Community Environmental Advocates FOUNDATION

MINE WATCH

February 12, 2023

Nevada County Supervisors
Eric Rood Administrative Center
950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959

Subject: Opinions and articles regarding the Idaho-Maryland Mine

Dear Supervisors,

What a journey it has been for the past four years! Opposition to the Idaho-Maryland Mine has united our community like no other topic in recent decades. Conservatives and liberals alike have weighed in against the mine. It seems that air, water, and quality of life are bipartisan topics!

Attached are two volumes collecting over 265 opinion pieces submitted to The Union Newspaper through February 1. 93% of them are against the mine (248 vs 19). There are also almost 100 newspaper articles from The Union, YubaNet, and others of note.

We've organized them alphabetically by topic. Even though we know you've likely read many of these as they were published, we hope you'll take a moment to review this amazing collection, and perhaps find a few new gems that got overlooked.

We hope these will help inform your decision for this week's public hearing and serve as a reminder for the future, should mining prospectors come knocking on our door again.

Sincerely,

Laurie Oberholtzer & Christy Hubbard
Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
PO Box 972
Cedar Ridge, CA 95924-0972

Community Environmental Advocates FOUNDATION

MINEWATCH

Idaho-Maryland Mine
Articles and Opinion Pieces – The Collection
≈ 2020 through February 1,2024

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- Nevada County Association of REALTORS encourage public to become educated...

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- Josie Crawford· Forever issues plague mines
- Julie Becker Clean up the Centennial site responsibly
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- Walt Froloff Rise Gold's proposal is a scam
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- Jeff Gold Show our community strength Dec. 13
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- Pat N McCoy Rise to the occasion
- Pat N McCoy What is rural quality of life
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- RISE_ Majority support Idaho-Maryland Mine, Rise Gold survey states
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- Ross Guenther Environmentally safe tailings management facilities for the Mine
- Ross Guenther Reopen the mine with zero waste

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- 'Hung out to dry' Well owners contend with Idaho-Maryland Mine report's findings
- 'It's taking time' Idaho-Maryland Mine's draft EIR expected to take a few more months
- 'No mine' Protesters oppose efforts to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine
- 'This is not OK' Organizers mobilize in light of Rise Gold survey·
- Without water, my property is worthless

- A change of mine. Consultant makes suggestions about Idaho-Maryland Mine
- Against the mine. Environmentalists, activists explain opposition to the Mine
- Business and Professional Women of Nevada County hold forum about Idaho-Maryland Mine
- Canadian company buys Idaho-Maryland Mine for $2 million
- CEA Local organization responds to mine draft report
- Changing times Rise Gold seeks approval from Nevada County, not Grass Valley council
- Comment period ends for Idaho-Maryland Mine report
- County chambers overflow with voices for and against the mine project
- Deadline approaches Public comment due Monday for Idaho-Maryland Mine
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- Don Rogers Face down with mine card - SierraSun.com
- Don Rogers Mine’s main ore is risk
- Don Rogers Rise's messaging less than golden
- Don Rogers The mine’s brightest promise
- Don Rogers Truth's as hard to mine as gold
- Don Rogers Who owns 'the science' anyway
- Film about Idaho Maryland Mine to screen Thursday
- George Boardman Candidates can't dodge position on mine reopening
- Idaho Maryland Mine News
- Idaho-Maryland Mine Final EIR released by County
- Idaho-Maryland Mine meeting set for next week
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- In the water Rise Gold Corp. CEO speaks to water quality concerns
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- Local organization responds to mine draft report
- Mine Meeting Nevada County Planning Commission holds hearing on the Idaho-Maryland Mine
- Mine the question Candidates, attorneys weigh in on Idaho-Maryland Mine statements
- Mining for time Public meeting, comment period extended for Idaho-Maryland Mine project
- Mining opposition Reopening Idaho Maryland mine protested Environment
- Nevada County community weighs in on mine’s economic report
- Nevada County expects draft independent mine impact study in March
- Nevada County releases draft EIR for Idaho-Maryland Mine
- Nevada County releases Staff Report on Rise vested rights petition ahead of December 13 hearing
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- No state monitor for mine -Water quality board to rely on Rise Gold for regular reports, environmental assurances
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- Our View Don't dig yourself into a hole on Idaho Maryland Mine

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- Our View No perfect process for mine
- Packed house Hundreds of people attend Idaho-Maryland Mine meeting (VIDEO)
- Planning commission No to the Idaho-Maryland mine
- Report delves into Idaho-Maryland Mine project
- Rise Gold attempts to reopen once lucrative Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine
- Rise Gold CEO calls county 'naive· in dealings with Nisenan
- Rise Gold CEO on trial over regulatory allegations in Canada
- Rise gold mine project set for County Planning Commission
- Rise Gold seeks to side-step requirements for mining use permit
- Rise Gold vested rights hearing carries over to a second day
- Rise Gold's CEO found guilty on 13 counts in British Columbia retrial
- Rise Grass Valley files petition for recognition of vested rights at Idaho-Maryland Mine
- Rise Grass Valley Petition for vested rights hearing rescheduled to December 13 Local
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- Survey says Opinion and research group behind Rise Gold survey defends its work
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- The long haul· Reports focus on Idaho-Maryland Mine’s impact to roads, noise, property values
- Understanding the gaps Local well owners organize in advance of May meeting - mine reopening
- Vested rights for Idaho-Maryland Mine denied by supervisors
- Vested rights hearing for Rise Gold proposal to examine historical fact
- Well underground NID board poses questions about possible impacts to water wells

2. **YubaNet**

- CEA Businesses urge County Supervisors to reject Mine proposal
- CEA Foundation "Significant flaws” in the DEIR for proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine
- CEA Planning Commission recommends NO to Gold Mine
- CEA A Preliminary Assessment of the Proposal to Reopen Idaho-Maryland Mine by CEA
- CEA· Canadian Firm Pushing to Reopen Idaho Maryland Mine
- CEA· Impacts to Jobs and Housing from the Proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine
- Jane Pelton· Another Golden Gamble in Grass Valley
- Jonathan Keehn· Junior mining company from Canada unable to follow simple County rules
- Nevada County Planning Commission unanimously recommends
- denying the Idaho Maryland Mine - Rise Grass Valley Project
- Op-Ed SYRCL California can't afford the Idaho-Maryland Mine
- Rise Gold may apply for vested right to mine
- Well owners urge Supervisors to safeguard resident's wells

3. Others of Note

- Alaska Highway News - Vancouver mining CEO convicted on environmental charges
- CBS News - CEO of defunct northwest B.C. mining company found guilty of environmental violations
- Junior Mining Network - Rise Gold Appoints Joseph Mullin as President and CEO
- Los Angeles Times - Inside the fight over reopening a California gold mine
- Mining.com - CEO of defunct Banks Island Gold guilty of environmental violations at British Columbia mine
- Penticton Western News - North Coast First Nation appeals Supreme Court decision on mining permits
- SYRCL - Quantity vs Quality The Shoddy Science Behind the Idaho-Maryland Mine
- The Deep Dive - Rise Gold Sees Commission Deny Idaho-Maryland Mine Project In California
- The Northern View - Former B.C. mining mogul fined $30,000 for past environmental infractions
- Sacramento Bee - Grass Valley gold mine owner wins, loses in British Columbia
- The Sacramento Bee - Grass Valley residents oppose plan to reopen old gold mine
- The Washington Post - Environmentalists and residents fight a new California gold rush
- Yahoo News - Man behind plan to reopen Grass Valley gold mine faced charges. Here are the verdicts

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THE UNION

YOUR AD HERE »

Bob Clark: Perry Mason, where are you when we need you?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 2, 2021

Bob Clark | Other Voices

If you're old enough or watch old TV shows, then you know that Perry Mason was a TV defense lawyer played by Aaron Burr that ran from 1957 to 1966. Perry was amazing! He never lost a case. In fact his cases never even got to the jury because at some point he would get some witness on the stand or often even a spectator in the courtroom to jump up and admit that they had lied and that they were the guilty party. And, he always did it within an hour (including commercials).

Oh Perry, where are you when we need you?

If we had Perry, I know the first witness we would want him to call would be Ben Mossman, CEO of Rise Gold Corp. Imagine a conversation that went like this:

Perry: "How many full time employees does Rise Gold have?"

Mossman: "Well, it's just me."

Trending Articles


Nevada County Food and Toy Run will not continue
14 comments



School board to hear from group against Critical Race T...
35 comments


Grass Valley protesters denounce vaccine mandate
28 comments



Our View: Updating the history books
23 comments


Susan Bewle Build Bac
21 comme

Perry: "Mr. Mossman could you tell us about the gold mines Rise Gold has ever opened or operated?"

Mossman: "Actually, we've never opened or operated a mine."

Perry: "In fact, isn't it true that Rise has no business income at all and according to your SEC filings is dependent on selling more stock to even continue to operate?"

Mossman: "Yes, but when we get the approval we can get a lot of money to open the mine and we'll hire a bunch of people and provide locals hundreds of jobs."

Perry: "The mine closed in the mid-1950s. Are there a bunch of experienced miners in the area to recruit from?"

Mossman: "Well, no, but we'll train them all and pay them an average of $94,000 per year."

Perry: "That's twice the Nevada County average, about $20,000 per year more than other mines are paying, and you're going to pay trainees that much?"

Mossman: "Well, maybe not initially."

Perry: "Are there any guarantees that locals will get these jobs or that you'll pay them that much?"

Mossman: “Sometimes things change. Besides, we have to claim some kind of benefit to the area.”

Perry: “Your outside expert produced a report saying that not only will you hire 300 workers, but that they will have 80% of their pretax income that they’ll spend in Grass Valley, creating another 300 jobs. Will the dollars they pay PG&E for utilities stay in the community? Will the money they spend for gasoline be given to the community or the oil companies? Will the money they spend on a new car down the hill because the county doesn’t even have a new car dealership, or the money they spend at a big box store, or at a mall, or buy online stay in the community?”

Mossman: “OK, so the numbers are inflated a bit.”

Perry: “In fact isn’t it true that none of the reports you have provided from outside experts would ever be submitted if they identified even one problem that you won’t claim can be easily mitigated?”

Mossman: “We’re not stupid. That could sink the project. We aren’t going to pay anyone who won’t say what we want them to say.”

Perry: “Some top-producing Grass Valley Realtors, the professionals who do the local real estate transactions, were surveyed. Those surveyed agreed 100% that if the mine reopens local property values will decline, in some cases by as much as $100,000 or more. Does Rise Gold plan on reimbursing the owners for the losses the mine causes?”

Mossman: “You’ve got to be kidding. That could be tens of millions of dollars! The county refuses to even consider it as part of the evaluation, so why should we?”

At this point Perry is supposed to get him to say, “All right, it’s all a lie. We might drain wells, damage property values, destroy the environment, the air, the noise, the traffic, the very reasons those people love the community, but we’ll be filthy rich. Screw them all. We’re betting the county supervisors will approve it anyway.”

Unfortunately, we don’t have Perry Mason. It all depends on us, the local residents, to stand up and say “Not here! Stop the mine!”

You don’t have to be Perry Mason to know when someone isn’t telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This isn’t just an hour of entertainment. It is something that can change our lives for the worse forever.

Bob Clark has been a Grass Valley resident for over 20 years.

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THE UNION

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Gary Palmer: Orcs at the gates

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Gary Palmer

It is foretold that Orcs will soon storm out of their deep mountain lairs in Canada to plunder and devastate the villages of Grass Valley and Nevada City.

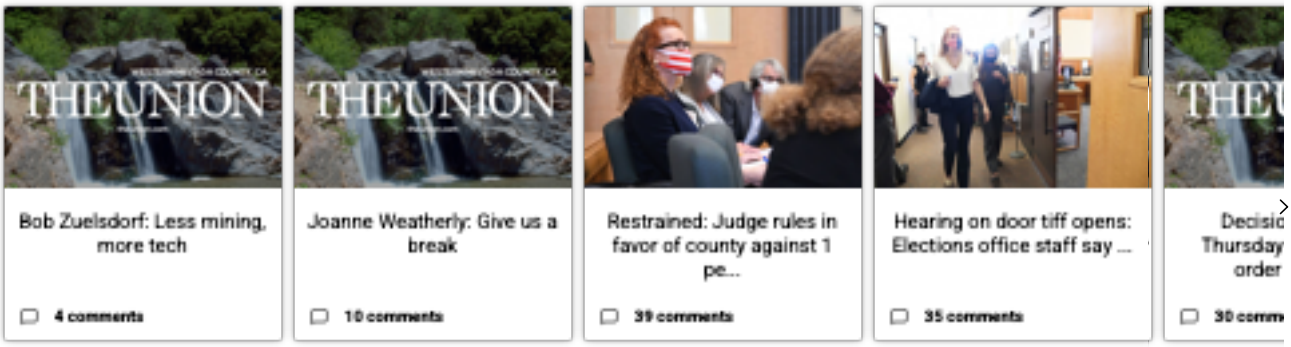
They will burrow into the ground under the threatened cities, and there steal and defile the precious water needed for household and garden. They will bring their own minions to work these ghastly chambers day and night, while on the surface we, unfortunate Hobbits, will feel the shaking and breath the noxious fumes of the massive vehicles by which they empty their lairs.

They will broadcast deadly wastes and gravels onto the lovely dells and defile the streams with the most vile chemicals. Once green and pleasant suburbs will be laid waste as the black oak forest withers and the deer and acorn woodpeckers depart.

The cities that are now thriving centers of shops, schools, medical centers, and farmers' markets will fall into decay. The residents will leave or wither with their neighborhoods.

The intrusive Orcs will prevail over the land. It has the sound of a fable, but it will be our fate unless we take up protective law and fight the ruthless exploiters.

Trending Articles



If the Orcs prevail, it is not hard to deduce that many residents will sell their homes at a loss and leave them with lower property tax values.

Tourists will soon find our towns transformed into an unpleasant industrial site with heavy trucks and air pollution. They will take the 80 bypass instead of stopping here for a day of shopping, eating, and wine tasting. Toxic waste and noise do not pair well with Primitivo.

Who would want to contend with large mining trucks on Highway 49? Who would find it worthwhile to run that gantlet to patronize the Sierra Moons, the little wine making supplier on Loma Rica?

Who will want to come and build a new home, or plant a vineyard, or start a tea room when they retire from the hectic traffic in San Francisco?

What will happen to the local contractors that would have built the homes and the young people who would have worked in the businesses?

Besides that, the Rise Gold guys are clearly tossers. Toss them out! This "jeremiad," as a friend called it, is tongue-in-cheek, but all unfortunately true to some degree.

Mining in or near town seems a losing proposition for the county, and there is really no good reason to take the risk.

Gary Palmer

https://www.theunion.com/opinion/columns/jeff-kane-nevada-county-sidewalk-conversation/article_17cb951c-0ae2-54d8-a7a4-4747c9aa2621.html

Jeff Kane: Nevada County sidewalk conversation

By navigaimport
Mar 14, 2022

Hey, I got your mailer about reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Pretty slick.

Yup. as it says, the science is clear. The draft environmental impact peport calls the mine safe and responsible.

Hmm. I read the report, all thousand pages. Safe and responsible? You're kidding, right?

Well, the report didn't say it in exactly those words. It did say there are issues around noise, traffic, air quality, explosives safety, lowering of well water tables, wildlife, creek destruction, and on and on. But it says most of that can be mitigated. You know, minimized.

Most of it?

Yeah, but sorry, not all. Nevada County already has some of the most toxic air in the country's most air-toxic state. That's not good, so we'll have our loaders and dozers and 20-ton haulers emit as little diesel exhaust as possible over the next 80 years. There's just no getting around the fact that our emissions will cause even more discomfort and lung disease than you have now, especially in children and older folks. But we'll figure something out, and it'll be a win-win, you'll see. To show our goodwill, we'll buy the Ophir Hill Fire District a top-of-the-line fire engine and fund three full-time additional firefighters for the mine's duration. How's that for being a good neighbor?

Wait a minute. I told you I read the report. On page 541 it says you're obliged to buy the fire engine and fund the firefighters because of your huge stash of diesel fuel, explosives and chemicals, not to mention drier weather every year. And these other "gifts" you're promising are contractual obligations, too. Like you love our rustic little community so much, you said, that you'll pay for a new NID water line to homeowners in the East Bennett area. How kind. Fact is that dewatering the mine may suck those private wells dry. And by the way, you said the report's "significant impacts" can be mitigated. What about "will" be mitigated?

Come on, let's be serious. Nevada County can't afford to monitor our work adequately, and besides, is that where you want your tax money to go? Mitigation of mining destruction has always been a joke, anyway. Take a look at our company's last mine, in British Columbia. The entire bond we posted cleaned up just a little of the mess, and the taxpayers there will be stuck with the rest, more than a million bucks. But really, shouldn't we all chip in for a good cause?

I heard you're going to hire 312 new employees. How many will be local?

We're planning on two-thirds. But that may change, so don't hold me to it.

And where will the non-local employees live? Are you aware there's a housing crunch here?

Trust me.

Your employees will make an average of $95,000, right?

Well, actually, to sweeten the pot we've already given them a raise. Now the average is $122,000.

If that's the average, how much will the underground workers make? On second thought, never mind. Why am I even asking? I heard that in your last venture you went bankrupt and couldn't even give 50 of your workers their promised severance pay.

Look, we're giving Nevada County a chance to participate in a historic and enriching venture. What else do you want? The report says the mine won't significantly affect anything in your county, so if you feel affected it's insignificant. Why are you so negative? Instead of complaining, you can join us and make a profit. You, too, can own a piece of this great California gold mine for only 67 cents a share.

Excuse me, but you're hard to believe. You've already showed us an obviously fake poll, a flier that's mostly misinformation, and such heavy-handed public relations in general that you must think of us as Ignorant Rube County. Am I right about that?

I hope so.

Jeff Kane lives in Nevada City.

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THE UNION

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Jeff Kane: Reviving the Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine — what a deal!

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 25, 2021

Jeff Kane | Other Voices

Here's a conversation I might have had with a guy I met on the street:

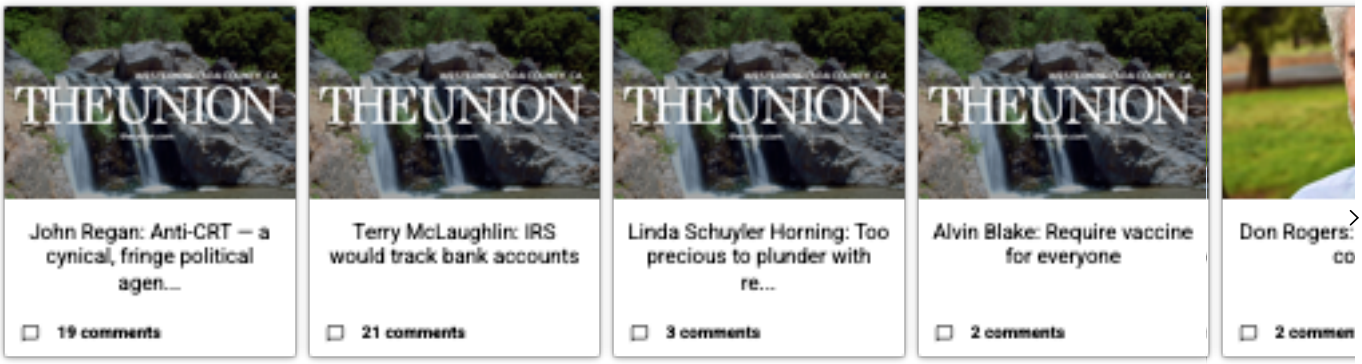
Let me tell you about the gold mine we're planning here in Nevada County.

Yeah, tell me. After all, that's our history. Are you gonna dip a pan into the South Yuba?

Well, it's a little bigger than that. We"l dig for it at the old Idaho-Maryland site.

Oh? How big a dig?

Trending Articles



We'll go underground and remove about 1,500 tons of rock.

Sounds like a lot.

Ahem. Ah, 1,500 tons every day.

Every day? Where will you put it?

We have a 56-acre parcel on Centennial Drive, near your hospital and most of your nursing facilities. We'll haul 1,000 tons of it every day and pile it there. And pile it and pile it. Eventually the pile will be 70 feet high.

Wow! How will all that rock get from the mine to the pile?

We'll haul it there with trucks. About 50 to 100 round trips a day.

With your pickup?

Aw, can't use pickups. Even your Ford F-150 can only carry just under a ton. We'll use 20-ton diesel trucks, 16 hours a day.

So let's see. That means if I stand in front of Peaceful Valley Farm Supply I'll see one of these huge diesels go by about every eight minutes. Won't that be loud?

Depends what you mean by loud. To us it's the sound of money.

Uh huh. So what's in it for us, the people who live here?

Jobs, Dude. You folks could use more employment, and this project means 300 jobs.

I see. By the way, aren't the mine tunnels full of water?

Hey, you know your stuff. Indeed they are. So we just pump the water out.

How much water?

The first six months we'll pump out about 3 1/2 million gallons a day.

Won't that drop the water table and dry up the local private wells?

Nah. Well, it will drop in some areas. If homeowners lose their wells we'll run NID lines to them. We'e a small outfit, though, so we won't be able to pay their water bills.

Gee, all that sounds pretty inconvenient. Tell me again what's in it for us.

Jobs, I told you. A total of 140 jobs.

That water you'll pump out: isn't it contaminated with poisons?

So what? We'll let it sit awhile, like that pond of brown muck that's been at Empire Mine the past 150 years. And then we'll drain it off into waterways like the fenced-off stream that runs through Memorial Park.

Hmm. Thinking about all the trucking and tailings, I wonder how our air will be affected.

That's one reason it's ideal to mine here. Nevada County's air is already graded F by the American Lung Association, and your rate of lung disease is twice the state's average. So a little more pollution won't make much difference, right?

What about greenhouse gases?

Our operations will produce 9,000 metric tons per year — equivalent to the exhaust of 2,000 cars. That includes about 200,000 minutes of diesel idling. But it's for a good cause, right?

I guess you'll be blasting, too.

Yeah, lots of underground blasting. We'll use ANFO (ammonium nitrate and fuel oil). That's the mixture that destroyed downtown Beirut in 2020. We'll store up to 14 tons underground, and 30,000 gallons of diesel above ground. Don't worry. We'll be careful.

Sounds like you'll use lots of energy for this operation at a time when Nevada County needs to cut back. We already struggle with shutoffs when PG&E can't keep up with the demand. Our Environment Action Plan calls for a reduction of 42 gigawatt hours by 2035.

