government agencies.

"At these levels, you would need to drink 2 liters of Animas water four days a week, for 16 weeks, to possibly experience adverse, noncancerous effects of those metals over a long period of time, years later," MSI's report states.

A slight increase in metals from a sample taken at noon Aug. 9 was observed, though it did not exceed toxic water-quality levels. Researchers believe the increase was caused by more water

flow after rain Aug. 7.

"This slight uptick speaks to the lingering concerns post-plume from the deposited sediments. We would expect to see slight increases in metal detections as we experience precipitation events this fall and with spring runoff next year," the report states.

The study focused only on risks to human health, not impacts to fish and other wildlife. Colorado wildlife officials on Wednesday said trout tested from the river appear to be safe to eat.

The MSI data was compared to national recreational screening levels for long-term chronic exposure. The analysis took into account how a person would contact the river, for how long at each exposure and then how that is repeated over a length of time.

The levels shown in MSI's data reflect EPA screening levels for surface water consumption by an adult or child who intentionally or accidentally ingests 2 liters of water per day, for four days per week, over a 16-week period. The levels are conservative, assuming a person drinks 2 liters of river water every

day while swimming or boating four times a week and is exposed to the sediments by camping or living along the river bank for a continuous 64-day period.

"In reality, very few people will experience this level of exposure in any given day, let alone every other day for 16 weeks," the report states.

It also explains that pH dipped as the plume passed in the first 24 hours, but then stabilized to normal levels previously seen in the Animas.

Only manganese exceeded water-quality levels, which is naturally high in the Animas. Many were especially worried about mercury, but that was barely detectable after the plume moved through, and that offers a positive sign to researchers. Still, they urge caution moving forward.

"We don't know exactly how those sediments will respond, where they'll be transported to ... " Bidwell said. "The way we interact with metals is complicated, unlike drinking water where there's a clear path of how we connect with it ... our exposure to the sediments is nowhere near as simple."

## up wants better direction

Council members serve three-year terms. If the recall is successful, Eagle and Alex Cloud would leave office without their six-month severance pay and could not run in the upcoming election.

One prospective candidate is familiar. Nephew to the chairman, Kevin Frost, an attorney and University of Denver graduate, plans to vie for one of the seats as he has done before.

Kevin Frost attended Thursday's meeting with the elders.

"I want my tribal members to come first," he said. "It takes elders, not people in their 20s, saying, 'I know.' They repeat the same mistakes. This has been going on since I was 10. Everyone is still the same. I wonder why we allow ourselves to be oppressed and stuck in the past?"

Kevin Frost commended the elders for finally tiring of the "general malaise."

sonal" matters.

The list of council hopefuls will be known Monday, then elders will start coordinating social events to support their favored candidates.

If new membership takes office, D'Wolf said she wants to see better control of the tribe's Growth Fund and higher standards put in place to qualify to run for the council. Currently, council members must be 24 years old and live within reservation boundaries, she said.

Recalls have created discord within the tribe before. In the early 2000s, John E. Baker was ousted from office, and in 2003, Matthew Box resigned at the tribe's request.

D'Wolf hopes future leadership is restored to the days under former chairman Leonard Burch, who died in 2003.

"When he was chairman, we didn't have this," she said. "We had

## Setting it straight

The headline of an Education Brief on Page 6B on Wednesday for the Grazda Center for Literacy and the Arts was incorrect. The center has limited tutoring openings for students who need assistance with literacy, especially reading and writing. For more information, visit [www.grazda.org](http://www.grazda.org).

Forum that ran on Page 1A on Thursday, the 916 calls in 2012 were reports of bears in trash. Agencies received a total of 1,545 calls about bear incidents in 2012.

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