

Snake River cleanup plan eyed; possible treatment

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SUMMIT COUNTY - State and federal water quality experts will take a close look at the polluted water leaking from the abandoned Pennsylvania Mine into Peru Creek this summer, eyeing designs for a treatment plant that could remove some of the toxic heavy metals.

Zinc and cadmium oozing from the mine taint the creek all the way to its confluence with the Snake River and beyond - creating a dead zone, where trout don't survive for long. The collaborative Snake River Task Force has been working for years to develop a cleanup plan for the drainage, and will meet today for an update.

The biggest question marks include what sort of technology is best suited for the remote site, how to fund construction and operation, and how to deal with potential Clean Water Act liability of taking action, said Summit County environmental planner Brian Lorch.

Along with treating the water coming out of the mine, state experts will also try to determine other ways of improving water quality in Peru Creek and the Snake River, maybe by moving some of mine waste material or re-routing surface flows away from the polluted tailings piles.

Similar tactics were used at the Shoe Basin Mine last summer, where the county completed a remediation project that will reduce the amount of zinc reaching the water.

Snake River cleanup plans have started to look more promising since Trout Unlimited, a cold-water fisheries conservation group, took a lead role in the process. Fresh from a model mine cleanup in Utah, the organization hopes to bring a similar approach to table for Peru Creek.

Along with site-specific projects, the task force will also get an update on a watershed approach to stream health in the Snake River Basin, as well as the potential for re-evaluating water quality standards in the basin.

The task force meetings are the best way for citizens in the Snake River Basin to find out the latest on the status of the cleanup plans.

Information is also available at <http://instaar.colorado.edu/SRWTF/>.

Snake River Watershed Task Force Meeting

When: Today, from 1-4 p.m.

Where: The Keystone Center, 1628 Sts. John Road, Keystone