Funny you mention that. We'll use exactly the amount you want to reduce, which is 12% of Nevada County's total annual use. It"l be like adding 5,000 new homes. You do support growth, don't you?

Well, there's smart growth and there's cancer. By the way, what happens to the gold you find?

Why, we haul it off to Canada.

I see. Let me ask you this: how long will your mining project go on?

Um, mff thn dsism.

What?

Ahhh... 80 years. But we promise to clean up when we're done.

Ha! Show me a mine that's been cleaned up. And even if you do clean up after 80 years, I won't be around to see it. And my grandchildren, who have no say in this matter, will have to live their whole lives with your mess and noise and hazards.

Yeah, but think of the employment. A total of 70 jobs!

You know, I'm beginning to think this isn't such a great idea. Tell me, how much mining has this company done?

Um, mff thn dsism.

What?

Uh, well, actually, none.

And your CEO, what's his track record?

No worse than gold mining's history in general. His last company was charged with some environmental violations, but they must not have been so bad since he only had to pay $15,000 in fines. His company had its $420,000 security bond confiscated by Canada's Ministry of Energy and Mines, and ended in bankruptcy. But we'll do better. You have my word.

OK, OK, lemme get this straight: Your mining operation will deplete our aquifer, contaminate our waterways, generate intolerable noise, toxify our air, lower property values, parasitize our electricity, decimate our tourist industry, and carry our gold away — all this over 80 years — and in return we get some jobs. And you want us to allow this? Do you think we're nuts?

I hope so.

Jeff Kane lives in Nevada City.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-john-lynch-the-relentless-search-for-gold-left-many-scars-behind/article_11bce81e-fa82-11ed-872c-67fac73a9286.html

Ideas & Opinions — John Lynch: The relentless search for gold, left many scars behind

John Lynch
May 25, 2023

Eureka! Eureka! was the cry in days of old!

People came from many lands in search of California's gold.

They labored in the foothills, labored in the streams,

looking for yellow ore that is the stuff of dreams.

Argonauts left homes and kin to seek the golden fleece!

Some found fortune but for most, dreams of gold did cease.

Some saw the miners as the pathway to their riches,

opened shops, grew towns, miners' gold in their britches.

Auburn, Nevada City, Grass Valley last,

built upon gold's legacy from that distant past.

Mines with their stamp mills' endless clatter,

brought jobs and prosperity such that the future didn't matter.

A boom time for the foothills they thought would never end.

But every story ever told has a message, my friend!

The relentless search for gold, left many scars behind.

For land and people, it was unhealthy and unkind.

Poisons in our rivers to sinkholes in our midst,

past greed haunts us to this day and perils still persist.

Beauty and worth drives many to seek gold where it hides.

But at what cost to do so? On this our future rides!

For those who think a gold mine will make their town divine,

study all the pitfalls 'fore you sign upon the line.

Ignoring history is a dangerous thing to do,

it leads to rash decisions that benefit a few.

Our communities exist for the sake of us all!

Don't sell the future once again for a golden sirens' call.

John Lynch, Auburn

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---john-vaughan-the-tale-of-a-wolf-and-a-gold-mine/article_dd831c2a-a0d7-11ed-85c1-43f264d356e7.html

Ideas & Opinions – John Vaughan: The tale of a wolf, and a gold mine

John Vaughan
Jan 31, 2023

I'm going to tell you a story. It's a bit whimsical but I assure you the numbers are real, directly from the recently published "Economic Impact of the Proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine".

Once upon a time, there was a small idyllic community in the foothills of Northern California. The community attracted lots of visitors, many choosing to stay and raise their families, start their own small businesses, or retire. The people of the community loved it for its natural beauty, limited traffic, and small-town quality of life.

One day, a wolf arrived in the community and purchased the property and mineral rights to a long-closed gold mine. Soon, the wolf submitted a proposal to re-open the gold mine, assuring the people of the community the mine would create lots of high-quality, high-paying jobs. The wolf's proposal included spending money on locally hired employees and local suppliers while

contributing to the communities “General Fund” based on profits from the mine.

The wolf’s proposal promised everyone in the community, including their children, their grandchildren, and their great grandchildren, that for 80 years the wolf’s proposal would not do any environmental damage. No air or water pollution. No bad wells. No health hazards. No traffic accidents. No contaminated mine rock that can’t be sold.

Many people in the community were skeptical and worried about degraded air and water quality, bad wells, negative health consequences, lower property values and traffic – as well as unforeseen events from the wolf’s large industrial operation. Over 5,500 community members and 250 businesses signed petitions or wrote letters to the community’s Board of Supervisors documenting their concerns about the wolf’s proposal.

The Board of Supervisors paid attention and sponsored an Economic Report to help the Community understand whether everyone would benefit from the mine.

Unfortunately, when the Economic Report arrived, the community realized that virtually all the data used to support the reports calculations came from the wolf’s proposal, like the claim the wolf would produce 108,400 ounces of gold every year for 80 years. The wolf had no current data to prove he could achieve that, so his proposal used ancient data from the 1940’s and 1950’s when the mine last operated.

The wolf’s proposal said that after everything was built and ready for production, he would spend about $68 million each year to get the gold. He

knew not all the money would be spent in the idyllic community. But the wolf told the people and their leaders not to worry, the community would still be much better off.

The wolf also said that when he sells 108,400 ounces of gold each year at market price, he creates about $180 million in annual revenue. Nice! The wolf's profit from $180 million after expenses of $68 million is...wait for it... almost $112million...every year, for 80 years. Happy, happy wolf!

"How much of the profit stays in our community?", the skeptical local folks asked. The wolf just smiled and said, "Well actually, virtually all $112 million profit goes to my shareholders, but don't worry, your community will be much better off."

Then he smiled even wider and said, "But the profit feeds the community's property tax calculations which the Economic Report says will add about $760,000 to the community's General Fund. Good for everybody, right?"

Now, in case you are not a financial analyst, you might be surprised to learn a $112 million profit gives the wolf an astounding, virtually magical return on Investment of just over 63% for one year's work, every year for 80 years... 63%...how cool is that? Cool enough to make the wolf smile bigger and bigger!

This made many people in the community even more skeptical as none of them had ever received 63% interest on their bank accounts or any other investments, and a 63% return on investment each and every year for 80 years seemed truly unbelievable. But that's what it said in the Economic Report, so maybe it's true.

Don’t worry though, the story ends well. The Board of Supervisors were much more savvy than the wolf thought. They could see the proposed “General Fund” contributions were based on a 63% return on investment every year for 80 years, which is really and truly unbelievable, so they chose to protect their community and just said NO to the wolf’s proposal.

And everyone lived happily ever after (except the wolf).

John Vaughan is a 55 year resident of Nevada County.

https://www.theunion.com/opinion/cartoons/r-l-crabb-it-takes-a-village-idiot/article_57be7b18-e8dd-5776-a02f-038ed0089be2.html

R.L. Crabb: It takes a village idiot

By navigaimport
Apr 18, 2022



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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-r-l-crabb-it-takes-a-village-idiot/article_d44d4816-3dfc-11ee-b48c-5f931ebbaf1b.html

Ideas & Opinions — R.L. Crabb: It takes a village idiot

R.L. Crabb | Cartoonist
Aug 19, 2023



R.L. Crabb | Cartoonist

R.L. Crabb | Cartoonist

Dec 16, 2023



R.L. Crabb | Cartoonist

SECTION TITLE

I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

THE UNION

YOUR AD HERE »

Bob Clark: I won't be investing in Rise Gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | October 5, 2020

Other Voices
Bob Clark

If you are thinking of buying shares of Rise Gold think again.

As you probably know Nevada County is considering issuing permits to a Canadian Company called Rise Gold to reopen mining in Grass Valley. The reason for this letter is because of my decades of knowledge and experience in the finance industry and my desire to protect you and my neighbors from what would most certainly result in financial loss.

Perhaps you have considered buying shares in Rise Gold thinking this could be your get-rich-quick opportunity. Regardless of if you are for or against the mine, please don't. Please consider the following facts:

I am now retired. I was formerly in the finance industry holding positions ranging from financial advisor, to branch manager for Wachovia Securities of their Grass Valley and Auburn branches to CEO of a registered broker/dealer. By the time I retired I had most of the securities licenses available which required hours of testing and involved detailed knowledge of both the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority and Securities and Exchanges Commision rules and regulations.

You should be aware that financial advisors are prohibited from soliciting or marketing shares of companies like Rise Gold that trade for less than $5 per share, generally called penny stocks, because of their very high risk. If they do they would most likely be kicked out of the industry. The failure rate of penny stock companies is almost 100% — and they are generally very poorly financed.

Like Rise they often have no business income and rely on borrowing and selling additional shares to stay afloat. If you were to examine Rise's SEC filings, as I have, you would see that they have huge quarterly losses totaling millions and inadequate cash to continue operation. To address this Rise has recently issued an additional $3.3 million shares.

They will no doubt have to do it again, and each time the ownership of existing shareholders is diluted. Reopening the mine would require millions of dollars to clean up the Centennial leftovers before they could even start.

Penny stock companies are not regulated in the same way as other companies nor are the individuals who solicit the sale of their stock, who are not even licensed. This opens the door to fraud and misrepresentation.

I called Rise telling them I might have an interest in buying their stock. I was called the next morning by a lady from Ontario. She recounted the success of previous mining operations here and told me that even more gold remains in the ground, which is probably true. But then she told me that they are "in the final stages" of getting the approvals necessary to reopen the mine — not even close to true, as there hasn't even been an Environmental Impact Report done yet — and that approval is a "rubber stamp away 90% probability it will be done by December."

Unfortunately information about penny stock companies is typically hard to find. No stock analysts follow the stock and provide recommendations or reports. Why would they waste their time? Most likely with a stock purchase everyone will lose it all. I hope you didn't invest in Emgold the last time around.

My wife and I have lived on East Bennett Road just around the corner from the big silo at Brunswick and Bennett Roads for 20 years. We picked it because of the beauty and tranquility of our wooded lot. If the mine were to reopen our neighbors and I would see each of our homes drop in value by as much as $100,000 or more, our wells would run dry, the 24/7 operation would obliterate the night sky and the serenity would be replaced by the sounds of rock crushers, graders, top loaders, and hundreds of trips by diesel trucks carrying tons of rocks.

Because you may not live next door don't think the reopening won't affect you. It will, but I'll save that for another time.

Bob Clark lives in Grass Valley.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---bob-hubbard-three-gold-mining-stories-tell-different-tales/article_19614214-d498-11ed-89ee-639cdc386f61.html

Ideas & Opinions - Bob Hubbard: Three gold mining stories tell different tales

Bob Hubbard
Apr 8, 2023

What's happening with the Rise Gold proposal is a story about stories. Rise wants approval for their project, so they tell three main stories: One about jobs, another about economics, and a third about environmental impact. For Rise, the key is that very few people reading the stories compare one to the other — or to the detailed data underneath them.

JOBS – Big promises that don't hold up when you look closely

The jobs story is designed to attract workers with the large dollars being offered in Rise's marketing program. Virtually none of the locally recruited jobs at Rise are available anytime soon. Construction will take at least 3 years (based on Rise assertions) and up to 6-10 years (based on industry averages). Most of the local hires will work 2,300ft or more underground for 12 hours/shift for 4 days on/4 days off (the story recently changed from 7days on/7days off to 4). The jobs story doesn't talk about the negative effects of 12 hours shifts, working graveyard, or missing time with your family because you effectively have a single parent household for half the year.

The math in Rise's promotional materials does not add up. For instance, the

Underground Mining jobs in Table 2 show annual wages much higher than the same jobs in Table 3. The introduction even says: “Actual wages during operations are subject to applicant experience and labor market conditions.”

The bottom line is that even if the annual dollars look good, what is being offered is a long way from “good jobs”.

ECONOMICS – Presenting best case scenarios to sell the deal

The economic story is based solely on data provided by Rise. That data shows Rise costs to produce an ounce of gold are half of the industry average, which leads to low expenses. When you have low expenses, you can show high profits. High profits make the contribution to the County General Fund look good. As long as you don’t compare the numbers provided by Rise to standard financial reporting, or industry averages, or other gold mining operations, the data appears to make sense. Not so much when you study the numbers.

Rise wants the jobs part of the story to focus on annual wages, so they summarized information from a report by The World Gold Council (WGC). However, the WGC report also says:

“...higher wages due to the presence of a mine can lead to price inflation for housing, food and essential services in the mine’s vicinity, leaving workers and households who are not part of the supply chain with lower purchasing power.”

So, virtually everyone not working at Rise is negatively impacted for 80 years.

ENVIRONMENT – Hiding behind compliance standards and weak excuses

The environmental story is similar, promising that nothing bad will happen at any time for any reason for 80 years. This story also includes “mitigations” where something actually is bad but is modified to make it less bad than some arbitrary standard. It’s still much worse than it was before the mine, but the story says you are supposed to be ok with that. For this story, Agencies, Groups and individual commenters on the Draft EIR have been met with aggressive, arguably biased, responses in the Final EIR. These responses often claim that Draft EIR comments are speculation or responds with some form of “we can’t afford to do it that way” when an alternative is proposed, or an additional mitigation is requested.

As long as you don’t study the asbestos controls, waste rock disposal, diesel emissions, many other inadequate responses, or the economics of “we can’t afford it”, the story holds water. Not so much when you look at the data.

TAKEN TOGETHER – A huge negative impact for Nevada County

Taken individually, some parts of each story seem to make sense. Taken together, the only story that really matters is one of a huge negative impact on the future of Nevada County.

Please contact your Nevada County Supervisor and demand they “Just Say NO” to the Final EIR and Rise Gold proposal. This link provides a set of facts and an easy way to submit a letter: https://www.minewatchnc.org/send-a-letter.

Bob Hubbard, Grass Valley

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YOUR AD HERE »

Bob Zuelsdorf: Less mining, more tech

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Bob Zuelsdorf

Once again a foreign company is attempting to open the Idaho-Maryland Mine, the third time I have seen this "once every decade" fiasco occur.

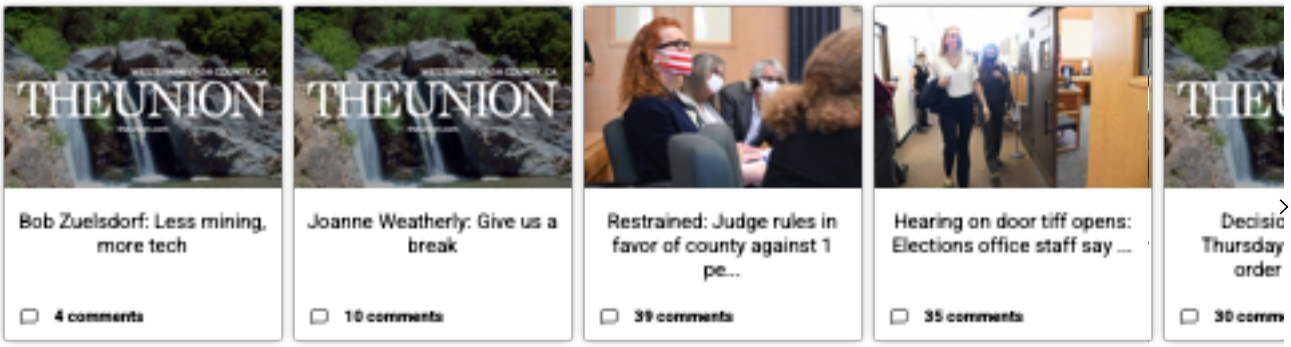
Once again it is being portrayed as beneficial to our community. Another attempt to translate the now-faded glory of the 1800s and early 1900s into today's very different world, it merely sucks up time and money from the county and local residents rather than living up to the fables Rise Gold portrays.

It is uncertain if they actually would resurrect the mine or are simply hyping up the prospect to gather in money from stockholders to feather their nest — and bank accounts — before fading into the woodwork with the funds, as has happened before.

It is the wrong business at the wrong time and these new mine owners are once again putting their own benefits ahead of the needs and desires of this community.

Yes, one can slant the numbers to show widespread support for another potential environmental disaster such as they have caused in in Canada, and are still in defensive litigation about, for environmental damage.

Trending Articles



A heavy trucking, noisy, air-fouling industry is far from being in the best interests of the Grass Valley area. And if there is such widespread support as they claim, why is The Union filled with letters from those in opposition, with most of the meager support coming from those with vested interests in the mine?

What the area does need is more high tech industries, such as were exemplified by the Grass Valley Group and others, with that legacy now being carried on by the likes of Telestream and AJA Video and being supported by training programs, such as those at Nevada County Media.

Greater emphasis on the clean, well-paying jobs they provide would be far more beneficial to the residents of Grass Valley, Nevada City and the rest of Nevada County.

Bob Zuelsdorf

Alta Sierra

6

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---bruce-herring-beware-of-electric-vehicle-tunnel-vision/article_4a33403c-d334-11ed-89e8-bb54272689e3.html

Ideas & Opinions – Bruce Herring: Beware of electric vehicle tunnel vision

Bruce Herring
Apr 5, 2023

Lithium, cobalt, phosphorous, nickel, antimony, copper, and rare earth elements. To a lesser extent iron, aluminum, graphite, manganese, gold, silicon, and gallium. Everything we need in haste and abundance for batteries, drivetrains, solar panels, and on-board electronics in electric vehicles (EV). The surge is being driven by demand, the global automobile industry, and global governments.

As a result mining operations are gearing up across the American West. Some are new projects, some old with links to decades of environmental degradation that inevitably leave the cost of cleanup to taxpayers. The criminal charges against Rise Gold's Ben Mossman is an example. Some are being challenged by enviros and/or tribal governments, but most are being fast tracked by the current administration.

Aussie owned Hermosa Mine in Arizona and Jervois Global in Idaho. Canada based Hudbay, Resolution Copper, and Energy Fuels ramping up operations in Utah, Nevada, and Arizona. Ioneer Ltd, Australia again, is proposing a lithium project in Esmeralda County Nevada (population 729). Rare earth metals in Mountain Pass, Cal. The oft mentioned lithium mine in Thacker

Pass, Nevada being rushed to approval despite indigenous opposition. All these mines are located in fairly remote and arid areas accustomed to government looking the other way. Oh — and did we say these mines will require billions of gallons of water per year?

Efforts are underway to minimize environmental impacts or find other ways to "mine" these elements. These range from tapping geothermal wastewater in the Salton Sea for the gargantuan water requirements, Rio Tinto extracting lithium from waste at their boron mine, Tesla co-founder JB Straubel recycling used batteries in Carson City at Redwood Materials, Renee Grogan's effort to secure Better EV labeling (sort of like organic food certification), and her own startup called Impossible Mining, which utilizes AI-equipped robots to pluck individual metal nodules from the sea-bed instead of vacuuming them up along with biodiversity-rich sediment.

Meanwhile back at the assembly line, for decades the auto industry has ducked federal fuel economy guidelines to pump out more and more profitable SUVs and trucks. Our desire to drive bigger, faster, and heavier autos than everyone else has helped "fuel" this trend, which now accounts

for 80% of new cars sold in the US. The industry shows no sign of changing this trend for EVs. The heavier the vehicle, the more heft is needed for the batteries, which are themselves extremely heavy. The E-version of the Silverado weighs 3000 pounds more than the gas one.

To date, gas-powered vehicles have accounted for roughly 20% of US greenhouse emissions. Though less polluting, EVs still create emissions due to the energy required to build them and charge the batteries. The 9,000-pound GMC Hummer EV contributes more emissions per mile than a gas-powered

Chevy Malibu. The Hummer's battery alone weighs more than a Honda Civic. Further, supersized EVs exacerbate the global shortage of essential minerals. One recent study found that electrifying SUVs could actually increase emissions by limiting the batteries available for smaller EVs.

Even modest-sized EVs are not a climate panacea. A 2020 study by the University of Toronto found that electrification of automobiles cannot prevent a global temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius by 2100 without a concurrent shift toward cleaner travel modes such as public transportation and bicycles. Aware of that need, Norway is replacing EV subsidies with support for people walking and biking, and considering a car-weight tax to nudge purchasers away from the bulkiest EVs.

By contrast, the US is subsidizing the SUV electric market by allowing those up to $88,000 to qualify for the $7500 tax credit ostensibly marked for cars at or below $55 grand. Since when did Americans require such encouragement to buy an SUV or truck? Yes, EVs are part of the solution, but given all we know do they truly represent a sea change, or even something better than a small hybrid vehicle that gets 50-60-70 mpg? And if we can't regulate the rush to fast track mining in a more sustainable way do EV buyers get to put a feather in their cap?

Let's keep our eyes wide open and beware of EV tunnel vision.

PS. As mentioned, a small amount of gold is used in some electronic applications. Last time I checked there is no global shortage of gold. So contrary to the need for lithium, rare earth etc., in order to "electrify" to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, why exactly do we need a multi decade gold mining operation right in town?

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David Wallace: Mine proposal falls short

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 23h ago

David Wallace

Rise Gold wants to make money for stockholders and managers by producing gold from the local mine. And as a side benefit, provide some local jobs. We often make choices based on money, "the bottom line."

But choosing the financial best is not necessarily the best. For example, if we choose low prices from Walmart or Amazon, we have fewer jobs in our local business community. If companies chose cheaper offshore manufacturing, we have fewer factory jobs in our communities.

Producing more gold is not a compelling value. Gold is easy to work with and attractive in jewelry. It is corrosion resistant and conductive in electronics. However, its main use is to serve as a symbol of power for rich folks and governments. But all they do with it is count it. Gold provides almost no jobs after it is mined.

Why should Nevada County support this? We value clean water and air. We value neighbors who preserve our streams, forests, wildlife and community, who don't wreck or clog the roads or consume too much electrical power.

We value jobs, too, but our community will thrive without these jobs. We have a choice. This mine proposal falls far short.

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David Wallace

Nevada City

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Conversation FOLLOW LOG IN | SIGN UP

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ALL COMMENTS 2 newest 5

DN **Donna Natali** 27 MIN AGO

All one has to do is look at the 16 to one mine in Allegany, the oldest working mine in the state. How many employees do they actually have? How

long has it been since they were operational? How much electricity did they use to pump out water from the aquafers 24/7? Where are the waste water, grey water, ponds now? Arsenic and mercury are here to stay due to mining, how much more can we withstand in our common water? The Environmental Impact report is such a sham. Get real answers from an actual mine right here in our back yard. I ask The Union to go ask these questions from Mike Miller, and then report them to the people. Much more legitimate than a rigged report being presented.

