

From: R8 Mass Mailer <R8_Mass_Mailer@epa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 12:33 PM
Cc: R8 Building <R8_Building@epa.gov>
Subject: New Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains

R8 Colleagues,

As you may have seen earlier today Doug Benevento and Peter Wright announced the creation of the Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains to be located at the EPA office in Lakewood, Colorado. The new office will report directly to the OLEM Assistant Administrator. Shahid Mahmud will be the Acting Office Director. Shahid has been the long-time leader of EPA's mining team and a member of the Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation (OSRTI).

The Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains will work with Regions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, as well as with OSRTI, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Federal Facilities Restoration and Reuse Office (FFRRO), and other AAships, to assume EPA's oversight responsibilities for hardrock mining cleanup sites west of the Mississippi River; serve as a central contact for other federal agencies, states, and tribes with responsibility for or impacted by these sites; and develop innovative technologies and adaptive management approaches to address legacy pollution. Additionally, the office will support efforts of conservation organizations to voluntarily undertake projects to improve conditions at abandoned mines (aka "Good Samaritan" projects).

The new office will consist of between five and nine EPA employees and OLEM will shortly be seeking to fill the positions. Initially, the physical space for this office will be on the second floor of Building 25 of the Denver Federal Center in Lakewood, Colorado. Physical relocations are not imminent as the facility is in Phase 2.

There are many questions regarding what this means operationally and the timing of impacts this new office will have on R8 work. I do not have answers beyond what we are seeing in the press releases this week. I expect this week will be focused on external communications and next week conversations will start on how this gets operationalized. I want to acknowledge the excellent work R8 staff consistently perform to address the many hard rock mining issues in our Region. It is my understanding that the Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains will increase visibility and opportunities to leverage resources in support of our work.

Here is a link to a recent OpEd from Administrator Wheeler on the new office:

https://www.coloradopolitics.com/opinion/the-podium-a-new-office-to-clean-up-old-mines/article_bc0cc2ca-eca3-11ea-9ba0-871529355409.html

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