

**Electronic *Green Journal***  
**Volume 1, Issue 46**

**Review: Gold Metal Waters: The Animas River and the Gold King Mine Spill**

Edited by Brad T. Clark and Pete McCormick

**Reviewed by Abbey B. Lewis**

*Boulder, Colorado, USA*

Clark, Brad T. and McCormick, Pete, Eds. *Gold Metal Waters: The Animas River and the Gold King Mine Spill*. Louisville, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2021. 286 pp. ISBN: 9781646421749, hardcover, US\$45.00.

In 2015, 3 million tons of wastewater from the Gold King Mine were accidentally released into the Animas River watershed, turning the waters bright orange and igniting discussions on the environmental dangers of abandoned mines throughout the United States. *Gold Metal Waters* analyzes the spill and its aftermath through an interdisciplinary lens. Written by faculty members at Fort Lewis College, along with students, community leaders, and others, it closely examines the history of the region, policy decisions, social impacts, media coverage, and scientific evidence, to provide an intricate understanding of the disaster and its lasting impacts.

Readers will find the book approachable and illuminating no matter what their educational background or expertise. With its stated intention to be an interdisciplinary examination of a single environmental disaster, the authors of various chapters make sure that readers are not given an oversimplified version, but rather given the means to enhance their own understanding of the spill's complex circumstances. In Chapter 7, "Contaminated Mines or Contaminated Minds: The Psychological Reaction to the Animas River Spill" readers are given a toolkit of psychological perspectives, each of which are helpfully defined and further examined through individual and community experiences in the aftermath of the spill. The result is a chapter that can be appreciated both by readers with substantial backgrounds in psychology and those who are new to understanding the applications of psychological concepts to real world events.

*Gold Metal Waters* shows exemplary work in examining the unique aspects of the disaster and affected communities, alongside the history of the mining in the region that ultimately led to the spill. Authors refrain from generalizations, instead leaning into singular and distinct aspects of the situation. In the cases where they draw on other

events or regions, the relevance is highly evident. This is especially for Chapter 8, “Social Impacts of the Gold King Mine Spill on the Animas–San Juan River Watershed Communities,” in which lessons from the Exxon Valdez oil spill and its impact on the Native American communities were used to understand and respond to the Gold King Mine spill’s effect on the Diné (Navajo) community.

Gold Metal Waters is an excellent book for understanding the complexity of the Gold King Mine spill and its impact on the region. Its usefulness extends beyond the content - the interdisciplinary format in examining the event provides a blueprint for how environmental disasters should be studied. Because of these reasons, it is highly recommended for academic libraries and suitable for higher education classrooms in a variety of disciplines.

---

Abbey B. Lewis, STEM Engagement Librarian, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, 80309, USA.

***Electronic Green Journal, Issue 46, ISSN: 1076-7975***