REPLY 0 0

TL

Tony Lauria 3 HRS AGO

Thanks for speaking up David. It's more like, this mine proposal is a disaster and complete failure for the thousands of people who live here. A residential community that would be displaced if it was allowed to happen. Well water drained, ecosystems ruined, air fouled and major devaluation of home values. Who would choose to live in an active mine zone, with drilling and blasting below your house, 24/7. What sort of disrespect does it take to submit a proposal of such gravity? It's a grim statement of the lengths some people will go for profit.

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G. David Miller: Mine — The reality of employment

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | March 25, 2022

G. David Miller

From my experience working in South Africa I have found that those mines do create jobs. However, these jobs are low wage, low skilled and the workers are never members of the local community. They are usually hired on a temporary basis, and recruited from poor communities with high unemployment. They often live in hostels and required to pay for their lodging.

Because the workers are poor and handling minerals of exceptionally high value (gold and diamonds), precautions must be taken. In South Africa, not only are there armed guards everywhere around the mines, but workers are required to undergo daily rectal examinations.

In the United States, the mine operators could easily recruit workers from abroad offering temporary H2b visas. If the worker attempts to ask for more than the minimum wage, the mine operator can revoke the visa.

On the other hand, perhaps the Idaho-Maryland Mine is a benevolent corporation with social and environmental interests outweighing that of profit.

G. David Miller (retired)

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-jim-steinmann-mine-jobs-harsh-few-and-not-for-locals/article_dec14e8e-c1c2-11ed-b5da-1b1382be6583.html

Ideas & Opinions: Jim Steinmann: Mine jobs – Harsh, few, and not for locals

Jim Steinmann
Mar 14, 2023

The Idaho Maryland Mine Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and project is coming to a vote by the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors soon. As expected, Rise Gold management is putting on a last-minute publicity blast touting jobs, jobs, jobs – even though most hiring may not begin for 6-10 years if the project is approved.

CEA Foundation-MineWatch is the group leading up the 21-organization strong opposition to the Idaho Maryland Mine (IMM). As a local resident and decades-long owner of a planning and management firm for large scale development projects including mining, I volunteered with other MineWatch panelists to analyze the economic impacts and jobs expected from the Mine. You can see my presentation at youtube.com/watch?v=sffBFTY78Pw.

Doing the analysis helped me understand how weak the jobs outlook from the mine is.

Here is what I found:

How many jobs are we really talking about?

Rise Gold originally claimed they would bring 600 new local jobs to the county. The county's Economic Impact Report corrected that number to 475.

This would include 312 direct jobs when the mine is fully operational, plus 163 indirect jobs hired by other companies, some part time. Of these jobs, my analysis concluded that the Mine will likely result in less than 132 locally held jobs for residents of Nevada County 6-10 years from now. Given the complexity of the permitting and building process, it could easily be 2034 before the mine is financed and operational with a complete workforce.

Will these jobs go to locals?

There is no guarantee that jobs will go to Nevada County residents.

Correcting the boilerplate assumptions used in the county's Economic Impact Report, I estimate that 58% (not 32%) of Rise Gold's workforce would be commuters from outside the county. This is because 12 hour shifts with 7 day on/7 day off work schedules favor skilled, but transient miners who commute – often sharing housing or living in an RV. They live in their hometowns and change mine jobs as they develop. Clearly, these transient workers will not spend much of their income in the county.

Even the construction jobs for building the facilities are likely to go to outsiders since most of the construction requires contractors with highly specialized experience.

Do you want your kids to work in an underground mine?

The bottom line is that mining is a miserable job that is physically and environmentally dangerous. We are talking about 12-hour shifts, 7 days on/7

off, 2,300 feet or more underground with heavy equipment – while wearing full protective gear.

Mine jobs are not secure

Mining is a boom-or-bust business. Risks include a rise in operating costs, a drop in gold prices or ore quantity, an environmental accident, bankruptcy, sudden closing, and wells drying out. Any of these events could result in a sudden loss of jobs.

The result: an economic and environmental wipeout instead of the touted jobs windfall.

Existing zoning provides for more and better jobs

For years, Grass Valley and Nevada County decision makers have responsibly planned for their economic future. The goal is to grow clean businesses, not resource extraction jobs. Approving the mine would require a zone change that would put mineral extraction immediately adjacent to residential areas, but Grass Valley's current General Plan and zoning provide for a clean Business Park that could accommodate up to 800 jobs according to a report for the last IMM proposal. This is almost twice as many jobs as the mine might provide, without the risk.

Let's stick with the City and County General Plans – which provides more and better jobs for locals.

The minimal economic and job benefits do not outweigh the risks

I made a simple calculation of the most optimistic scenarios in the County's

Economic Impact Report to reveal that the real economic benefits of the mine will be an inconsequential $7/per year/per County resident.

I ask our County Supervisors: does $7/year/resident and only 132 future jobs for current residents override the serious risks of placing a toxic, hazardous and economically questionable business in the middle of an idyllic residential community? My conclusion is no.

If you agree, write a letter to your supervisor at www.MineWatchNC.org/send-a-letter. I will be attending the upcoming Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors hearings asking them to Just Say No to the Idaho Maryland Mine and EIR.

Jim Steinmann

Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---john-vaughan-the-mine-it-s-not-about-economics-it-s/article_c1a9188c-de09-11ed-8556-2b063dce67cf.html

Ideas & Opinions – John Vaughan, The mine: It's not about economics, it's about risk

John Vaughan
Apr 19, 2023

Since the beginning of 2022, like many other local people, I've spent a LOT of time studying the environmental and economic reports for the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine. I've spoken to the primary author of the economic report and made comments to Planning Commissioners and Supervisors. I've participated as a panelist at the MineWatch Community Review of the County's Economic Impact Report. Click this link for the video (http://bit.ly/MW-Economic-Review).

In short, I've had a great deal of time to think about what Rise Gold's mine proposal is really about – and what's it's NOT about.

The issues with Rise Gold's proposal ARE NOT ABOUT:

Whether Rise's production, revenue and cost estimates have any basis in current, provable measurements or industry standards (they do not).

Whether the consultant who prepared the Economic Report did a good job (they did…but critical parts of the input came from Rise Gold).

Whether our elected representatives and the people who work at Nevada

County are doing their jobs and care about this community (they are and they do).

Whether there would be some economic benefit (there may be, although best case the benefits are half of what is projected in the Economic Report and there is no consideration of risks).

Whether the economic reports include all the costs or the cost of risk (they do not).

Whether the Rise Gold profits shown in the Economic Report are overstated which inflates County benefits (they are and they do).

Whether some of the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) responses demonstrate a bias towards Rise Gold (they do).

The issues with Rise's proposal ARE ABOUT what RISK we, and our elected representatives, are willing to accept in trade for jobs and County revenue.

Over 5,500 individuals and 250 business owners signed petitions and/or wrote letters to the Supervisors opposing the mine. 95% of the letters and opinions pieces on the topic in The Union newspaper have been opposed to the mine. The vast majority of the opposition to the Rise Gold proposal are thoughtful people who have done their homework, who care about this community and are committed to a better future outcome than what Rise proposes.

If you study the EIR and the Economic Reports you will find risks related to toxic mine waste, air and water pollution, well drawdown, property values, traffic, and many others. You will find the cost of those risks are not included

in the economic analysis.

You will find that local jobs, local spending and County revenue are inflated based solely on assumptions provided by Rise Gold.

Are we willing to take the risks for 80 years?

In trade for the possibility of more jobs and more County revenue: Are we willing to accept that some toxins may leak into our streams or water supply? Or a few wells go dry? Or that property values for many homeowners will go down? Or a few of our children or grandchildren or great grandchildren may have lung issues from “fugitive” asbestos dust? Or that County revenue will not even come close to the cost of fixing any number of potential environmental catastrophes? Or that local prices and housing costs will go up for everyone not working at the mine as a direct result of Rise’s inflated salaries?

Don’t be fooled by wild claims of economic benefits and jobs and proposed mitigations. The data provided by Rise is designed to sell their story. It is not designed to show the facts.

Please contact your Nevada County Supervisor and demand they “Just Say NO” to the Final EIR and the Rise Gold proposal. This link provides a set of facts and an easy way to submit a letter: https://www.minewatchnc.org/send-a-letter

John Vaughan, Grass Valley

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Martin Webb: Analyzing the Idaho-Maryland Fudge Factory

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | September 13, 2021

Martin Webb | Other Voices

As a long-time energy professional, local business owner and radio broadcaster of The Energy Report, I was asked to speak to a group about the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine on the subject of energy use.

I analyzed multiple sources of information, including reports either paid for, created by or referenced by the mine's investors, as well as our own Nevada County Energy Action Plan.

As a result, I was able to deep dive into claims of estimated jobs and earnings for locals, while also taking a look at overall energy use for the proposed facility. I was surprised.

First, note that any estimated local jobs are always based on the proposed mine operating at a "maximum production rate" of 2 million pounds/day. However, Rise Gold acknowledges it's a made-up theoretical number not based on any technical feasibility report and would take an unknown number of years to reach, if ever.

Out of the estimated direct mine jobs, only two-thirds would go to locals, and the highest paying category (19 supervisors and managers) would employ zero locals, as well as the next four highest-paying jobs (geologist, engineer, metallurgist, and scientist). A "local's average job" at the mine would pay less than the mine's regularly touted "average job" earnings.

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The mine would necessitate moving in 100 new non-locals to compete for tight housing, generally making more money than their local co-workers.

There is also sweet talk about indirect jobs created, which is the assumed outward ripple effect of even more new jobs and revenue created by the spending of the mine's proposed operations, as well as by the personal spending of people working for the mine. This is where things go sideways in the mine's reports.

Their economic report bizarrely calls PG&E a local utility, then assigns all $8 million a year in power bills paid as going into our community, and somehow magically compounds that huge mistake into $13 million in total local economic effects. After you correct their blunder to reflect reality, "local vendor purchases" drops from the report's false "41% of the mine's total spending" to only 15%.

Yes, 85% of vendor spending will go elsewhere. The local indirect jobs numbers collapse.

Well, so what? The mine won't employ as many local people as they say. And they wouldn't pay them as well. And they don't know how much they could mine, having done no technical feasibility study, so there could be few jobs. And their reports don't make sense, using

flawed information and admitted guesswork.

Still, wouldn't even 10 new jobs be worth it versus zero new jobs? It turns out, no.

Using the mine's repeated citation of a 2019 Economic Policy Institute report on job multipliers for 179 different industries, mining is practically the worst possible job creator, both in direct jobs at the mine, and indirect jobs around it. Literally, almost any other business model would be better, if jobs are what we want in our community.

We have a choice, and in the 21st century we've done well without mining. When I looked at the proposed mine's power use, it would equal all of the entire non-residential power use combined in the county: roughly 50 million kWh/yr. For that same annual amount of mine power (which if used, would destroy our local energy action plan), our county's very smart and resilient citizens already employ over 30,000 locally, creating $3 billion in local earnings ... using 50 million kWh.

The proposed mine — for that same gargantuan annual power use — would provide at most a paltry 1% of the jobs and earnings (300 jobs and $30 million) that our local citizens already do, using the ample gold reserves currently buried between our ears.

Visit Rise Gold's website. Locate their jobs information. Find the numerous footnote links to the Economic Policy Institute brief on jobs multipliers from 2019. They love touting it. Notice we have much better industries to choose from, providing far greater local jobs numbers with less risk and more certainty, and without exploding our county's energy action plan.

My recommendation? I myself am a three-time local solar business owner who has created dozens of local jobs. Then those jobs saved our citizens and businesses more money, with roughly around $2 million a year staying here in our county instead of going to PG&E, all from my hard work.

And that's just me. There are currently over a hundred solar and energy jobs locally. And we'll need many more to hit the county energy action plan ... but only a handful of local mine jobs to explode it.

Martin Webb lives in Penn Valley.

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Mike Shea: The magic numbers

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 23h ago

Mike Shea | Other Voices

No, this isn't about the chances of winning a mega lottery, but about a different type of gambling. It's about Rise Grass Valley (a Nevada Corporation) gambling that opening a gold mine will make Rise GV's principals and investors fabulously wealthy. And if Nevada County supervisors approve Rise GV's project, they will be gambling that some of that wealth will trickle down in the form jobs for the residents of Nevada County. (Rise GV claims that the mine would create an estimated 612 jobs, with the majority being filled by Nevada County residents.)

It's important to keep in mind that Rise GV isn't trying to open a gold mine in Grass Valley for the benefit of our community – it isr noble act designed to provide jobs for our citizens. Opening a gold mine is a way to enrich themselves and their investors. "Jobs" a just a carrot to get us to go along.

If approved, the mine would only continue to operate if it's profitable. There is a point where it is no longer cost-effective to conti mining – the magic numbers on their balance sheet. Things that can affect the decision to keep the mine open are the price of gol how much gold is extracted from a ton of ore, the costs of labor, energy, explosives, water, concrete, chemicals, equipment, insurance, and of course, lawsuits. Plus, as the miners dig deeper, the mine becomes more expensive to operate – and less profitat

If a mine isn't profitable, or if it has to shut down for a while to repair or replace equipment, address health and safety or environmental violations, deal with a fire, a cave-in, flooding, lack of capital, or some other occurrence, what happens to the employees who suddenly are out of work? Do they continue to receive their salaries? Will they get unemployment? What happens the businesses that have come to depend on the money the miners were spending? That's not hypothetical. Here are some examp of what I'm talking about:

A year after it opened in 2013 the Sutter Gold mine in Amador County closed when the mine shafts flooded. The mine employees were laid off. The mine is still closed.

How about the Pimenton gold mine in Chile? In 2017, Mining.com reported, "One of the world's highest-grade gold mines has beer closed and its operator has declared bankruptcy due to a lack of working capital." (Speaking of mines in Chile, check out http://www.npr.org/2022/08/04/1115605505/sinkhole-chile-656-feet-deep. Want that here?)

Here's one from the September 13, 2018, Great Falls Tribune, about Pegasus Gold Corp. and the Zortman and Landusky gold and si mines that closed after 17 years of operation leaving a massive cleanup behind: "After Pegasus went bankrupt it left the state of Montana and the Bureau of Land Management to fund ongoing water treatment and maintenance." (Magenta Drain ring a bell?) An let's not forget, Ben Mossman's last mining venture went bankrupt and left a bunch of pollution behind.

A headline in the July 6, 2022 industry publication, Energy Capital & Power, says "Uganda Discovers 31 Million Tons of Gold Ore." H might that find affect the availability and price of gold and, consequently, the Idaho-Maryland mine's profitability?

On July 25, 2022, the Denver Business Journal ran an article about a Newmont gold mine in Colorado. The article says, "Supply cha woes and labor-cost inflation ate into the second-quarter profits of Newmont Mining, cutting the income of the world's biggest gc mining company by 40%." The article adds that "While the company is ramping up production at one West African mine where cos are low, Newmont is scaling back at its lone mine in Colorado to focus on more cost-efficient production."

Again, my question is, if the mine should suddenly close what happens to the people working in the jobs Rise GV says the mine wil create? How will the laid off or terminated employees be able to make their mortgage, auto, and credit card payments? Buy food a pay for water and electricity? Does Grass Valley end up with a lot of shuttered buildings and out-of-work people? I hope that Robe D. Niehaus, Inc., the firm hired to prepare an economic study, has taken these factors into consideration. Because just like the lott all the numbers need to match up to keep the mine operating.

Mike Shea lives in Cedar Ridge

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Paul S. Schwartz: Idaho-Maryland unlikely to begin actual mining until 2034

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | October 14, 2021

Paul S. Schwartz | Other Voices

Fourteen months ago, Nevada County Planning Department published the notice of preparation (July 17, 2020) that presented Rise Gold's proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine, including 100-plus technical reports prepared under the direction of Rise Gold. The project scope of work and technical reports were made available for review and comments from federal and state agencies, nonprofits, and the public.

Nevada County selected Raney Planning and Management to use the technical reports, the Rise Gold project description, and comments as a basis to complete the environmental impact report.

This year, Raney Planning and Management submitted a draft administrative environmental impact report for review by Nevada County Planning. Nevada County Planning and Raney Management and Planning directed Rise Gold and their cadre of consultants to update, complete additional data collection, and develop further analysis in many of the technical reports. We are still in the administrative draft phase.

If the county accepted the administrative report as complete, it would be retitled the draft environmental impact report and made available to federal and state agencies, Grass Valley and Nevada City, nonprofits, and the public for a 45-day review. Since the proposal is complex, it is likely the review period would be extended to 60 days.

This process could easily extend into 2022. The process will include public hearings before the Nevada County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. Many agencies will make specific requests that will influence conditions of approval.

The Centennial cleanup proposal, also a Rise Gold project, is in the review and determinations phase at the Department of Toxic Substance Control and may influence the mine's draft environmental impact report. If the department determined that the mine proposal and the Centennial cleanup proposal should have one environmental impact report that covers both projects, we would expect process delays.

There is the possibility the notice of preparation and environmental impact report process would need to start over with a new unified scope of work and set of technical reports. Raney Management and Planning would likely redefine their scope of work and enter new agreements with Nevada County. If this were to come to pass, project consideration by the Nevada County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors could slip into 2023 or even 2024.

The county supervisors circulated a request for proposal on Sept. 2 to complete an economic impact study of the proposed mining operations. The tentative deadline for submitting a proposal is Oct. 8. The draft economic study submittal date in the request for proposals is February 2022. I expect this is a loose date and may change.

The selected consultant would submit a draft report for the supervisors to review and comment. Likely, an additional 60-90 days would be needed to complete a final report.

The supervisors could wait for the economic impact study to act on the draft environmental impact report or not. Approval of the draft environmental report is not a project approval.

I would not expect the Board of Supervisors to begin the project-approval process before benefiting from a completed economic impact study and vetting the conclusions. The supervisors can approve the draft environmental report and reject the project.

At some point the Nevada County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will hold hearings to finalize the draft environmental

report, and consultants will draft a final environmental impact report.

Public hearings will occur with Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors to consider all public and agency comments received during the application process and finalize a decision on the environmental report.

If the supervisors approved the environmental impact report, the project would proceed to the entitlements phase and project approval. This phase would require Rise Gold to complete schematic level engineering and architectural designs at a sufficient level for county analysis.

Rise Gold would need to acquire the financial resources to fund technical and physical development of the project. Typically, the cost of design, engineering, capital planning and cost modeling is around 10% of the projected budget. If the estimated project cost is $100 million-$200 million, Rise Gold would need to raise $10 million to $20 million to keep the project rolling.

There is a long list of state and federal agencies that require their approvals to advance the project. The entitlements phase could easily become a lengthy process. The Loma Rica Ranch Housing Development Plan was originally approved in the 1980s and only this year has it begun grading the project. We could see the entitlements phase extend the approval process into 2025-26.

There are likely legal challenges and appeals that will follow any level of approval from the Board of Supervisors. If the Rise Gold proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine survived legal challenges and the appeals, there would likely be new requirements, redesigns, new bench-marking, new standards for energy efficiency and carbon footprint reduction, and increased bonding requirements. These might require Rise Gold to increase their capital profile to restart the project. After 18 to 24 months in the courtroom, I expect most of 2028-29 would be needed to restart the project.

If Rise Gold were to navigate their way through the environmental review, Board of Supervisors approval, legal challenges and raise enough funding, the two projects would begin rough grading, construct the water treatment pond and the detention pond, construct the underground infrastructure required to support the industrial complex including conduits and pipe for electrical, potable water, waste, fire protection water, data, natural gas or propane, and storm water.

Residential properties relying on well water would need replacement water lines run, including a new water main on East Bennett Road. In addition, the new shaft would need to be constructed. While these improvements were underway, evaluation of the existing underground mine shafts and tunnels would need to occur.

There is the possibility that de-watering couldn't be undertaken or completed until many improvements were made to prevent shaft collapse or sink holes throughout the system. There is also the possibility that Idaho-Maryland Mine tunnels connect with Empire Mine tunnels and de-watering would require those connections be shut off. This process would likely extend into 2030-31.

Final grading would happen to set the pads for new construction. Infrastructure and utilities would be raised to finished grade and extended where needed. Construction of new buildings would begin. Plans for improvements to the underground mine tunnels based on investigation would continue to advance.

A full water treatment facility would have to be constructed, and the treatment buildings, utilities, equipment, treatment pond, pumps and pipelines would need to be completed before de-watering could begin.

If all the permits were granted and all the prep work completed, de-watering could start as early as 2031-32. Then construction of a new access shaft would be completed and restoration of existing mine works could begin.

When the mine closed for 17 months during World War II, 80% of the Idaho-Maryland shafts were caved in, as reported in Jack Harvey's history "Gold in Quartz."

One can only imagine the scope of work needed for reopening after 65 years. All of the facilities and infrastructure for underground crushing, processing, transport and dumping would need to be in built and operational before removing any waste rock. Commissioning of all the systems above and below ground would be completed. The Centennial cleanup project would need to be completed before any waste rock could be relocated there.

Even if all the stars aligned, processing the first ounce of gold would probably not happen before 2034.

Paul S. Schwartz lives in Grass Valley.

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Paul Schwartz: Mine's unintended consequences not mentioned

Opinion FOLLOW OPINION | 14 hrs ago

Paul S Schwartz

I am generally disappointed in the depth of the economic analysis and the decision to use the Rise Gold economic and jobs projections as the baseline for the analysis.

There was no testing the data or comparison to actual data from comparable operating mines. There is no analysis that considers the impact on the current balanced and prosperous economy in our County when we entertain a return to industrial gold mining.

What will the impact to an economy that more and more is built around tourism, recreation, and seniors?

In the Niehaus Economic Impact Report for Santa Barbara County, they concluded the impact of expanding the oil industry would seriously impact tourism. As a result of the study Santa Barbara rejected the expansion proposal. Where is the similar analysis for the impact of industrial mining operation in a residential neighborhood, on a scenic entryway to our County, and close to Grass Valley and Nevada City?

I can see a long list of what-ifs and unintended consequences that could affect the economic impact of the reopening of the IMM.

One need look no further that the Rise Gold leadership's last gold mining enterprise and the unfunded toxic material cleanups in excess of $1.4 million, according to the media coverage.

What if the workers live outside the county because of affordable housing shortages here, thus spending their dollars somewhere else? What if labor contractors bus workers in? Again, no local spending.

What if the IMM purchases supplies and materials outside Nevada County, and there is no tax or multiplier revenue to the local economy?

What if the two years of construction to prepare the project for operations is completed by contractors from outside our county and that revenue disappears?

What about issues related to climate change and energy consumption that change the way we require an industrial enterprise operate? Does the county have the authority to change the requirements placed on Rise Gold in their 80-year permit approval?

