

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: POLITICO Pro Energy Whiteboard
Sent: Mon 6/12/2017 3:59:54 PM
Subject: IG report largely clears EPA on Gold King spill response

By Alex Guillén

06/12/2017 11:57 AM EDT

EPA's inspector general today said the agency acted reasonably and lawfully before and after the 2015 Gold King mine spill that dumped 3 million gallons of polluted water into Colorado's Animas River.

The 40-page report, conducted following two congressional requests, concludes that on-site EPA officials and contractors were "qualified, experienced individuals with relevant expertise," and noted that while the release was harmful, that single mine already discharged the same amount of water every 10 days.

The report says that EPA's decision not to directly test the mine's water level was "reasonable" because of the safety risks and high costs, among other things. It said EPA properly assured the independence of the Bureau of Reclamation's technical review of the incident. And despite complaints from state and local agencies that it took too long for EPA to notify them of the spill, the IG concluded that EPA followed the legal requirements and that there were "no delays" in notifying other entities.

Investigators concluded that the Bureau's technical review, along with EPA's own internal investigation, had led to sufficient changes to limit the risk of such a spill happening again, and to boost response and notification plans.

WHAT'S NEXT: Various lawsuits over the spill are playing out in federal courts. The Gold King site and various other mines in the surrounding area were added last year to the Superfund priority list.

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