What if Nevada County adopts stringent climate change regulations, carbon footprint restrictions, and county-wide carbon reduction goals? Will the residential sector have to make all the reductions or will Rise Gold and the Idaho Maryland Mine have to conform to new county and state climate change carbon reduction regulation?

One revealing part of the Niehaus report on the economic impact of reopening the Idaho Maryland Mine is the data pulled from our local real estate professionals. Seventy-nine percent of those responding to the questionnaire thought real estate values would decline. Eighty-nine percent thought the loss in value would be permanent. Seventy-two percent of the respondents thought the environmental impacts documented in the EIR would be significantly greater. These are folks who are intimately involved in the heartbeat of our local economy. We should trust their understanding in this case.

My wife and I took a 3,000+ mile road trip this summer through Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada. We drove through a lot of mining communities. In general, and anecdotal, our biggest take away in these communities was massive poverty and cultural decline. Silver City, New Mexico represents my biggest fears of the long-range impacts of industrial mining. At one time the town was very prosperous. The residential areas similar to ours had large Victorian homes. The downtowns had government buildings, restaurants, retail similar to ours. Today, the economy has collapsed. Residential properties and the downtown are in serious disrepair. Stores are closed and boarded-up and restaurants are gone.

Where in the Niehaus economic analysis is any work related to the possibility of this kind of impact of industrial mining to our local economy. Our local economy recovered from the age of big gold and large timber. Over the last four to five decades, we have built a strong balanced economy around construction, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, information and finance, professional, scientific, and technical services, healthcare, arts and entertainment, and government and government services. Two years of COVID impacts hurt some sectors more than others, but generally, compared to many communities, we are doing OK because of the diversity of our economy. Niehaus presents no analysis related to the impact of reintroducing industrial mining to our well-balanced economic

4

mix.

Thinking outside the box for a moment. What happens when the IMM reopens with a multimillion-dollar gold processing plant ready to go. Why wouldn't other gold mining companies with deep pockets connect the tunnels and reopen the Empire and the North Star mines pumping out the water and processing the waste rock and gold at the Brunswick location. How big do the piles of waste rock grow? How much new particulate clouds our air? How many trucks are hauling waste rock on our roads? What is the impact of gold on our elections and governing? Just a thought on the slippery slope.

> Paul S Schwartz lives in Grass Valley.

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Ideas & Opinions – Peter Burnes: Enough gold for 600 years

Peter Burnes
Apr 21, 2023

In the April 5th Other Voices column in The Union, Bruce Herring reminds us that, as EF Schumacher said, “Small is Beautiful” when it comes to the evolution of our cars. Until electric vehicle battery technology evolves a few more notches, I’m going to get back to thinking small.

But in his last paragraph, ‘PS’, Mr. Herring ‘buried the lead’ about gold demand and inspired me to do a little arithmetic.

The World Gold Council says there is about 208,874 metric tonnes of gold already above ground, most of it sitting in vaults, doing absolutely nothing except making bankers feel warm and fuzzy. The same source indicates that the annual demand for gold for actual technological use has hovered around 330 metric tonnes per year over the last decade.

Based on this authoritative data, there is already enough gold lying around for over 600 years of technology ‘need’ for gold. Someone please tell me why we need to dig up more gold? And if you own gold as an investment, wouldn’t it be logical to be an absolute opponent of all gold mining?

There is no need for any more gold mining anywhere, least of all here in Grass

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Ralph Silberstein: Idaho-Maryland Mine, again

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | September 24, 2018

Other Voices
Ralph Silberstein

The Idaho-Maryland Mine was recently acquired from Emgold Mining by Rise Gold Corp., a junior mining company from Canada.

The prior Canadian owner, Emgold Mining, spent years trying to get the mine opened and failed. Due to immense environmental impacts, financial obstacles and public opposition, Emgold eventually abandoned the project.

Repeating the pattern of Emgold, Rise, the new owner, has recently completed some exploratory drilling and has been publishing enticing reports. In a Jan 3, 2018 press release, Rise CEO Ben Mossman stated "The presence of high-grade gold values in the walls of the quartz veins was not expected ..." and "The possibility that there could be very substantial gold mineralization in the developed upper levels of the mine is astonishing ..."

Except this isn't astonishing news at all. Rise is excitedly reporting gold deposits in concentrations previously reported in multiple glowing reports by Emgold (e.g Emgold Publication March 2008).

It all sounds so promising, so easy, such a lucrative deal. Multiple alluring reports have been produced yet again. Following the pattern of Emgold, Rise has turned to funding methods that are not approved by the SEC, collecting more than $2 million via "private placements."

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Why didn't Emgold open the mine? What is going on?

The reality is that the mine is flooded and deposits lie thousands of feet under polluted water.

The mine shut down in 1956 due to low production. In order to get to what gold is left, miles of tunnels have to be dewatered and continuously treated to meet the strict California standards. So a water purification system to handle large volume has to be designed and built. It will have to run forever.

Also, discharging this water means putting South Fork Wolf Creek at flood stage. This creek is a pristine little stream that runs down into the beautiful meadows along Bennett Street. The land is owned by Empire Mine State Park and has been undergoing habitat restoration. Extensive environmental studies will be required to assess the impacts on this habitat before anything can go forward.

There also will have to be studies and guarantees to protect local well owners. Costly water mains and service lines will have to be installed in advance throughout the area to provide a solution for the possibility that the mine would impact these wells.

Even without considering the dewatering issues, it is questionable whether it would be financially feasible to mine the ore that

remains at such depths. In California, the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) requires that all mines have a reclamation plan in place before starting. Gone are the days in which a mining company could extract massive amounts of waste rock, leave tailings all over the place, pollute the area with mercury or cyanide or arsenic, and then leave it all when the gold runs out. In order for the mine to get SMARA approval, the area will need a reclamation plan and a huge guarantee bond.

This problem is even larger because the mine property already has vast areas of tailings left over from earlier days which are in need of testing and potential remediation. In a recent EPA study of California abandoned mines to determine their potentials of hazardous exposure, Idaho Maryland Mine is listed as number one! ["Prioritization of California Abandoned Mines Exposure-Based Algorithm" May 9, 2017, Hillenbrand]. Rise Gold now owns this legacy clean-up problem.

And there will be other environmental impacts. The mine is situated at the City of Grass Valley. There will be noise impacts, air pollution impacts, traffic impacts, and energy consumption limitations due to California's strict new climate change laws. The project will need to have an Environmental Impact Report which must be approved by multiple agencies. It is well known that the local environmental community will not stand for anything other than full and careful scrutiny.

The executives at Rise undoubtably know all this, but make little mention of these huge obstacles. CEO Ben Mossman recently spoke at a mining conference as if the permitting would be easy, with "only county approval needed," failing to mention a reality that paints an entirely different picture. But, in one sense, Mossman is right.

Idaho-Maryland Mine is still a very productive gold mine. Only instead of mining for gold, it is again being used to mine unwary investors: in the last year alone Rise has collected over $2 million in investment cash.

Ralph Silberstein lives in Grass Valley and is a member of Community Environmental Advocates (CEA-NC.org).

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Randall J. Newsome: Thar's gold in those promises?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 23h ago

Randall J. Newsome | Other Voices

Of all the lofty promises Rise Gold has churned out over the preceding months, none has been more ballyhooed than the number of jobs the mine would create, and the $94,000 average annual wage they'll pay. Before anyone runs to get in line for one of these dream jobs, let's take a closer look.

First, it appears to require a considerable amount of magical thinking to believe the company will ever create a single job. According to its most recent SEC 10-Q report, Rise had less than $400,000 in the bank as of Oct. 31, 2021. By its own reckoning, it needs to plow $100 million into the facility before it can mine its first ounce of gold. It is grossly undercapitalized, to put it mildly, and teetering on the brink of insolvency.

Second, the $94,000 number is totally misleading. According to its March 2021 economic impact report, Rise estimates that it will employ "312 people in Nevada County at full operating levels." Note that it may take years before "full operating levels" are reached.

Putting that aside, the company says that its annual payroll (not including benefits) for these 312 employees will be $29,220,000. It provides no explanation for how it arrived at this number. Rise then provides a list of job categories and an estimate of employees per category.

What it doesn't provide is detail as to the average pay for each employee in each category. Only 213 of the potential 312 employees would be local hires, and of that 213, 162 of them would be "local trainees." Does anyone really think that Rise is going to pay a trainee $94,000 a year?

According to Comparably.com and other sources, the average wage for underground gold miners in the United States is less than $50,000. Even after these 213 local hires are fully trained, does anyone really think Rise will pay almost twice that national average?

So how did they arrive at the $94,000 number? Simple — if you take 312 and divide it into their made-up annual payroll of $29,220,000, you'll come up with just under $94,000.

By lumping together the salaries of managers (all of which are listed as "non-local hires"), engineers, geologists and other highly paid jobs with the lower-paid miners and mineral processors, the company has provided what I consider a false representation of what someone who lives in our community might actually expect to earn at Rise.

There is a great deal more in the Rise economic impact report that is of questionable validity. That's why the Board of Supervisors was right to commission its own economic impact report. But all the board or anyone else needs to know about the Rise report is found in italics on the second page:

Mineral resources that are not mineral reserves do not have demonstrated economic viability. Rise Grass Valley has not established mineral reserves supported by a feasibility study.

Rise Grass Valley has not completed a feasibility study to establish mineral reserves, and therefore has not demonstrated economic viability of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

In other words, the Rise business model appears to be built on sheer speculation, which begs the following question: Why is the county continuing to spend valuable time and money on this project?

The only explanation I've heard is that the board has to follow the legal process. Does that mean that every time a carload of people comes to town with an undercapitalized, half-baked, potentially dangerous business scheme and starts throwing around empty promises, the board is required to take it all seriously?

Due process only requires whatever process that's due under the circumstances, not a seemingly endless process in pursuit of a fantasy. Isn't it time for this particular fantasy to end?

Randall J. Newsome lives in Nevada City.

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Randall J. Newsome: Rise Gold, show me the money

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 29, 2021

Randall J. Newsome | Other Voices

A lot of print has been devoted to the pros and cons of Rise Gold Corp.'s reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. The opponents have focused on various environmental impacts of the mine. Proponents point to the potential for as many as 300 new jobs, and urge that the company and its CEO, Benjamin Mossman, be given a chance to prove themselves.

Putting aside whether reopening the mine is a good or bad idea, there has been little discussion of whether Rise Gold has, or ever will have, the financial wherewithal to carry out its business plan. My experience as a U.S. bankruptcy judge for 28 years leads me to believe that this company is destined for financial failure.

Unfortunately, Rise Gold's financial structure looks a lot like that of Bank Island Gold, Ltd. ("BIG"), Mr. Mossman's last failed business venture. That company began commercial production of gold at the Yellow Giant mine in Banks Island, British Columbia, in January 2015. Only six months later, its operations were forced to shut down after an extensive pollution abatement order was issued by the British Columbia Ministry of Environment.

On Jan.15, 2016, Banks Island Gold was put into a receivership. According to FTI Consulting, the Canadian receiver, the company's books showed assets in Canadian dollars of just under $12 million and liabilities of about $16 million. The creditors list includes 158 unsecured creditors holding over $6 million in claims. Significantly, about 50 of those creditors were former employees of BIG. They held claims for vacation and severance pay amounting to over $107,000. Most of the other creditors were small trade or equipment vendors.

Despite extensive efforts to market the mine, the receiver was unable to sell it. Ultimately, BIG's principal lender, who had a security interest (lien) covering all of the company's assets, took over the mine. Its stated value of $2.7 million did not begin to cover the full amount of the lender's loan, which was nearly $8.9 million. Thus, the unsecured creditors probably recovered virtually none of the money they were owed.

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Rise Gold's financial situation is nearly as dire. By its own reckoning, it needs upward of $100 million for construction of a wastewater treatment facility, a second mine shaft, a ventilation system, and other improvements before the mine can commence operations.

According to its June 14, 2021, 10Q report (a quarterly form public companies must file under SEC rules), the company only had about $1.5 million in cash as of April 30, 2021, down from nearly $3.4 million at the end of the previous quarter.

Apparently, it's been unable to secure conventional financing with a commercial lender and has been forced to resort to a hard-money lender to raise funds.

In late 2019, it borrowed $1 million and gave the lender a lien on all of its assets. The loan comes due in 2023. The interest rate is 10% for the first two years, 20% for the third year, and a staggering 25% for the fourth year.

Nearly two years later, due to fees and charges on top of exorbitant interest rates, it still owes some $916,000 on this loan. This is the commercial version of what a consumer could expect when borrowing money from a payday lender.

Perhaps the most telling and chilling excerpt from the June 14, 2021, 10Q report is the following:

“The Company expects to operate at a loss for at least the next 12 months. It has no agreements for additional financing and cannot provide any assurance that additional funding will be available to finance its operations on acceptable terms in order to enable it to carry out its business plan.“

Where is the money going to come from to build a wastewater treatment plant that can handle 3 million gallons of water a day? Where is the money going to come from for an environmental bond? Where is the money going to come from to pay NID to extend piped water to homeowners whose wells fail?

In other words, who is going to pay for all the promises Rise Gold has made, and who is going to finance its other basic capital needs? Some four and a half years after buying the mine, Rise Gold still doesn’t have a clue.

If the Board of Supervisors doesn’t receive answers to these questions in the immediate future, it should put an end to this ill-conceived and futile venture.

Randall J. Newsome lives in Nevada City.

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Ideas and Opinions - Randy Newsome: Rise Grass Valley—Time for a Financial Reckoning

Randy Newsome
Feb 24, 2023

When I last wrote about the financial condition of Rise Grass Valley (RGV) ("Other Voices," The Union, June 29, 2021), I noted that the company was teetering on the brink of insolvency and had no prospects for raising the $100 million or more it needs to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine. Some 19 months later and six years after the mine was purchased by RGV, nothing has changed. The company is still burning through cash at the rate of about $100,000 a month and generating revenue solely through the sale of its stock and rights to purchase stock.

Putting aside the environmental and other problems associated with reopening the mine, RGV otherwise is not a particularly attractive investment opportunity, since one lender, Eridanus Capital LLC (which is indirectly owned by a gold investor in New York City), is owed nearly $1.5 million and has a lien on all the company's assets to secure payment. If RGV defaults on that loan, Eridanus would be entitled to foreclose on everything RGV has that's worth having. That loan had an interest rate of 25% and was to mature in September of this year. In its beneficence, for an additional $250,000 and the right to buy more RGV stock at 60 cents a share, Eridanus extended the maturity date to September of 2024 and lowered the interest rate to 15%.

Since RGV has no operating revenue, and any other lender would take a back seat to Eridanus if RGV goes broke, it's no wonder that traditional lenders have not jumped at the chance to loan RGV the funds it needs to open the mine.

There's a common myth circulating that the money will magically appear once (if) the Nevada County issues a conditional use permit that allows RGV to go forward with its scheme. But many, if not most, publicly-traded junior mining companies like RGV never secure adequate capitalization and never generate a penny in revenues, much less a profit, even after they obtain a mining permit.

County staff and local citizens have spent hundreds if not thousands of hours poring over and discussing the merits (or lack thereof) of environmental impact reports, economic impact reports and other issues involving the mine. But the County has steadfastly refused to examine the financial wherewithal of RGV. Despite spending some $80,000 to have an independent expert prepare an economic impact report, that subject was never addressed in that report. The County's refusal to investigate this issue might be understandable if a small business such as a bar or laundromat was involved. But mining is an inherently dirty, dangerous business. If corners are cut on safety or the environment because of a lack of funds, it won't just mean that a landlord or a few vendors won't get paid. It could mean that people will be injured or will die, and property will be destroyed.

Both the spirit and the letter of the Nevada County General Plan (which is binding and tantamount to a county constitution as to land use) mandates that the County safeguard against grossly undercapitalized mining projects like RGV. Specifically, Policy 17.13 of Chapter 17 of the General Plan, which

deals with mining, states:

“The County shall require satisfactory forms of accessible security, including irrevocable letters of credit, cash deposits, escrowed negotiable instruments, or performance bonds to cover all such damages which may stem from the projects.”

Before the Board of Supervisors even thinks about voting on RGV’s conditional use permit application, it should require the company to prove at a minimum that it has binding, irrevocable commitments from reputable lenders that will provide it with adequate funds to:

1. Provide NID with the $14 million bond it has requested;
2. Provide NID piped water to all residents who are or may be affected by mining operations;
3. Clean up the Centennial toxic waste site as promised;
4. Acquire an environmental bond of no less than $20 million;
5. Fulfill all the other commitments and promises the company has made.
6. At long last, it’s time for the County to fulfill its mandate under the General Plan and require RGV to prove its financial viability. If after a reasonable period (say, 60 to 90 days) RGV is unable to do so, then its application should be denied.

Randy Newsome

Nevada City

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Reed Hamilton: What's in mine for us?

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 7, 2021

Reed Hamilton

I've been following the discussions of the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, trying to think about what the project might mean for us here.

Previous comments have mentioned the vast amount of water to be pumped and treated in perpetuity, toxic waste, explosion risk, possible dewatering of wells, noise and air pollution and road damage of heavy truck traffic, noise and dust from blasting, devaluation of neighboring homes, enormous energy requirements.

The mine CEO has proposed the increased tax revenues and jobs as credible benefits. He has also suggested some not very creditable ones, such as increasing home values and helping the homeless situation. I don't think those are realistic.

Aside from those aspects of the project, comments have pointed out the financial weakness of Rise Gold and its short history, including bankruptcy and the CEO's abandonment of the toxic waste of another mine.

When I look at the whole picture the question is what do we get out of this?

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While we could benefit from more good jobs, will those hires be local or imported? Will the jobs be mostly temporary? Will tax revenues offset the increased cost of public services and road maintenance from an industrial project?

Will the increase in power demand threaten our already vulnerable electrical system? Will mining activity decrease the value of local businesses and residences and, if so, by how much?

Will our tourist industry be damaged by traffic, noise and pollution from the mine? Will telecommuters who have been moving here stop coming and reduce the sales revenues that their lucrative jobs produce for local government?

Does Rise Gold have financing for the whole project or are they only hoping they can get it if they get county approval? Assuming that mitigation for the damages can be effective, will Rise Gold stay solvent if the price of gold falls as it has many times? If Rise Gold does go bankrupt, will there be adequate bonds to support the mine water treatment forever and elimination of other pollutants?

These are complex questions, but they deserve answers. Without answers, we and the Nevada County Board of Supervisors are proceeding on assumptions and unsupported claims.

It's clear that a thorough economic analysis of the project needs to be completed before any decisions are made.

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Robert A Hubbard: Nevada County's economic report on mine biased

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 9 hrs ago

Robert A Hubbard

On December 15, Nevada County presented a glowing Economic Impact Report on ZOOM, touting the benefits of reopening the Idaho Maryland mine for an 80 year period.

A close look by experts on the topics contained in the report was assembled into a webinar by the Community Environmental Advocates, CEA Foundation, and shows that this report has many serious issues. For instance, the software used to evaluate the project is biased to favor the applicant. Rise Gold does not know with any certainty how much gold is actually there to be mined. Rise Gold has no current information on well productivity in the hundreds of wells surrounding the mine, upon which to conclude that there will be no impact. The study dismisses local realtor's concerns about loss of property values. The report made it clear that Rise Gold's claims of jobs and benefits to the County treasury were exaggerated, but the panelists showed that even the report's lessened benefits are larger than reality. They also showed that the mine could easily be a serious drain on County resources for many years. There are many more flaws.

For a fact-filled rebuttal, please watch CEA's recorded webinar at https://www.minewatchnc.org/post/minewatch-december-2022-meeting-economic-report-review

Robert A Hubbard

Grass Valley

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Robert Clark: Don’t step in a cow pie

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | November 16, 2020

First I should apologize. I realize that you may be reading your paper, enjoying your breakfast, or having a cup of coffee while you read. Thinking about a cow pie is not something you want to do. I am truly sorry. I wouldn’t bring it up if it was very important.

Whether you call it a cow pie, meadow muffin, or some other term you probably know that what it refers to is what cows leave all over fields. When a cow has to go it goes.

Now, what you may not know is that as this nasty mess sits there in the sun it tends to bake an outer crust. It may not smell like it initially did, but beneath this crust lies, well let’s just say it is still a danger. I learned this as a child visiting an uncle’s farm. Like kids do I didn’t just step, I jumped. I ended up to my ankles in the lesson I wish to pass on to you.

As you may know, and as your Realtor certainly knows, by law you are required to disclose to any potential buyer anything and everything you are aware of that may have a pending negative impact on the property’s value. Failure to do exposes you to considerable financial risk.

I believe the potential that the Idaho-Maryland Mine could reopen is our cow pie. Before you turn the page assuming this is another pro or con article about the mine, it isn’t. Supporters point to things like possible jobs. Who cannot support more jobs? Opponents point to the potential negative impacts on noise, air, traffic and property values. Who can want any of that?

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No, this is simply offered as a heads up to all my neighbors and residents of our beautiful area as to a very serious risk that all of us could face. Many of our local Realtors have agreed that the mine reopening could have a negative impact on property values. They are the ones who should know best. I don’t know how much it might impact them or if it will at all, but some estimates are breathtaking.

For the purpose of this commentary, it doesn’t matter. This is simply to make sure you know that if you put your home or property on the market, you must protect yourself from financial liability by fully disclosing that the reopening is even a possibility.

Don’t say I don’t live over the mine, so it won’t impact my property. You do not know. The fact is that some of our Realtors think otherwise. They can even cite current cases where families who were considering moving to anyplace in Grass Valley have decided not to do so when they learned of the possibility. You have to disclose it.

Yes, it could negatively impact a sale. Doesn’t matter. This warning goes further. Even if you have disclosed this possibility, you need to take care not to say anything that might make them decide that the odds of it happening are very low. If you do, you may have avoided one cow pie and stepped into another.

If the mine does reopen and it impacts the property value at all, you can be liable for that decline, possibly for more because it might

impact their quality of life as well. I unfortunately don’t have a solution. The only solution would be for the county and city to deny Rise Gold’s application and refuse to issue the permits and zoning changes necessary.

Opponents have asked the county to do an economic study to identify the pluses and minuses. They say it is “not required.” If the mine reopens and property values do decline, those suffering loses will undoubtedly sue to recover their loses. The county, the city, nor Rise Gold can afford the millions of dollars that would result.

If the reopening resulted in 1,000 jobs, these losses will still have to be mitigated to individual property owners. The county may have had to consider the application after it was filed. It doesn’t mean that when it becomes obvious that it is not in the best interest of residents, property owners and voters, they shouldn’t act responsibly and stop it, now.

It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see a cow pie. Protect your own liability and pray the county doesn’t step in it for you.

Robert Clark lives in Grass Valley.

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Ideas & Opinions — Terry Lamphier: 'Rise of the machines' will affect Rise Gold employment

Terry Lamphier
Jun 2, 2023

Man has a limited biological capacity for change. When this capacity is overwhelmed, it is in "future shock." — Alvin Toffler, author of "Future Shock"

Are we there yet? Toffler's premise in Future Shock was that technologic advances are outpacing our ability to understand their impacts to society. And here we are.

Artificial intelligence programs and robotics are now at the stage where they are a part of our everyday lives, yet we are only vaguely aware of the broader implications and impacts. Robots and AI programs are everywhere and continue to expand into areas where the ramifications are profound – will robots create a world where most human jobs are replaced? What does that mean for consumer-based capitalism that requires employed humans to buy things? Or will advanced AI programs decide that they don't need humans competing for resources, as in the Terminator movies?

These technologies promise profound, even threatening prospects for the human race, as prominent inventors in the field are quick to point out, and are beyond the scope of this column. We in Nevada County have a more

immediate concern: what will be the impact of robotics on the controversial Rise's gold mine employment projections over the next 80 years?

Rise promoters have made a big deal about the good paying jobs they promise, as well as the positive economic ripple effects from these 'well-paid' workers spending their dollars in our community. To date, no one has asked them about the likelihood that robots will replace many of those jobs in the very near future.

Robotic mining, often guided by AI programs, is a multi-billion dollar a year industry that is growing an estimated 7% annually. As Patrick Thibodeau, senior editor for Computerworld wrote in 2016 ("Robotics, driverless tech are taking over mining jobs"), "in the next decade, the mining industry may lose more than half of its jobs to automation...that's not based on future technologies, but on automated equipment being deployed today".

(From Thibodeau): "Most affected will be miners in the lesser-skilled trades, including heavy-equipment operators, drivers and maintainers. This will increase demand for people with IT skills who can set up and operate automation systems – but at far smaller numbers than the automation displaces. Local communities, dependent on mining employment, will be hard hit". How hard? "Automation will replace 40% to 80% of the workers at a mine. New mines and those with many years of life left are the prime candidates for automation".

Oof.

Another article, "Automation and robotics in mining: jobs, income and inequality implications" (https://www.sciencedirect) reports: "Although

mining is a capital-intensive industry, its contribution to employment creation is generally praised as a leading local benefit to justify new or expanding extraction projects. However, labour substitution from automation and robotics is increasing in a wide range of modern mining processes... the labour share in the value-added generated by mining has consistently decreased over the years, from around 40% in the mid-nineties to about 20% in recent years".

The report notes that: "in early 2019, a worldwide survey asked more than 800 executives and representatives of 399 mining companies what technologies will have the most significant impact on mining innovation over the next 15 years. Of those surveyed, 73% responded 'robotics and automation'".

Further, "nowadays, it is common to have mine trucks drove (sic) and machines controlled by operators sitting in an office in Santiago, Sydney, or London – located thousands of miles away from operations. Although humans cannot be totally out of mines and operations...advances have reached such a point that the first 'self-proclaimed' fully automated mine is taking place in Mali".

It is important to note that the ripple effects of robotization in the Rise project will extend to our greater community – robots will not need lodging and typical human services, likely severely reducing Rise's rosy economic projections.

Rise's unpopular proposal still faces a decision by our county supervisors, the same supervisors who, year after year, place "fiscal responsibility" as their number one priority. To their credit, they recently authorized additional funds

to an independent consultant tasked with analyzing the mine’s economic impacts. Fiscal responsibility should include the likelihood that Rise’s projected economic impacts will not stand the test of time and will likely not offset the numerous negative impacts. If the ‘rise of the machines’ is not part of the economic analysis, it should be.

Terry Lamphier, Grass Valley

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2. Economic Impact
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II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

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Jeff Kane: Enjoy breathing? Consider the proposed mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 23h ago

Jeff Kane | Other Voices

The valid criticisms that can be made of Rise Gold's bid to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine are as numerous as the South Yuba's pebbles, but in this space I'll just address its predictable effects on our air quality.

California's air quality in general is already poor. According to the American Lung Association, the five cities in the country with the worst annual particulate pollution and highest ozone levels are in California, and include the Sacramento-Roseville region. California's most polluted cities are also those most affected by our now-endemic wildfires, which severely aggravate monthly and annual air pollution averages. Ongoing climate change, bringing warmer and drier conditions, intensifies wildfires, so is certain to worsen California's air quality.

Nevada County is even more affected than the state. The American Lung Association gives our community an F grade for ozone levels, designating 105 days per year "unhealthy." Our county has long been considered "Sacramento's tailpipe," as auto exhaust emitted there funnels here. And during the past two summers, wildfires contributed to entire weeks the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District labeled "very hazardous."

Airborne elements from the proposed mining will include dust, ozone, and noxious particulates and chemicals, not to mention considerable greenhouse gases. The project's diesel particulates will be mostly of a size that readily enters human lungs.

Current and future Nevada County children will absorb more of this than adults do, both because of their more rapid respiratory rate and exposure during the 80 years of the mine's operation.

Trending Articles



The particles we'll all inhale include asbestos, silica, heavy metals, and more than 40 known cancer-causing organic substances. The California Air Resources Board has classified diesel particulate emissions as a toxic air contaminant, and estimates that about 70% of the cancer risk that the average Californian faces stems from this source.

Whatever paltry benefits Nevada County might glean from this project, it will certainly damage our health. Our mortality rate from chronic lung disease is already double the rate in California statewide: 69 versus 35 deaths per 100,000 people. Many of us are already at risk simply for our age.

According to the 2020 census, one in three of us is 65 or older, compared to the statewide proportion of one in seven. Our heart disease mortality rate is half-again higher than statewide.

In 2014 Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital saw 369 adults and children for acute asthma and admitted 88 at cost of over $3 million, and that represents only one single illness.

Although airborne mining emissions will raise the incidence of local pulmonary and cardiac illnesses, with all their personal and financial costs, the proposal's Draft Environmental Impact Report asserts that none of Rise Gold's operations, properly mitigated, will violate air quality standards. Mining operations are infamous for circumventing and ignoring mitigations. This report recommends

more of them than any public agency can monitor, enforce or, most importantly, afford.

The report's repeated conclusions, "no significant impact," were written by people who won't live here the next 80 years. They are based on estimated quantities and arbitrary limits, not on varieties of human experience like anxiety, irritation, aesthetics, and sensitivity to noise and odor.

Nevada County can't tolerate additional air pollution. That bears repeating: Nevada County can't tolerate additional air pollution. But that's not the only issue in this outrageous proposal. Considering its predictable injuries to Nevada County's health, beauty, economics and well-being, no one who values our community can claim it has redeeming value.

Jeff Kane, MD, lives in Nevada City.

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Tony Lauria 2 HRS AGO

Thanks for speaking up about this Jeff. The raw injustice in this proposal is overwhelming, but I keep seeing this company spin their rhetoric to downplay all these life changing impacts to the people who live here. It's no longer a "potential risk", when impacts are backed by the data you listed. It's a given. We will all suffer from the increased air pollution. And, as you mentioned, that's just one of many industrial horrors we would face. I sure hope our elected county officials use their power to protect us, by dismissing this terrible plan, in an area surrounded by hundreds of homes, wells, and thousands of people. Time to speak out loudly with comments on the obvious deficiencies in the DEIR, and let the county know this is unacceptable.

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Ray Bryars: Mine would add to air pollution

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 30, 2021

Ray Bryars | Other Voices

Instead of doing the ordinary things that an electronics engineer would be doing in his retirement years, I find that attempting to ensure that Grass Valley remains a healthy, vibrant community is taking over a number hours each week.

This involves working with other concerned residents who are looking into the issues that would result if Rise Gold is allowed to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine. It would be really nice if we could keep mining as a historic component of this area without having to constantly battle to maintain a healthy environment.

The challenge is that Rise Gold sells a lot of shares and take out a lot of loans to keep funding its organization and to hire experts to make it appear that reopening the mine would be a wonderful thing for Grass Valley and the County.

Meanwhile an overloaded county staff can do little more than juggle the required environmental impact documents with no funding or permission to do a critical analysis. Local property owners and concerned residents are scrambling to understand the process and to digest the hundred of pages of documents that make up the environmental impact report. This is a David-and-Goliath battle that is going to require significant local support not only for expertise, but for funding the legal experts who will ultimately make the difference between retaining our current environment or risk being overtaken by the air pollution, noise, water and safety issues if this mine opens.

One of the areas that I have been looking into is air pollution. As some of you may know. Nevada County has been one of the most polluted counties in California. Air quality is rated F for ozone and 24 hour particle pollution by the American Lung Association.

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Susan Bewle Build Bac
21 comme

Measurements of air pollution generally cover the following:

PM 2.5 = Fine particulate matter less than or equal to 2.5 microns. Penetrates deeply into the lungs and bloodstream. Is known to cause premature death in people with heart or lung diseases.

PM 10 = Coarse particulate matter less than or equal to 10 microns. Penetrates deeply into lungs causes bronchial issues. Can result in high blood pressure, heart attack and strokes.

O3 = Ozone. Corrosive gas that acts like sunburn on lungs. Causes asthma attacks and has other respiratory impacts.

NO2 = Nitrogen dioxide. Causes inflammation of the airways, reduced lung function, coughing, wheezing.

SO2 = Sulphur dioxide. Causes irritation of the skin and mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, throat and lungs.

Data for Grass Valley is monitored from the Litton Building. Unfortunately, only PM 2.5 and O3 is measured locally, but it can checked on line at: https://aqicn.org/city/california/nevada/grass-valley-litton-building/

Historic data shows that there are many months during the year when we greatly exceed what is considered “good” for most monitored pollutants. Much of this pollution is not locally generated, but is carried in from the Sacramento Valley and environs. As this population grows, we become more impacted by pollution blowing up the hill.

We are also subject to air pollution produced by the many fires that occur around the Sierra foothills. Given that we are already subject to exceedingly high air pollution, it seems inconceivable that we would consider allowing a mining company to add significantly more pollutants to the toxic stew that we already breath.

Data from the Litton building: Federal maximum 24 hour concentration for PM 2.5 for a 24 hour period over the 2016, 2017, 2018 period was exceeded 13 times. In 2018 the concentration was measured as four times what is considered “ambient.” For the record, 2020 was even worse.

Think about putting your hand in a bowl of 90 degree water. Now knowing that boiling point is 212 degrees, would you feel comfortable putting your hand in 360 degree water? We are effectively burning our lungs.

Federal maximum 8-hour concentration for O3 over the 2016, 2017, 2018 period was exceeded 139 times. In this case the maximum to ambient ratio is 1.4 times.

The bottom line here is that we are already subject to some of the worst air quality in California. It seems unthinkable to expose the residents of Nevada County to a mining operation that would significantly worsen this situation.

To educate yourself more and to find out how you can help our community, please check the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation website: http://www.cea-nc.org.

Ray Bryars lives in Nevada City.

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Carol Kuczora: Mine would contribute to global warming

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 2h ago

Carol Kuczora

The science is clear: We cannot afford to dump fossil fuel exhaust in the air if civilization is to survive. Really. Air pollution is rising relentlessly, and it is driving global warming progressively. That is because the carbon compounds in the atmosphere reflect much more solar heat back to the ground than normal, upsetting the delicate balance that had enabled life to thrive on earth.

We've understood that for decades. If it continues, every generation will suffer more than the one before.

So what are we doing about this? Considering reopening the Idaho-Maryland gold mine. That means diesel trucks hauling 1,000 tons of waste rock, 100 trips every day, plus trucking in explosives.

Add a large factory on Brunswick Road, and massive machines crushing 1,500 tons of mine waste every day.

That's just counting diesel exhaust, which contains hundreds of toxic chemicals plus carbon particulates small enough to enter your blood.

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Then the silicate rock dust includes asbestos. We might have a lot of sick people, and they would endure unprecedented killer temperatures.

This is just one reason the mine is a horrendous idea. Please vote to protect us.

Carol Kuczora

Grass Valley

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David J. Whitehead: Mine would undermine climate change solutions

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

David J. Whitehead | Other Voices

All across California, communities work hard to address climate change. We develop plans for increased recycling and increased renewable energy use. We support our local farms to improve sustainable food production. We purchase low-emission cars, appliances, and sustainable energy sources. And we know we have to increase our efforts to meet our goals. Our challenges ahead are truly substantial.

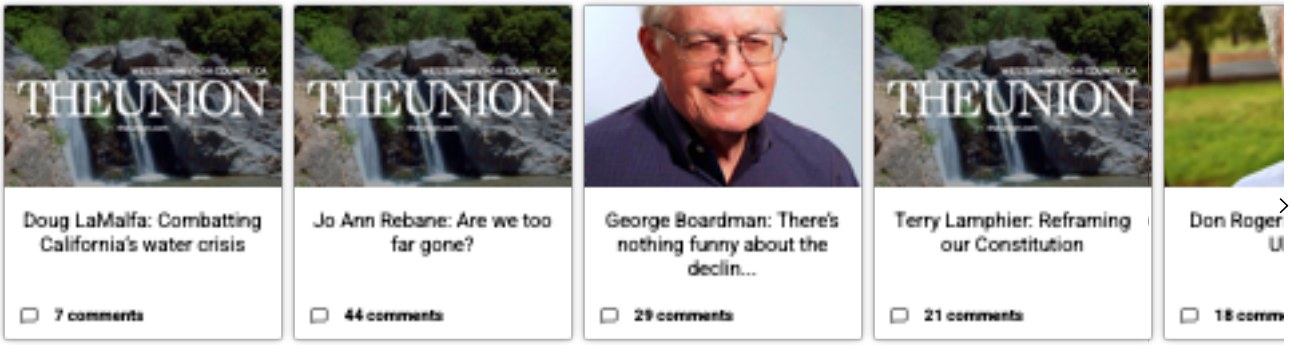
Four years ago, I helped form the Nevada County Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby/Education, joining the efforts of other non-profit organizations already working on climate.

You may have seen our chapter volunteers at the farmers markets. We have met over 600 community members who want to learn how to take climate action. We work with local churches on climate education and action programs. We lobby candidates and our elected officials to support real climate change solutions.

So when I read the draft environmental impact report for the Idaho-Maryland Mine proposal, I was very disappointed.

Rise Gold proposes to generate significant amounts of carbon and greenhouse gasses every year. If you take their estimates at face value, they would create over 3,500 metric tons of CO2 during construction, and over 9,000 metric tons during operations. These emissions would be new to our community, and they would undermine state of California climate goals.

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State Assembly Bill 32 (2006) set carbon emission goals for 2020. California's Climate Scoping Plan (2017) sets goals for 2030 and beyond. To meet these goals, every community must reduce emissions. Rise Gold's proposal ignores these goals.

Rise Gold proposes to purchase carbon offsets in California's cap and trade markets during "construction" only. Using categorization to stay below arbitrary, outdated thresholds, Rise Gold would not mitigate their emissions during the following 78 years of operations. Rise Gold proposes to mitigate approximately 2,500 metric tons of CO2 per year when they call it construction. Then, when they call it operations, they wouldn't mitigate any of carbon dioxide they produce annually. They may produce more than 700,000 metric tons of the greenhouse gas over the life of the project.

Particularly galling is that Rise Gold says in the draft environmental impact report that they think this plan is acceptable because the citizens of California have cut their carbon footprint since 2006, working hard to reduce carbon emissions and greenhouse gas in our communities.

To give an idea of how much CO2 Rise Gold would create, 10,000 metric tons would be roughly equivalent to the emissions created by building 450 new homes in Grass Valley. But it's an imperfect comparison because many of the people buying those houses already live in California. Their carbon emissions already exist.

Rise Gold proposes to create completely new carbon emissions on land that currently produces zero carbon emissions. It would be as if 450 alien households from outer space landed on the property and began polluting.

Citizens' Climate Lobby estimates that the true cost of carbon in the United States is around $80 a ton. This figure includes all the costs we citizens currently pay to emit carbon per our standard of living. Carbon offsets on the market currently range in cost from between $10 and $30 a ton. These offsets are what Rise Gold would purchase.

In other words, we pay $80 a ton and Rise Gold would pay as little as $10 ton to pollute our atmosphere. Therefore, we would subsidize Rise Gold for as much as $70 a ton. They would take gold from our community and enrich themselves in exchange for creating 350 jobs and polluting our air.

As we attempt to reconfigure our society to address climate change, we would subsidize Rise Gold so they could make climate change and global warming worse.

The draft environmental impact report says reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mind itself would not cause climate change, and that is true. But if communities across the state and nation approve projects like Rise Gold's proposal, there is no way we could be effective in addressing climate change. That impact is called the "cumulative impact."

Our lives and property are threatened by climate change: wildfires, drought, sea level rise, more powerful storm events, etc.

Rise Gold says to us: We can't see you. We can't hear you. We want that gold. But their mine proposal would undermine our climate change work.

We citizens would have to work much harder to reduce the horrible impacts of a warming world if projects like reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mind are allowed to go ahead as proposed.

As lead agency, Nevada County must hold Rise Gold to a higher standard. To do otherwise is just irresponsible. The deadline for comments on the draft environmental impact report is April 4. Please submit a comment.

David J. Whitehead lives in Grass Valley.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---don-rivenes-idaho-maryland-mine-greenhouse-gas-emissions-are-significant/article_cd8c5610-e5e7-11ed-b3d4-0f8469c5e9bf.html

Ideas & Opinions – Don Rivenes: Idaho-Maryland Mine greenhouse gas emissions are significant

Don Rivenes
Apr 29, 2023

The County should deny the Idaho-Maryland Mine project and should not certify the Final EIR. The Idaho-Maryland Mine Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is inadequate in its assessment of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A valid threshold for GHG emissions was not set in the EIR.

As stated in the EIR, CEQA Guidelines allow a lead agency to determine its own thresholds for environmental impacts (including GHG emissions), and "explicitly provides that an agency may consider thresholds adopted by other agencies provided that such decision is supported by substantial evidence."

The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District has not set thresholds for GHG emissions, so, as lead agency, Nevada County simply applied the 10,000 Ton/year carbon-dioxide emission threshold chosen by some other air districts for this project. However, the justifications for adopting these thresholds are unique to each air district. These other air districts have

prepared detailed GHG inventories to identify and evaluate strategies for achieving the statewide GHG reduction goals within their districts.

Nevada County cannot simply assume that the justifications used by other air districts to adopt their thresholds also apply in Nevada County. Hence, the EIR failed to provide “substantial evidence” required by CEQA by just considering other districts for setting the threshold. In fact, the EIR provided no evidence beyond just copying what other districts used.

But this is doubly wrong because the other air districts originally adopted the 10,000 Ton threshold to achieve the older 2020 statewide GHG goal under California Assembly Bill 32, which is no longer consistent with the current statewide GHG reductions goals.

In 2015, the California Supreme Court determined that a project’s GHG emissions should be evaluated based on its effect on California’s efforts to meet its long-term climate goals.

Then, in 2017, the California Air Quality Board Climate Change Scoping Plan stated “Achieving no net additional increase in GHG emissions, resulting in no contribution to GHG impacts, is an appropriate overall objective for new development.”.

And in, 2018 Governor Brown signed Executive Order 55-18, calling for the state to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible and no later than 2045, and to achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter] In view of this, the mine’s 9000 tons/year of emissions should be considered significant and unmitigated. The mine is proposing an 80-year project, and no consideration was given to meeting the state’s GHG emission goals. The EIR should have

established a net zero threshold for GHG emissions from the proposed project.

For example, in considering current goals, the recent Draft EIR for another mine — the analogous Sargent Ranch Quarry project within the Bay Area Air District uses a net-zero significance threshold for operational GHG emissions.

This EIR should have done the same. The EIR does not explain why the Project should be exempted.

Nevada County Energy Action Plan

Nevada County Board of Supervisor's adopted its objectives for 2023 that included, under Economic Development, to "implement tasks identified in the Nevada County Energy Action Plan". The plan was adopted one year earlier than the Mine proposal.

The Nevada County Energy Action Plan's goal is to reduce the projected annual grid supplied electricity the county will use in 2035 by 51% and the annual natural gas use by 30% through energy efficiency measures. The mine's electricity use is equal to adding the electricity use of 5,575 homes in Nevada County and nearly equal to current business electricity use in Nevada

County. This almost eliminates the results of any energy-saving measures planned by the county.

This project will consume 49,000 Megawatts of electricity, in direct conflict with the County's energy reduction goals. The FEIR states "...although the EAP is not a Qualified GHG Emissions Reduction Plan under CEQA the project was nevertheless determined to be consistent with the EAP." This

statement is essentially false.

In fact, the Mine operation is antithetical to the County's Energy Action Plan. The Nevada County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors should ask the question: Are we serious about meeting our 2023 strategic objectives including the Energy Action Plans? If so, this mine should not be approved.

In conclusion, the EIR for the mine fails to correctly identify a valid threshold for GHG emissions by assuming an outdated 10,000 Ton threshold without any substantial evidence, failing to consider the current State goals, and it would also effectively undo a large part of the goals of the County Energy Action Plan.

Under CEQA, this EIR is totally inadequate in addressing the significant impacts of greenhouse gas emissions from Rise Gold's proposed mine.

Don Rivenes, CEA Foundation

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---gianna-setoudeh-california-can-t-afford-the-idaho-maryland-mine/article_22c57ab0-df9b-11ed-a599-cbd27bf5de52.html

Ideas & Opinions – Gianna Setoudeh: California can’t afford the Idaho-Maryland Mine

Gianna Setoudeh
Apr 21, 2023

In 2019, Rise Gold Corp., a private company based out of Canada, submitted plans to the Nevada County Planning Department outlining a proposal to reopen the long-abandoned Idaho-Maryland Mine – hidden away beneath the vibrant community of Grass Valley, an archive of toxic mine waste and an intricate underground tunnel system dating back to the Gold Rush Era of the 1800s.

In a community still recovering from the legacy effects of past mining operations, including exposure to both physical hazards on an altered landscape and chemical hazards such as mercury contamination, acid mine drainage and arsenic, lead and asbestos inhalation, the prospect of reawakening the mine has given rise to intense scrutiny and local activism, calling greater attention to the project’s significant environmental and public health impacts.

If you asked the average community member about the project, the sentiment is clear. Driving around the County and beyond you will see bright yellow lawn signs with the simple plea: “No Mine. Protect our Air. Water. Quality of Life.”

The project is currently under review by the Nevada County Planning Commission and will ultimately come before the Nevada County Board of Supervisors for a final vote, expected sometime in mid-2023.

As it turns out, a decision on this project is much more complex than meets the eye, particularly when considering the boarder context of California's climate policy agenda.

In the fight against climate change, the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine is in direct conflict with not only local climate goals and initiatives, including the County's own General Plan, but also with the State's climate policies and long-term goals more broadly.

A key question to consider is, what role does our community want to have in the statewide effort to fight climate change? At the local level, this requires going far beyond the simple checking of boxes and comes down to a deeper question of true leadership and ethical obligation.

Proposed operations at the Idaho-Maryland Mine would generate an overwhelming 9,000 metric tons of new greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions annually from the proposed site in Grass Valley, plus another 4,000 metric tons of new GHGs from cement manufacturing performed offsite.

Nevada County already suffers from poor air quality due to extended wildfire seasons, vehicular pollution, factory emissions and other sources of dust and particulate matter accumulation, yet the community would have to endure further air quality impacts from rock crushing, hauling, and compacting activities that could release hazardous chemicals such as asbestos and silica particles into the air during mining operations.

Further, the excessive increase in diesel truck operations, road usage, and traffic generated by this project will only exacerbate local air quality concerns, damage to roadways, and increase electricity demand equivalent to approximately 5,000 new homes. The major uptick in new GHGs from this project reaches beyond local impact and contributes significantly to the state's carbon footprint, ultimately detracting from statewide environmental goals.

This just scratches the surface when it comes to the project's potential environmental impacts, which also include significant impacts to water quality, groundwater resources and wildlife habitat.

These impacts are not only harmful to the community directly, but they are in direct conflict with the state's climate agenda.

So where does the Idaho-Maryland Mine project fit in to the broader context of our state's climate change goals, and where should we go from here?

In 2022 alone, building on the work of years' past, California enacted a sweeping portfolio of new climate laws, ranging from codifying the state's long-term climate goal of achieving net-zero GHGs by 2045, to prioritizing clean electricity, to enacting a strong state budget that prioritizes tens of billions of dollars in climate spending – referred to as the "California Climate Commitment."

From building regional climate resilience, to transitioning our state's workforce to a carbon-neutral economy, to decarbonizing buildings, to prioritizing zero-emission vehicles, all while responding to wildfires, drought, and other catastrophic climate events – forward-thinking climate action is and has been at the forefront of decision making in California.

The bottom line is that the Idaho-Maryland Mine simply doesn’t have a place on the state’s path to a cleaner, greener economy, and California simply can’t afford to be set backwards in its intentional fight against climate change.

Reopening a toxic mine with significant environmental impacts for the benefit of very few is simply not a risk worth taking, particularly as we consider our role in the larger fight against climate change in California.

Every policy decision is a chance to do better for our communities and our environment. That is why our community is relying on our local government and its leadership to do the right thing and reject the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Join us in person at the Nevada County Planning Commission hearing on Wednesday, May 10 at 9:00 AM at the Eric Rood Administrative Center, at 950 Maidu Avenue in Nevada City, California, to let our local government officials know this project is wrong for our community and for California.

Gianna Setoudeh, Policy Director, South Yuba River Citizens League

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---marion-blair-reopening-the-idaho-maryland-mine-will-not-bring-hope/article_1362b860-e092-11ed-8fa2-bbe46b2b566f.html

Ideas & Opinions – Marion Blair: Reopening the Idaho Maryland Mine will not bring hope for the earth

Marion Blair
Apr 22, 2023

Record drought and wildfires, and a winter of a dozen atmospheric rivers in California make it clear that we have a climate crisis impacting California, our beloved communities of Grass Valley and Nevada City, and beyond.

Earth Justice Ministries' mission statement includes the following: "We connect faith to actions that bring hope for the earth, the human family, and the community of life to further the cause of peace, justice and healing of the earth." We feel it is Earth Justice Ministries' responsibility to protect our community and combat climate change, among other things.

The proposed reopening of the IMM will not bring hope for the earth, the human family, and the community of life. As a community we need to be pushing for a just and equitable energy transition away from fossil fuels which are the driving force behind the climate crisis. In fact, California's Senate Bill 350 aims to establish clean energy, clean air, and greenhouse gas (GHG)

reduction goals, reducing its GHG emissions significantly within the next decade (to 40% of 1990 levels by the year 2030).

SB 350 also requires the state to double statewide energy efficiency savings in electricity and natural gas uses by 2030. Yet mine operations are projected to use as much electricity in one year, as the entire town of Grass Valley uses in a year (approximately 50,000 megawatts.)

Californians have been working hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by switching to cleaner energy sources, and since 1990 clean energy sources have increased by 22%. Still, over 40% of GHG emission come from vehicles, a quarter of which are heavy trucks.

The FEIR downplays the impacts of GHG emissions this project would create, along with many other environmental impacts that our attentive community questioned in the DEIR. The repeated use of Master responses whitewashes the significance of these impacts under a legal cloak of empty and often conflicting statements. Specifically, the following FEIR Master response 25 states:

“The actions within the EAP (Energy Action Plan) are voluntary and do not require the County or community to meet the reduction goals. Nevertheless... the Project is found to be consistent with the EAP.” This statement is followed by a chart of the “assumptions” regarding how the mine will voluntarily reduce its use of electricity.

First of all, assumptions are not strategies. Secondly, we do not believe the project owners will voluntarily reduce the use of electricity. They are said to be voluntarily cleaning up the Centennial Site and yet we still have no

Department of Toxic Substances Report.

This project will not bring hope for the human family, nor will it bring healing to the earth. This land is heritage Nisenan land, which was never ceded to immigrants. There has been little attempt made in the FEIR to consider the cultural resources of these indigenous people whose ancestral land and livelihoods were virtually destroyed by gold mining.

A recent personal conversation with Wanda Enos, of the Kelly/ Enos Humwak, representing the local Nisenan community, confirms they were never consulted, contrary to the following statement (on p837 Vol 4 of the FEIR) which states: “local tribes were notified and invited to consult on the proposed project, and such information was presented in the DEIR.”

This is another whitewash to make it appear that the EIR is complying with CEQA

It is our responsibility and honor to provide the ethics of care and guardianship to this land. Prioritizing profit over sustainability is an equity and rights concern for indigenous peoples and all local communities. We say NO to this egregious IMM project, and NO to certifying the FEIR.

Marion Blair, Earth Justice Ministries

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Ralph Silberstein: Idaho-Maryland Mine greenhouse gas impacts and the draft environmental impact report

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | April 8, 2022

Ralph Silberstein | Other Voices

The draft environmental impact report for the Idaho-Maryland Mine project includes an assessment of the environmental impacts from greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions are from carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases such as methane, which are the major contributors to climate change.

To determine the level of impact from the emissions, Nevada County used a threshold. Anything over the threshold would be classified as "significant" and would require additional actions, or "mitigations," to reduce the severity of the impacts.

However, as stated in the draft report, neither the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District nor Nevada County "has adopted numerical thresholds of significance for greenhous gas emissions that would apply to the project."

Instead, Nevada County chose 10,000 metric tons per year as the threshold. The county determined this threshold by looking at air districts for Placer County, Sacramento Metropolitan Area, the Bay Area and Southern California.

The draft report calculated that emissions from mine operations would be just under the 10,000 metric tons threshold for the bulk of the mining operations. The largest contributor to greenhouse gases would come from PG&E electricity, followed by emissions from trucks hauling mine waste rock and tailings off site.

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Consequently, the conclusion was that the emissions would be "less than significant," and no mitigations were proposed. (Note that construction greenhouse gas emissions are calculated separately, are listed as significant, and mitigations are proposed.)

CEA ANALYSIS

Each California air district has unique air quality conditions with standards that are established by an inventory of those conditions.

As explained by the Baseline Engineering Consultants' report addressing the draft environmental impact report, the thresholds that Nevada County chose to use were established by other districts prior to the 2016 California SB32 statewide update of greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Those changes reset the reduction targets to reduce emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. Thus the thresholds used by the other districts referenced by Nevada County are no longer relevant. In fact, at least one of the districts is undergoing review to reset their threshold to conform to the current California SB32.

Nevada County's use of the 10,000 metric ton threshold for the draft report was not adequate in the first place due to the different conditions in the various air districts. In addition, due to the changes in state targets, that 10,000 metric ton threshold is certainly not valid now. As summarized by Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger LLP in comments prepared on behalf of CEA Foundation:

"The DEIR must use a significance threshold that will achieve California's new statewide greenhouse gas reductions goals over the proposed 80-year lifetime of the project. In light of those state goals and the severity of climate change, any operational emissions over existing conditions should be considered significant.

"Since 2010, scientific research has made clear that any additional emissions will contribute to the serious and growing climate crisis. See Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis, Summary for Policymakers (October 2021), attached as Exhibit I.

"Recognizing this reality, in 2018 Gov. Brown signed Executive Order 55-18, calling for the state to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible and no later than 2045, and to achieve and maintain net-negative emissions thereafter. See DEIR at 4.3-29.

"Given these facts, the DEIR should establish a net zero threshold for new greenhous gas emissions from the project. See e.g., CARB 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan, attached as Exhibit J, at 101 ('Achieving no net additional increase in greenhouse gas emissions, resulting in no contribution to greenhouse gas impacts, is an appropriate overall objective for new development.') The DEIR does not explain why the project should not be judged by a significance threshold requiring no net increase in greenhouse gas emissions."

The draft environmental impact report states greenhouse gas emissions from mine operations would be just under 10,000 metric tons per year. This number was chosen as a threshold based on other air districts in California.

Neither our Air Quality Management District nor Nevada County have adopted numerical thresholds of significance for greenhous gas emissions that would apply to the project.

The draft environmental impact report does not discuss the justification for adopting the 10,000 metric tons per year threshold, nor does it provide substantial evidence for applying this threshold to the project to demonstrate how it will achieve a fair share of the statewide greenhouse gas reductions goals for 2030 and beyond.

Ralph Silberstein is the president of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation.

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Ideas & Opinions — Sharon Delgado: Climate action - From local to global

Sharon Delgado | Other Voices
Sep 9, 2023

Note: On Sunday 17, September 17, people concerned about climate change are invited to join a demonstration calling for climate action on the Broad Street Bridge following the Constitution Day Parade, which begins at 2. Everyone is invited to join. Some of us marching in the parade's Minewatch contingent will be there with our NO MINE signs. This article describes why these two issues go together.

It is past time to have another big climate demonstration here in Nevada County, as we face the shared reality that the ravages of climate change that scientists warned us about decades ago are upon us. This summer's record-breaking heat waves and other extreme disasters (including on Maui and now in Florida) bring home to us the extent of damage caused by a 1.2°C (2°F) rise in average global temperatures. (See Global Citizens' "Shocking Photos of Extreme Weather Around the World in 2023 So Far.") The terms

unprecedented, the new normal, and apocalyptic have become common but do not adequately express the climate emergency that has come upon us. Today's disasters provide a preview of what's coming if we don't turn around and change our ways, a "new abnormal" of escalating dangers. At the current rate, greenhouse gas emissions will raise global temperatures by 3 or 4°C by the end of this century, and our beloved Earth will become progressively inhospitable to life.

Many of us respond as individuals or groups to these weather-related disasters through relief efforts, by donating money or with hands-on help. Some individuals, faith communities, and other organizations are adapting to climate change by "greening" their lifestyles and facilities. Some communities are working to become resilient and to be prepared for disasters. Nevada County has detailed plans and initiatives to address both Climate resilience and Emergency Preparedness. A primary focus is on being prepared for the danger of wildfires made worse by climate change. These actions provide relief, demonstrate renewable alternatives, reduce our carbon footprints, and offer a witness to our concern and care for our community, our global neighbors, and future generations.

Here in Nevada County, we have taken our collective response to climate change even further. We have expanded our work of relief, adaptation, and resilience to also take on the work of mitigation. In 2019, our Board of Supervisors adopted a Nevada County Energy Action Plan. Its goal is to "reduce the projected annual grid supplied electricity use in 2035 by 51% and annual natural gas use by 30%" through "energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water efficiency." Following through with this plan allies us with others here in California and around the world who are taking coordinated actions to

mitigate climate change, that is, to halt and reverse the upward trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions.

We should all be grateful for the work that has brought us to this point and support other such forward-looking policies in the future. This requires vigilance, which means paying attention to local development decisions, and it means adding our voices and our bodies to the struggle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and to protect the rural quality of life here in Nevada County.

A most pressing local development challenge continues to be the actions of Rise Gold, which, according to Market Screener, is “a Canada-based exploration-stage mining company” whose “principal asset is the past-producing Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine...” Now that the Planning Commission has gone on record opposing the mine, this foreign corporation is now threatening to force our County to accept the reopening of the old Idaho-Maryland Mine by filing a petition granting them the “vested right to mine.” This would mean proving that the Idaho-Maryland Mine is not a “past-producing mine” but has been a working mine all along.

As mentioned above, Nevada County’s Energy Action Plan calls for gradually reducing both electricity and natural gas use, but Rise Gold’s projected electrical and natural gas use would cancel out this plan. There would be massive carbon emissions caused by diesel-powered heavy equipment used for constant construction during the first year and half; ongoing continuous excavating, underground blasting, drilling, rock crushing, loading, hauling, unloading, spreading, and compacting to create engineered fill up to seven stories tall; continuous mine dewatering by pumping, treating and sending millions of gallons of wastewater down Wolf Creek; increased new diesel truck

traffic (up to 100 round trips a day, seven days a week, 16 hours a day). This would result in significant increases in greenhouse emissions rather than decreases as outlined in the county's Energy Action Plan.

There are plenty of other reasons to oppose reopening the mine, including the harmful impacts this working gold mine in the City of Grass Valley would have on our land, air, water, endangered species, and quality of life. Furthermore, Rise Gold has a terrible track record. CEO Ben Mossman is waiting to be sentenced after being convicted of fourteen counts in Canada for the environmental harm a previous mine of his caused there. Locally, this foreign corporation has misrepresented facts and has falsely claimed that our community is in favor of reopening the mine, despite broad, sustained, and reasoned opposition. Find details at the Minewatch website.

I will be part of the Minewatch contingent in the Constitution Day Parade at 2 p.m. on Sunday, September 17. This happens to also be the Global Day of Action to End Fossil Fuels, the day on which public demonstrations will take place around the world, including in New York, San Francisco, Sacramento, and here in our community. That's why after the parade you will find me standing on the Broad Street Bridge with others who are concerned about climate change and the mine's potential impacts on climate. I know from experience that it will be fun and energizing. I would love to see you there.

Sharon Delgado is an author, climate justice activist, and retired United Methodist minister living near Nevada City.

Global Citizens' "Shocking Photos of Extreme Weather Around the World in 2023 So Far:

https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/photos-extreme-weather-events-2023-climate-change/

Nevada County Climate resilience: https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/3735/Climate-Resilience

Nevada County Emergency Preparedness: https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/3471/Emergency-Preparedness

Nevada County Energy Action Plan: https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35183/Nevada-County-Energy-Action-Plan

Market Screener: https://www.marketscreener.com/quote/stock/RISE-GOLD-CORP-120791766/company/

Minewatch website: https://www.minewatchnc.org/

Global Day of Action to End Fossil Fuels: https://fightfossilfuels.net/

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Sharon Delgado: No climate for reopening a mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 12, 2021

Sharon Delgado | Other Voices

As we residents of Nevada County struggle to adapt to extreme drought, heat waves, water shortages, periodic power outages and threat of forest fires, Rise Gold is trying to persuade us that reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine would do us good.

Yet regardless of its recent flawed and deceptive survey, the mine would negatively affect the community in many ways, including in our ability to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In June, our region got a taste of a record-shattering heat wave that farther north led to many deaths. We are in a historic "severe to exceptional drought," resulting in depleted reservoirs and mandatory water restrictions.

Fire insurance rates are skyrocketing and policies are being canceled as fire season extends to almost year-round and as wildfires become ever more ferocious, burning more acres. Even as we pack our go-bags and create fire safe spaces around our homes, we know that catastrophic forest fires could come at any time.

Reopening the mine would only make these climate-related impacts worse.

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The leaked report of the 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns of "progressively serious, centuries-long and, in some cases, irreversible consequences" that will impact people around the world with multiple climate calamities at once: drought, heat waves, cyclones, wildfires and flooding, leading to widespread hunger and disease.

So far, the Earth's average global temperature has risen slightly over 1 degree Celsius, which is about 2 degrees Fahrenheit. Just imagine what it will be like if it rises to 3 or 4 degrees Celsius! The panel's report warns: "Life on Earth can recover from a drastic climate shift by evolving into new species and creating new ecosystems ... humans cannot."

Nevada County has had the foresight to respond proactively by adopting the Nevada County Energy Action Plan, which was developed by the Sierra Business Council with support from PG&E in collaboration with Nevada County and community members.

The plan, based on scientific climate forecasts in the context of our region, states: "From record temperatures to proliferating wildfires and changing precipitation patterns, climate change poses an immediate and escalating threat to the region's environment, economic strength and public health."

The plan is intended to "guide local government decisions that will help achieve greater efficiency, reduce costs and demonstrate the county's commitment to energy independence and community resilience," and to "inspire residents, businesses and other public

agencies in Nevada County to participate in community efforts and maximize energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water efficiency."

This plan should guide analysis and decision-making about the mine as it relates to climate. It points to goals, strategies and ways to implement policies that will enable us as a community to adapt to projected climatic changes and mitigate harm by lowering greenhouse gas emissions. But reopening the mine would take us in the opposite direction.

Adapting to climate change means developing resiliency so that we human beings, our fellow creatures and coming generations can survive and thrive as much as possible.

This means carefully preserving our region's air, land, and water. The mine would further pollute our air, replace life-sustaining ecosystems with mine waste, and perhaps deplete our precious groundwater, putting wells at risk and sending millions of gallons of treated wastewater daily down Wolf Creek.

Adaptation means generating sustainable forms of livelihood, housing, education, business, agriculture, and more — locally-based as much as possible — and moving away from fossil fuels to justly sourced renewable power.

Many community members, local businesses and local nonprofits are working to attain just such a vision. Rise Gold's extractive business model does not align with these goals.

Because it is a global problem, we must also do our part to mitigate the harm of climate change by reducing our regional carbon footprint. The Nevada County Energy Action Plan calls for gradually reducing annual residential electric use by 12 percent. Rise Gold's projected electrical use would cancel out this goal by annually using electricity equivalent to 5,000 new homes and could strain our already overburdened power grid.

Even more significant would be the massive carbon emissions caused by diesel-powered heavy equipment used for: constant construction during the first year and half; ongoing continuous excavating, underground blasting, drilling, rock crushing, loading, hauling, unloading, spreading, and compacting to create engineered fill up to seven stories tall; continuous mine dewatering by pumping, treating and sending millions of gallons of wastewater down Wolf Creek; increased new diesel truck traffic (up to 100 round trips a day, seven days a week, 16 hours a day). This would result in significant increases of greenhouse emissions rather than decreases as outlined in the county's Energy Action Plan.

Please, let's put this debate to rest once and for all and not waste everyone's time and energy by pretending we should seriously consider reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine every time another penny-stock company comes along to propose it.

The county has taken a proactive approach with its plan to foster resiliency and mitigate the harmful effects of climate change. Let's not turn back now.

Sharon Delgado is a local retired United Methodist pastor and author of "Love in a Time of Climate Change: Honoring Creation, Establishing Justice" (Fortress Press). Her blog is at sharondelgado.org.

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Billy Packard: The murky waters of mining

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 2, 2021

Billy Packard | Other Voices

I read the article on Rise Gold about their promises on water treatment. “It may make water have a musty odor.” Andy Kopania, a hydrologist hired by Rise Gold Corp, said, “Though unpleasant, water containing these naturally occurring minerals is not bad for one’s health.”

Right! Drink up!

What was particularly disappointing about The Union article was what wasn’t said pertaining to the water aspect of the Rise Gold project. Hidden from view when driving by is the old mine that is filled with water contaminated with byproducts of hard rock mining. The water now forms a murky lake several hundred yards wide. Rise Gold plans to pump out 3.6 million gallons of water every single day for six months and after that another 1.2 million gallons a day for up to 80 years from this site.

Let that sink in. Get your mind fully around this. This is real.

They will dump this water into the little creek alongside the site and send it on its way down Wolf Creek to the Feather River to the Sacramento River to San Francisco Bay with a “damn the consequences” attitude.

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There are many more issues besides the water, but for now the one I’d like to present is the results of Mossman’s previous endeavors in his home country, Canada. In particular Mossman as CEO and Dick Meckert as chief geologist will be standing trial for spillage at their former mine, at which they declared bankruptcy. This is after polluting land outside their mine.

Is this what we want for our beloved Grass Valley?

Grass Valley was once a wasteland from mining. Evidence of it is everywhere. A walk through Empire Mines Park reveals countless piles of debris that while partly grown over are obvious. Parts of the park are still considered too hazardous for the public because of pollutants. This is what Rise Gold reopening of the mine would likely reproduce. I think Rise Gold is an ecological disaster waiting to happen.

Billy Packard lives in Grass Valley.

Editor’s note: Water discharge must meet federal and state standards of at least secondary drinking water quality by regulation.

https://www.theunion.com/news/local/ideas-opinions---christy-hubbard-wake-up-call-for-well-owners-near-the-mine/article_888435ba-d40d-11ed-ac5e-939d010a16d4.html

Ideas & Opinions - Christy Hubbard: Wake up call for well owners near the mine

Christy Hubbard
Apr 6, 2023

The Wells Coalition – a group of well owners near the Idaho-Maryland Mine – has completed its review of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). We are deeply concerned about the proposed reopening of the mine. If you own a well near it – you should be too. The proposed operation poses a serious threat to our local groundwater resources and our pocketbooks.

100% certainty is a myth: The FEIR asserts that stronger mitigations and/or financial assurances are "not necessary because no significant impact to domestic water wells are predicted".

But a "prediction" is only an educated guess – NOT a certainty. In this case, it is based on an analysis that has serious flaws.

The stakes are too high to get this wrong. The County's Economic Impact Report revealed this mine proposal is unprecedented in its proximity to so many homes. Pumping over a million gallons a day from an area with hundreds of wells is a huge risk. If "predictions" are wrong, it could cost the County, NID, and individual homeowners tens of millions of dollars – and years or decades – to connect a permanent water supply to each property.

Claiming “no significant impact” defies both science and common sense.

Predictions of the groundwater model have limited reliability: In Draft EIR comments, multiple hydrology experts confirmed groundwater models in fractured bedrock like ours can NOT deliver 100% certainty. They also revealed numerous defects in the groundwater model. The Final EIR dismissed these concerns, but – in contradictory fashion – agreed more data is needed for validating the model.

Without current well monitoring data, the FEIR’s “threshold of significance” is invalid: The FEIR lacks current well performance baseline data and is inadequate under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The FEIR relies only on sparse patches of data from 15 years ago.

Baseline data is needed to assess potential impacts to groundwater and well owners prior to determining mitigations. It is also the lynchpin in determining what threshold should be used to determine the measure of “significance”. The FEIR sets that threshold at a 10% drawdown in water level, but legal experts call that number “arbitrary” and “invalid”.

The FEIR’s addition of a Domestic Well Monitoring Program for 378 properties is a feeble attempt to address the issue, but it collects data after the fact, doesn’t last long enough, and excludes wells in NID-served areas.

Toothless mitigations mean serious risk for well owners: Other than 30 properties on E. Bennett Road, there are no plans or financial assurances for connecting to NID if wells are rendered useless. NID asked for a $14M bond to cover costs if wells fail, but the FEIR dismissed it, insisting NID needs nothing. That means no bond, no water supply assessment, no design plans,

and no easements.

This is a recipe for disaster. Today's NID projects take years to complete, but a failure in this project would create a large-scale crisis for NID, the County, and especially homeowners. Costs could run into $10's of millions as people scream "where's my water?". And a property with no permanent water supply is worthless.

The FEIR is striking in its absence of accountability. It describes steps for fixing wells or providing temporary water, but all decisions are left solely up to the mine operator, who would take action only if the 15 monitoring well locations in the official Groundwater Monitoring Program flag an impact.

This is especially concerning because the complexity of the fractured bedrock geology in the area may mask impacts. With the impact threshold arbitrarily set at a 10% drawdown, homeowners with marginal wells may lose water long before they get a call from the mine operator.

The bottom line is well owners are being told to trust that nothing will go wrong with their water supply for 80 years based on assumptions and speculation.

The Wells Coalition is asking the County to REJECT the FEIR for the Idaho-Maryland Mine and VOTE NO on the project.

If you're a well owner whose property is within a ½ mile of the mine's mineral rights area https://bit.ly/mineral-rights, consider joining the Wells Coalition to make a bigger impact on County decision makers. Send an email to wells@cea-nc.org to learn more or get an invitation to our "all-hands-on-

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Jonathan Keehn: The Siskon Mine well disaster

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 10, 2022

Jonathan Keehn | Other Voices

A short story: In the early 1990s, a junior mining company from Canada named Siskon Gold wanted to reopen an abandoned gold mine near North Columbia in Nevada County.

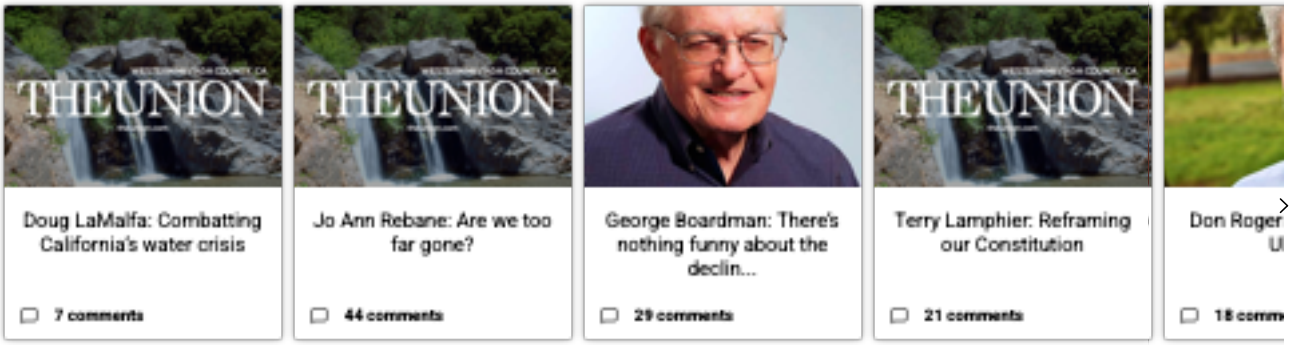
Siskon got investors to pay for the most expert hydrogeologists and the best environmental consultants. After several years a complicated draft environmental impact report was produced.

Eventually, with many revisions and mitigations, the draft was tweaked into a final report. The county supervisors finally deemed it complete, and granted Siskon a permit to reopen the abandoned mine.

Two years later (Labor Day weekend, 1995) the unthinkable happened: The miners hit an unmapped bedrock fault, drained an aquifer, and ruined 12 water wells over two square miles (including the well for Grizzley Hill School). If you put your ear to the well casing, you could hear the sound of water being sucked out of your well. The resulting flood (a million gallons a day for many months) scoured Spring Creek down to bedrock, killing fish, frogs, and benthic macroinvertebrates.

Siskon paid to have all 12 wells drilled to a deeper aquifer, requiring larger pumps. The water coming out of these wells is still contaminated with manganese and iron. To this day the Grizzly Hill School must maintain an expensive filtering system to bring the water to safe drinking standards. Siskon went out of business and left town by 1998.

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One hardly needs to mention that the parallels of this story to the current situation with Rise Gold are clear and ominous.

Jonathan Keehn lives in Grass Valley.

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Kurt Lorenz: Wells can be impacted by mine dewatering

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 5h ago

Kurt Lorenz

Dewatering the Idaho-Maryland Mine? Speaking for Rise Gold, Mr. Mossman as quoted in The Union, said, "Water quality in domestic water wells cannot be impacted by the mine dewatering."

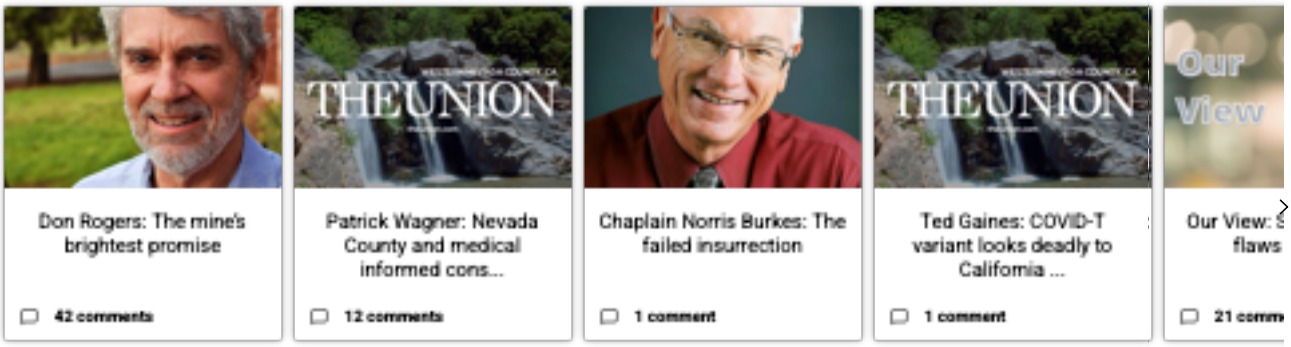
Mr. Mossman's statement is either ignorant or intentionally misleading, or both. Water quality in domestic water wells can indeed be impacted by the mine dewatering.

In the 1990s the Siskon Mine, operating on San Juan Ridge, opened a fault crack in the bedrock and 14 domestic wells up to a mile and three quarters away from the mine works went dry.

Other wells that didn't lose all their water, and replacement wells, were severely affected with various water quality problems. Water testing before and after the event showed huge spikes in iron and manganese, as well as other trace minerals like aluminum that had never been a problem before.

Why? Air rushed in and oxygen, where there had been none before, caused chemical changes, making some minerals soluble in water.

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The Grizzly Hill School water was so bad that for years the county Health Department required the school to use bottled water for all drinking purposes. The school still operates a water treatment plant to make the water drinkable.

Kurt Lorenz

Nevada City

Editor's note: Kurt Lorenz served on the Water Review Team set up by Nevada County to monitor possible well water problems until the Siskon Mine closed.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/local/ideas-opinions-mike-pasner-water-problem/article_bd89f996-eebd-11ed-9372-476c210d7ab6.html

Ideas & Opinions — Mike Pasner: Water problem

Mike Pasner
May 10, 2023

Are there many problems with Rise Gold's proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine? Yes there are! My main concern as a Nevada County farmer is the pumping of millions of gallons of water out of the mine for the next 80 years.

Rise Gold will be responsible for testing the purity of the water they pump. When the mine fails in their testing, this poisoned water will go through (NID's) Nevada Irrigation Districts canals and reservoirs. This is the water I have farmed with for 37 years. There are many other local ranches and farms relying on this water.

Who will be held liable? The Canadian mining company, NID, Nevada County, me the farmer or you the rancher?

We don't need this problem and it should not be allowed to happen.

The county should deny the Idaho-Maryland Mine project and should not certify this flawed Final Environmental Impact Report.

Mike Pasner Indian Springs Organic Farm

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Mike Pasner: Water vs. gold

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 2h ago

Mike Pasner

On Feb. 9, Nevada Irrigation District's board of directors considered a trunk line that would replace 31 wells that might go dry when a Canadian company, Rise Gold, starts to pump water out of the mine shaft.

There was a large debate involving about 20 commenters. All of the public opinions expressed were against NID approving the water supply assessment.

Director Ricki Heck recused herself because she lives above the mine. The other four directors debated approving the trunk line, and decided to conditionally approve it, since NID has sufficient supply for the 31 homes.

These directors looked at each other, and Karen Hull said, "Well, I guess I lose" and made the motion to approve the assessment, with several conditions. Rich Johansen, seconded the motion, appearing reluctant.

This mine is a major loser for our community. There are many, many reasons, including the possible taking of 100 wells. Don't let this large industrial disaster happen here. To better understand the reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine by Rise Gold, go to http://www.minewatchnc.org.

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Mike Pasner

Indian Springs Organic Farm

Grass Valley

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Mike Shea: Impacts of Idaho-Maryland mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | May 11, 2020

Rise Grass Valley has filed an application with Nevada County for a permit to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine. Reopening the mine may impact wells in the extended neighborhood around the mine.

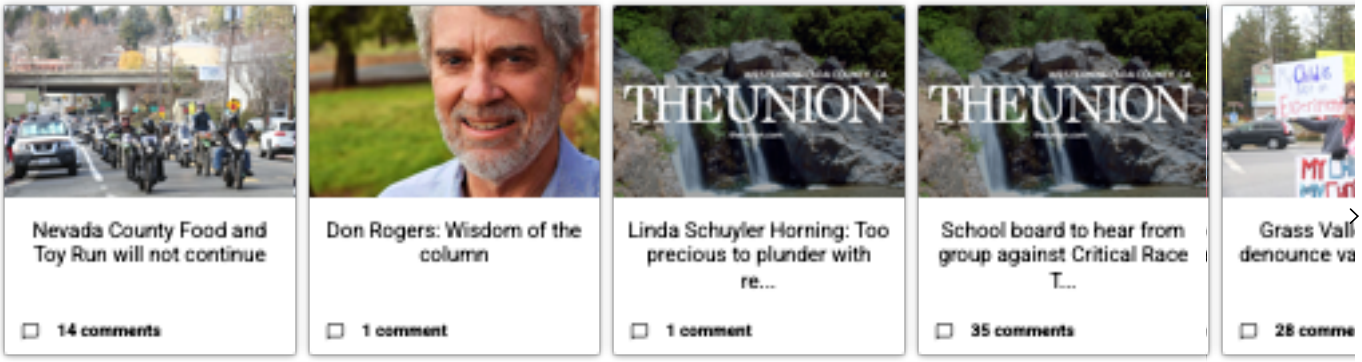
Before the mine can be worked, 815 million gallons of water in the existing mine shaft would be pumped out. After dewatering, Rise Grass Valley estimates it will pump out approximately 1,224,000 gallons a day of natural groundwater that would continue to flow into the underground workings. That may be the same groundwater your well depends on.

Rise Grass Valley will install a NID pipeline along a section of East Bennett Road and pay to have houses there hooked up to NID. Homeowners will have to pay the monthly NID water bill. Moreover, the mine's underground mineral rights extend far beyond East Bennett Road, but Rise Grass Valley has made no provisions to provide NID hookups to well owners in other locations whose wells may go dry.

I wonder how sucking out over a million gallons of ground water a day might affect our forests. Will it further dry out trees and increase the fire danger in our community, which is already rated as a "Very High" Fire Hazard Severity zone?

Mike Shea

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Cedar Ridge

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Patricia Sharp: Mine water usage makes no sense

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Patricia Sharp

My chief concern about the Idaho-Maryland Mine Proposal is the additional environmental burden it potentially puts on our community. Diverting millions of gallons of water into Little Wolf Creek while California is experiencing drought conditions statewide in a fire prone region is reckless, I think.

We are all aware of the devastation fire brings to heavily forested areas like ours. We've lived without electricity and cut back on our own personal water usage hoping to avoid the devastation that fire brings. Fire season is now year-round. Then, we turn around and allow a private company to drain our precious water away! Dewatering any region during a years long drought makes no sense to me.

We need water. We don't need an industrial mining operation in the middle of our community compromising our ability to survive.

The promises of environmental mitigation presented by Rise Gold management are not reassuring based on their track record. This mine proposal is environmental havoc we can avoid.

Supervisors, please be good stewards of our community and deny this very flawed proposal from this very flawed company. Our quality of life is at stake.

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Patricia A. Sharp

Grass Valley

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Ralph Silberstein: Rise Gold's well fantasies

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 23h ago

Ralph Silberstein | Other Voices

The Idaho-Maryland Mine speculative draft environmental impact report that has been released for public comment is a massive document based upon, well ... clairvoyance?

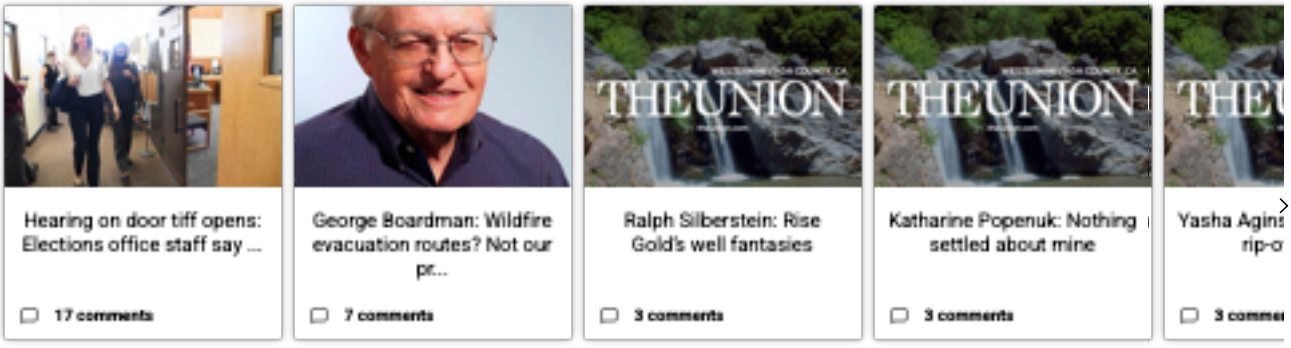
One might think so because the baseline, or "current conditions" of the Centennial site as described in the report is some future condition of the site after a required toxic mine waste cleanup project has been completed.

However, no actual document describing the cleanup was included in the draft. It turns out that the needed document, the Remedial Action Plan from the Department of Toxic Substances Control is not yet even finalized.

Meanwhile, well owners get a nice little letter from Rise Gold that repeatedly states things like, "The county has determined that no domestic water wells will be drained by mine dewatering." Of course, this also must be based upon a crystal ball session because a final environmental impact report has to be approved before any county determination can be made.

But after all of that, Rise still could not accurately claim that the county has determined anything about the mine project. This is because the county is not clairvoyant, either, and so can't possibly know whether a well will or will not see a drop in water levels, not to mention the fact that the current report recognizes that wells could be drained.

Trending Articles



Regardless, the real issue: Can anyone can ever predict with any certainty what the impacts on wells will be? The short answer: No.

Even among experts, there are different predictions, and all of them are couched in disclaimers, assumptions and phrases of uncertainty. And the unfortunate situation is that the only way to find out how much damage the dewatering of the mine would cause to wells and groundwater is to dewater the mine and wait for a few years. By then, the damage would be done.

For that reason alone the mine should not be approved. And if for some reason it is approved, there need to be protections for well owners. CEA Foundation estimates that more than 300 well owners should be protected. Rise's own studies list 242 wells that will likely have some groundwater level decrease.

And back in 1996, when the Board of Supervisors granted a five-year permit to just dewater the mine for exploration, all of the wells within a designated study area were to be provided with emergency water hookups within 24 hours. That was backed up with water service connections that were pre-designed, pre-permitted, NID approved, and financially assured. This involved over 100 wells. None of that is included in the Rise Gold project's draft environmental impact report, a slap in the face of well owners.

This issue is far from settled, and the documents that supposedly make the case that the impacts to wells are known are surprisingly inadequate.

What is fascinating is that in spite of the thousands of pages and over a year of delays, Rise Gold didn't even bother to gather critical data needed to strengthen its arguments about groundwater predictability, such as logging the amount of water flowing out of the

mine or conducting well monitoring.

Instead they have relied upon sparse previous data from the Emgold Mining reports and word of mouth. Other omissions and errors point to a inadequate ground water assessment. Even the historical data examining mine water levels and seasonal variations were misinterpreted in the draft environmental impact report .

Looking into our crystal ball, we see a recirculation of the speculative draft in the future in order to create a realistic draft, consuming another year's worth of delays.

Ralph Silberstein lives in Grass Valley.

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Ralph Silberstein: Do you live on top of the Idaho-Maryland Mine?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 12, 2021

Ralph Silberstein | Other Voices

Many people in Grass Valley live and work over the Idaho-Maryland Mine without realizing it. A lot of information about the location of the two surface sites and the project features has been circulated, but not much has been shared about the sheer size of the project underground and how that may affect us.

The underground mineral rights of Rise Gold are massive, covering 2,585 acres. They extend north as far as the edge of Glenbrook Basin. To the south they run to Highway 174. On the east side they extend under the entire airport area, and on the west they run completely under Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital.

Planned underground blasting, stoping and other mining activities will potentially impact anyone living or working in this area due to vibrations from the shock waves. The report on explosives that was submitted by Rise Gold estimates the impacts of blasting, with the goal of keeping shock wave velocity below a threshold of 4/10 inch per second (0.4 in/s) at neighboring properties. This is deemed as an "acceptable standard" because, according to the studies cited, "... human complaint factors were studied and it was determined that less than 8% of people would complain." Note that, also according to the report, people can feel 0.1 in/s.

As unacceptable as it may be for those impacted, Rise claims that it can comply with this "acceptable standard" by using a time-phased technique of blasting and because the initial mining activity will be more than 500 feet from residences. However, once the mine is opened there is nothing stopping Rise Gold from drilling or tunneling anywhere within their mineral rights area and to within 200 feet of the surface.

Wells are of even greater concern. Due to dewatering of the mine, there will be lowering of the ground water levels in the area. The predicted amounts of ground water drop are detailed in a hydrological study based on a computer simulation. This study shows that dewatering will lower ground water levels 5 to 10 feet over a fairly large area between Idaho-Maryland and East Bennett Roads, and some other areas. Overall, of the 334 wells identified in the study, it specifically lists 152 that will experience a 1 to 10 foot drop in water levels.

What is worrisome is that this groundwater study depends on a lot of assumptions that mask the true risk. It depends on the assumption that the stratigraphy is uniform, that it conforms to their computer model throughout, and that no additional fractures, faults, tunnels, shafts or permeable rock features will be intercepted. But perhaps most concerning, the study assumes that the mining will be limited to a small portion of the mineral rights area, accounting for only one-third of the project lifespan.

I think the threat to wells extends far beyond the boundary of the mineral rights. And while the blasting is a problem for anyone near active mining, the potential loss of well water is a far greater problem. It was only a few years ago that, after reassurances of no serious risks to local wells, a permit to another mining company was obtained to reopen the San Juan Ridge Mine. Early operations hit a fracture, drained off the groundwater, and ruined 12 wells in the North Colombia area. Even today, Grizzly Hill School has to truck in water because their local wells remain polluted. We cannot rule out that a catastrophic event like that could happen here.

Needless to say, having your well level drop even one or two additional feet in the summer can be a make-or-break situation, and that is the smallest of impacts predicted by the study. When your well starts sucking air, there are no quick fixes! How would you establish a claim? Could you obtain compensation? How many months or years would it take to get a replacement well or get a NID connection? These are serious questions.

The reality is, the study acknowledges that at least 152 wells are going to be impacted and it does not say with any certainty that the dewatering and expansion of the mine won't cause an even greater loss for well owners, or even a catastrophe like the San Juan Ridge Mine.

Simply put, this mine should not be permitted.

Ralph Silberstein lives in Grass Valley.

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Ray Bryars: How would they vote today?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 22, 2021

Ray Bryars | Other Voices

It has been a number of years since June 1993 when, in a single hearing, the Nevada County Planning Commission certified the Environmental Impact Report and Use Permit for the Siskon Mine in North San Juan. Although they were very concerned about the mine, a number of residents in North San Juan worked closely with Tim Callaway, the mine owner, in an effort to ensure that the mine was as environmentally safe as possible. Unfortunately, despite their efforts, disaster struck.

In 1996, sections of the mine walls broke through, causing disastrous flooding and the dewatering of 12 local wells. Significant efforts by the mine owner to stop any further damage was unsuccessful, and operations ceased.

By July 1996, Siskon was in financial trouble. The company sold the timber rights on its 2,000 acres of land for $450,000, and its stock price dropped to $2.50 per share.

In March 1997, Siskon miners hit unstable ground in their tunnel. Then in May 1997 the mine folded. Siskon's share price went to 2.3 cents and dropped even further in the following months.

During this period Tim Callaway received $791,000 in severance pay plus a salary of $178,700. The company had failed at mining gold, but had successfully mined its investors.

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Ultimately the owner was forced to declare bankruptcy, leaving behind a legacy of dewatered wells and a school that to this day is forced to bring in bottled water for its students.

As Rise Gold pushes forward to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine in an area that could possibly dewater over 300 neighborhood wells, I've been wondering if, knowing what they know today, would the 1993 Planning Commission change their votes on the Siskon Mine? We know that hindsight is 20:20, but given the multitude of things that can go wrong when you are digging or dewatering holes in the vicinity of wells, does it make sense to risk the well-being of hundreds of our neighbors and friends so that one company can make money on a very speculative venture?

Mining in Grass Valley would be risky with a reputable company, but the environmental history of Ben Mossman's management of the Banks Island Mine in British Columbia, Canada, does not provide anywhere near the level of confidence that our current Planning Commission should be requiring.

The county approved the Siskon Mine but took absolutely no responsibility for monitoring operations. The community took the risk, and when there were issues, the county looked the other way.

If there are impacts with the Idaho Maryland Mine, such as pollution, wells being dewatered, property values reduced or quality of life negatively impacted, can we expect the county to be there for us?

Unfortunately there will be no funding for monitoring the operations of the mine for even a year, let alone the 80 years that Rise Gold claims they will be operating.

No doubt that if the mine is approved and something goes wrong, the county will have moved on to other business and will be too busy with the latest Nevada County drama to do anything about it.

Residents will be on their own to figure out how to find water and how to continue their lives while living on a property that is worth way less than they paid for it.

This is not the way Nevada County residents should be treated. We need to put a stop to this continued whack-a-mole with speculative mine owners. A requirement for operation must be funding for 80 years of continuous monitoring and a multi-million dollar "forever" bond, so that if anything ever goes wrong, there will at least have been an effort by the county to minimize the impact to residents.

Author's note: Some of the information for this piece was gleaned from a summary by Connie Sturm of a presentation titled "A Brief History of Siskon Mine," by Liese Greensfelder and Kurt Lorenz. More details of the issues surrounding the Siskon Mine can be read on the San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association site at: http://www.sjrtaxpayers.org.

Ray Bryars lives in Nevada City.

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Scott Murray: Rise Gold — 1 million gallons a day

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | June 18, 2021

Scott Murray

1 million gallons of water is enough to provide daily drinking water for 2 million people.

1 million gallons of water is enough to provide weekly water for over 1 million tomato plants.

1 million gallons of water is enough to provide weekly water for over 200,000 apple trees.

1 million gallons of water is enough to grow nearly 10,000 pounds of rice.

1 million gallons of water is enough to provide daily drinking water for over 40,000 cows.

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1 million gallons of water is enough to provide daily drinking water for 4 million chickens.

1 million gallons of water is enough to flush over 600,000 toilets.

1 million gallons of water is enough to put out 50 house fires.

1 million gallons of water per day is what Rise Gold intends pump out of our ground and dump down a river.

Scott Murray

Rough and Ready

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Conversation

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TL **Tony Lauria** JUNE 22, 2021

Great perspective! Did you know that 3.5 Million Gallons of water is the daily dewatering plan? This will be the initial pump out rate for 6 months. That's 630 million gallons of our precious ground water, sent downstream. During the drought, no less. And their ceo says there's no impacts.

REPLY 2 0

MJ **M Jensen** JUNE 21, 2021

Holy moly

REPLY 0 0

 **Corniglio Digli** JUNE 19, 2021

Yup, thank you Scott Murray! It is becoming clearer to local residents, members of the Nevada County community that this mine debacle waiting to be unearthed is...just that, a looming unsustainable environmental disaster that would occur smack in the middle of where we live, raise our families, conduct our lives.

Just Say No To The Mine!

REPLY 7 0

P **Paul Stackhouse** JUNE 19, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Murray, for taking the time to remind us of the wealth that clean, uncontaminated water means to our community. We, the residents of Nevada County, greatly value the metaphorical gold our environment already yields equally to all of us: air that is free of the dust from mining particulates; water that is free from the legacy of mining pollutants; and the serenity of quiet mornings and peaceful evenings. The proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine threatens the very “gold” that we all enjoy each and every day: our health and our environment.

REPLY 7 0

J **James Coe** JUNE 18, 2021

One million gallons per day of clean treated mine water discharged into Wolf Creek is good for all downstream life in creeks and farms. What is so hard to understand that clean water discharge from treatment plants is not wasted. Your wastewater plants discharge clean treated water daily that is used for downstream cities and farms. The truth is the Sierra Club will not support water that is recycled for the benefit of mankind because the Club is anti human.

REPLY 3 REPLIES 1 7

1 SHOW OLDER REPLIES

K **Ken Jones** JUNE 19, 2021

Reply to **James Coe**

James what will be required to treat the water from the mine that has to meet National Secondary Drinking Water Regulations. I am not even sure if the waste treatment plant is capable of removing contaminants at that level. If not who pays for the technology?

Treated waste water is used across the country for many different applications. How you tie in the Sierra Club is confusing.

REPLY 5 0

TL **Tony Lauria** JUNE 23, 2021

Reply to **James Coe**

This is ground water that thousands of Nevada County residents depend on. It's impossible to predict the impact regarding hydrology. Gravity *is* predictable, however. The pump out of an area could suck wells dry very effectively, as fissures drain into those dewatered tunnels. In a drought, it's an unconscionable act of theft. At least 300 wells are in the immediate vicinity of the mine. Almost all do not have a secondary source of water. The proposal risks the health, safety and welfare of all of us, including the potential for a total loss of value for our homes and property. And that's the tip of the iceberg, in terms of severe impacts associated with a heavy industrial mining operation. For anyone who might like the idea, consider what it would be like if you, or your son or daughter lived near ground zero. Blasting and drilling 24/7 beneath your home. 100 heavily laden truck loads rolling by your house all day long. The incessant back-up beeping of heavy equipment. The foul air. On and on the

list goes. Never mine where people live. It's not just a bad idea, it's ruination of a community.

REPLY

Add your reply

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Sharon Delgado and Dianna Suarez: Water more precious than gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | September 3, 2021

Sharon Delgado and Dianna Suarez | Other Voices

Even in the wake of the tremendous losses locally caused by the River Fire — as heat waves, wildfires, drought and smoke devastate Northern California — Rise Gold continues to inflate the economic benefits of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

While the CEO claims that the silent majority supports it, those of us who are studying plans for the mine see many negative impacts. One significant and irreversible impact could be the depletion of our region's groundwater, which could add to growing water scarcity and rising water prices in this time of climate change — just when we need to conserve water most.

How can we calculate the value of water against the value of gold? Gold is a commodity. Gold prices are high right now, tempting speculators from out of the area who want to profit by extracting both gold and profits. Neither would stay in our community.

On the other hand, while water is often treated as a commodity, under natural law water is a right given to all people and all parts of creation to sustain life. "Water is life."

Yet fresh water is becoming scarcer ... and more expensive. According to NID documents, an acre foot of untreated water varies in price but averages from $50 to $70 locally. The Sacramento Bee reports that Sacramento area water agencies are selling water to Southern California at $700 per acre foot.

Trending Articles



How much is an acre foot of water? It is a volume of water the size of an acre, 1 foot deep. One million gallons of water equals 3.07 acre feet.

As we live through another drought, with the value of water rapidly increasing, dewatering local groundwater to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine might mean loss of economic and ecological value to our community.

Using simple math, we can roughly estimate the economic value of groundwater slated for extraction. According to Rise Gold's Technical Report, beginning mine operations would require draining the mine shaft by pumping out 2,500 acre feet of groundwater (81,433,250 gallons). Based on current NID prices, this means discharging between $125,000 and $175,000 worth of water down Wolf Creek into Bear River during the first six months of operation (2,500 acre feet x $50 to $70).

Then, to keep the mine shaft clear, inflow of groundwater to the mine shaft, estimated at 1,375 acre feet (44,788,287 gallons) per year, would have to be pumped out continually. The next six months would see $34,300 to $48,000 down the creek and then between $68,600 and $96,000 would flow down the creek annually (1,372 acre feet x $50-$70). Within 10 years, close to 500 million gallons of water, worth a whopping $776,700 to $1,087,400, could be lost to our community — a million dollars' worth of precious water down the

creek in the first decade!

This would go on for the next 70 years thereafter. Billions of gallons of water, worth millions, would be dumped down the creek and out of our community.

Meanwhile, community members whose wells are dewatered would pay ever-increasing rates for NID-treated water instead of drawing water out of their own wells, water that has been cleansed by Mother Nature as it percolates down to underground aquifers. (NID rates for treated drinking water during this drought vary from $.0039 per gallon for the first 500 cubic foot of water and $.0049 per each additional gallon, which adds up to between $1,270 and $1,596 per acre foot.)

Another fun fact: In only 35 years Rise Gold would dewater and discharge enough water down Wolf Creek to fill Scotts Flat Reservoir to capacity.

We must also consider the ecological value of groundwater lost due to the mine. We don't see groundwater, so why does it need to be recharged? According to the U.S. Geological Survey: "As part of the water cycle, groundwater is a major contributor to flow in many streams and rivers and has a strong influence on river and wetland habitats for plants and animals. People have been using groundwater for thousands of years and continue to use it today, largely for drinking water and irrigation. Life on Earth depends on groundwater, just as it does on surface water."

According to NID's website: "Nevada Irrigation District encourages wise use of water. Conservation and water use efficiency is important to preserving our precious water resources. Water is needed for drinking water, household use, growing food, commercial and industrial uses, groundwater recharge and the environment."

Rise Gold's plan is the reverse of recharging groundwater. Draining groundwater could deplete our aquifers, which would otherwise provide well water and contribute to supplying our local lakes, creeks, ponds, wildlife, trees, and vegetation with the water they need to thrive.

Nevada County has been a water-rich area, with lakes, rivers and creeks contributing to its natural beauty and abundance of wildlife.

But our shrinking snowpack, historically low reservoirs, record-breaking heat, smoke-filled skies, and parched lands and forests make clear that times are changing.

Future climate projections are dire. Let us not compound these problems locally by letting Rise Gold extract and waste our valuable groundwater. Water is more precious than gold.

Sharon Delgado lives in Nevada City. Dianna Suarez lives in Colfax.

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Steven Rugge: Mine dewatering seems risky

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS |

Steven Rugge

The recent article “Hung out to dry” in The Union highlights a key issue around the proposed reopening of gold mining here in Nevada County — the negative impact on water supplies for the people of this county.

Proponents of the mine seem to imply that the dewatering necessary for the operating the mine will not significantly impact county residents. But we know from other multiple sources that we here in California are in a severe long-term megadrought, our water resources are quite limited, and that we as a population are being asked to conserve water in a variety of ways that seem nickel and dime against the severity of the water shortage problem.

Essentially what we seem to have are competing priorities and interests — the interests of the entire population of this county, for all of whom the use of water is essential, against the interests of a few who desire to make some money from the mining of gold.

A hundred years ago, there were fewer people and plenty of water, so dewatering the ground reservoirs thousands of feet below ground level was not considered to be significant.

Things have changed. Now with 100,000 people in this county, many of whom live off wells 100 to 400 feet deep at most, dewatering our groundwater reservoir from the current 250 feet below ground level to the proposed 3,500 foot below ground level needed to conduct mining seems to me to be not what is in the best interests of the population of this county.

I am sorry for those who have a financial interest in the mine that this is the case, but to me the interests of the many for adequate water supplies should outweigh the interests of the few to make a profit mining gold. I am sure if reopening the mine was put to a vote of the entire population in this county, it would fail by a wide margin.

I can only hope that the five people on the Nevada County Board of Supervisors recognize this, and vote in a way that reflects the majority will of the people of this county.

Steven Rugge

Nevada City

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Steven Rugge: Water vs. gold

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Steven Rugge

I see in the draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed reopening of the gold mine here in Nevada County that Rise Gold intends to pump more than 3 million gallons of water per day from our underground water storage aquifers and, I believe, basically just flush it away down the south fork of Wolf Creek.

Does it really make sense in this time of mega-drought, water shortages, and water rationing for the citizens of this county to be wasting our precious water resources like this? I say no.

In this day and age, water is more precious than gold. Let's leave both of them in the ground and just say no to reopening the mine.

Steven Rugge

Nevada City

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Terry Lamphier: Mine our green, not our gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 2d ago

Terry Lamphier | Other Voices

It is likely our community would survive another 80 years without a gold mine. We won't survive that long without water, which is rapidly becoming the world's new gold. Current climate trends and over-development increase the likelihood we will face water rationing, higher rates and increased pressure to build a new dam. Are there alternatives?

According to Nevada County documents, the Idaho-Maryland Mine contains between 576 to 815 million gallons of water as well as ongoing mine inflows — all to be pumped and dumped by mine operators into a local creek after improving to "drinking water standards."

The inflow is "pass through" water from natural sources. Outflow would be less than inflow due to mine operations, I believereducing Nevada Irrigation District's currently available downstream draw and likely leading to higher water rates for NID customers.

As the mine is part of the currently stable water table system, a severe drop in mine water levels is expected to affect local wells and may, as critics point out, affect wells far beyond the areas predicted by incomplete modeling and old records.

The problem is our complex geology. Where influx water comes from is an open question. Well owners and the mine get water from cracks in bedrock that collect and transfer water — but it is only guesswork as to how far and wide these cracks extend, leading to questions as to how far well dewatering could occur.

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Here are a few more thoughts for consideration:

- A Sierra College geology teacher once said that Nevada County's geology is some of the most complicated in the state, noting that the water outflow on the public spring on Bitney Springs Road likely originates at much higher elevations.

- Local fracturing includes an earthquake fault three miles west of Grass Valley, running from Lake Oroville to beyond Auburn.

- Opening up gold-containing fractures raises more water movement questions. While the North San Juan Siskon disaster involved different geology, the principle is the same.

- At a city of Grass Valley-hosted forum on water issues for the previous (Emgold) proposal, mine proponents maintained that mining operations would be below existing ground water tables, so wells would not be affected. When then asked about where mine water came from, the vague response referenced uncertain geology around Wolf Creek, raising the possibility of partial creek dewatering if the mine were drained.

There may be a higher and better use for the mine. As we face the prospect of extended and possibly worsening drought for the foreseeable future, new water sources will have to be found.

The mine could potentially serve as a supplemental or emergency water source. In some ways, mine water storage is little different than a new dam but without eminent domain, massive construction costs, ecological negatives, etc.

Effects on local stream levels would be comparable to a dam's varying stream flow impacts but on a smaller scale. As a supplement to existing supplies, this could offset the need for a new dam for years.

Estimates of the mine's water volume range from 1,767 to 2,501 acre/feet. At California's typical annual household usage of one half to one acre feet, the mine holds enough water to serve 2,500 or more homes for one year, making it a potential alternative revenue source for mine owners.

Drawn down in drought years and recharged in wet years, the mine water would be continually renewed at no cost beyond providing water to affected well owners. Even seasonal use is possible, as summer drawdowns would be eventually restored to Wolf Creek through our sewer system (minus evaporation from garden use, etc.).

Truckee just bought water from PG&E for about $38/acre foot and urban users pay as much as $1,500 to $2,000/acre foot; some farm

districts pay much more. Sale of mine water could generate anywhere from $67,000 to several million dollars and becomes a sustainable local water — and revenue and job — source beyond the mine's predicted lifespan.

Add in another profitable, clean, renewable and local job-producing opportunity for mine owners: a biomass plant. The Brunswick site was identified by Nevada County's biomass research group as a possible biomass (logs, branches and brush) energy plant location. This is the place that recently had mountains of storm damage biomass — free energy — hauled away to a distant biomass plant.

It's time for local leadership to take climate change seriously. The mine site offers better — sustainable — options than extracting sort-sighted profit.

Terry Lamphier lives in Grass Valley.

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Terry McLaughlin: Skeptical about reopening mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 2, 2021

Terry McLaughlin | Columnist

Rise Gold Corp., a Canadian mining company based in Vancouver, submitted an application to restart mining operations at the old Idaho-Maryland Mine in Grass Valley.

The permit application describes a drill and blast regime to remove 1,500 tons of rock per day, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week for approximately 80 years. The two main processing facilities would be on 119 acres at the junction of Brunswick and East Bennett, and 56 acres along Idaho Maryland Road, east of Centennial Drive. Approximately 2.4 million cubic yards of mining tailings and rock waste would be deposited at the two locations.

In an April interview with CBS 13, Rise Gold CEO Benjamin Mossman said of the proposed project, “We’ve designed it to have no impact on the environment.”

It is difficult to see how such a massive project could have no impact on the environment or residents’ quality of life.

At the Brunswick site, the first six months of operation would include pumping 3.6 million gallons of water daily from the abandoned mine shafts into South Fork Wolf Creek. Discharged water would be treated, bringing the treated water to secondary drinking water standards. He has acknowleged that while the water may have no known detrimental impacts to human health, elements in the water could cause pipes to rust and emit a distinct musty odor.

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Once the mine is dewatered, 1.2 million to 3.6 million gallons per day would continue to be pumped from underground workings to maintain the dewatered state. The water treatment facility would have to operate in perpetuity to prevent discharge of contaminated water, even after closure of the mine.

It is not possible to accurately predict the full effect that dewatering would have on the underground hydrology in the vicinity of the mine, including wells, the creek, riparian zones, and subterranean groundwater.

Since the mine closed in 1956, approximately 300 homes that rely on wells to supply their water have been built within a 1,000-foot radius of the mineral rights boundary area.

Within the East Bennett area, a hydrological study showed that dewatering will lower ground water levels five to 10 feet. In response, Rise Gold has indicated it would install an NID pipeline along a 1 ¼ mile section of East Bennett Road and pay for hookups for those customers who desire it, but the homeowners would be responsible for the ever-increasing monthly water fees. Rise Gold has made no public provisions or commitments for other homeowners whose wells may fail or become contaminated.

A number of years ago, after assurances of no serious risks to local wells, a permit was obtained by another mining company to reopen the San Juan Ridge Mine. Early operations ruined 12 wells in the North Columbia area before the project shut down.

What most people likely do not know is that the underground mineral rights for the mine cover 2,585 acres, potentially impacting up to 1,800 property owners. These mineral rights extend west under Highway 49, running completely under Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital. They extend to the east under the entire airport area, north as far as Plaza Drive in the Glenbrook Basin, and to Highway 174 and much of Cedar Ridge.

Planned underground blasting and other mining activities could potentially impact anyone living or working in this area due to vibrations from the shock waves. Rise Gold claims that it can comply with an "acceptable standard" by using a time-phased technique of blasting and because the initial mining activity will be more than 500 feet from residences. However, once the mine reopened, the subterranean mining operations would not be excluded from any of the areas covered by the 2,585 acre mineral rights to within 200 feet of the surface.

Gravel-hauling trucks would make up to 100 roundtrips per day, seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., using Brunswick Road to reach Whispering Pines and to access Highway 49. Additional trucks would transport fuel oil, diesel fuel, explosives, and large amounts of cement and other supplies on a daily basis.

Mine operations would include two shifts a day for 300 workers, adding more traffic congestion to the area, not to mention the safety hazards of heavy truck traffic during winter conditions on the downhill slope of Brunswick Drive.

An environmental impact report for this project is being drafted by Sacramento consultants Raney Planning & Management, and is expected to be released later this summer. Once released, at least 45 days must be allowed for public comment.

Multiple Nevada County and city of Grass Valley agencies will be consulted for review and comments, such as Planning, Engineering, Transportation, Environmental Health, Fire Departments, County Sheriff, and outside agencies such as Fish and Wildlife.

But the final decision lies with the five member Nevada County Board of Supervisors. The vote of three out of five of the supervisors will determine the fate of this project.

I would encourage readers to do further research on the Rise Gold Corp. project to determine for themselves if the proposed reopening of industrial mining operations in a rural but heavily populated residential community, with the potential for negative impacts to air, water, traffic, safety, noise, local habitat, property values and quality of life is indeed a positive opportunity for Grass Valley or a disaster in the making.

Terry McLaughlin, who lives in Grass Valley, writes a twice monthly column for The Union. Write to her at terrymclaughlin2016@gmail.com.

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Tony Lauria: Risks of reopening mine no joke

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | May 4, 2021

Tony Lauria | Other Voices

It is without conscience and integrity for a company to waltz into a residential community and falsely proclaim they will cause no environmental impacts with their heavy industrial mining operation.

The very nature of deep bedrock gold mining is inherently tied to environmental impacts. The facts of history confirm this. The statement by Rise Gold's CEO, in a KOVR 13 news interview, said they have designed their operation to have no impacts. How could this be any further from the truth?

Dewatering the region's aquifers at the rate of 4 million gallons per day for six months, then 1 million every day thereafter for 80 years is an environmental impact. It might be an environmental disaster.

The complexity of hydrology makes it impossible to predict how far reaching this dewatering process will impact the quality of life for the residents who live here. The amount of churned contaminants that might be released and pumped out of these aquifers would be a significant impact. There is no guarantee those toxic elements will not mix with existing water stores and contaminate residential water sources.

Furthermore, the loss of a precious resource, in the midst of declining water levels and frequent droughts, might significantly burden this environment and its inhabitants.

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There is a reason no active deep bedrock gold mines exist in Nevada County any more. The legacy of the gold mining industry has scarred many square miles of land here, with extreme toxic consequences.

The Lava Cap Mine continues to fail complete clean-up efforts, initiated during the federal Superfund program. Downstream, Lost Lake still maintains its contamination status from the mine's runoff. Similar hazardous conditions exist at, virtually, all other previous local mines, including the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Not only is this dewatering process an environmental impact, but its potential to destroy the hundreds of residential water wells, within their boundaries, is another collateral impact that should never be risked. Such a failure in their "no impact design" could render hundreds of homes without a clean water source and devalue property severely, undoubtedly triggering a mass exodus of residents from the county.

What if our wells go dry due to this mining operation? They cannot guarantee it won't happen. If this company turns a blind eye to this possibility, they are proving their lack of conscientious integrity. In other words, they simply do not care who gets thrown under the

bus for their profits.

Consider the failure at the most recent mining operation in North San Juan. The Siskon Mine company stated the same falsehoods of estimating no potential negative consequences. After a dozen wells were destroyed and the company filed for bankruptcy, the citizens were left to bear the burden of those consequences. If you have not seen it, this documentary shows it all: https://vimeo.com/120747168.

This represents only the tip of the iceberg with known environmental impacts associated with gold mining. The company CEO has already been fined twice for toxic spills in British Columbia. Does the county have a budget to watchdog his operations here?

Our risk, for profit in the pockets of this company, has no benefit for our community. How many jobs are worth the risk to the hundreds of homeowners that could lose everything, and our towns that could suffer the fallout of this industrial takeover?

Their application to change the zoning to heavy industrial is simply an unconscionable action. It's been 70 years since this mine was in operation. None of the residents here agreed to this possibility when they purchased their homes. A zoning change should never be permitted.

Do not allow this Canadian company to risk our clean air, water and quality of life for their own benefit. The potential impacts are severe and might foretell a very grim upcoming 80 years for the community. The potential environmental and economic destruction of this area could ripple through both Grass Valley and Nevada City regardless of the proximity to ground zero.

There is power in numbers. Show your opposition to the mine proposal every way you can. Start by signing the petition at http://www.minewatchnc.org. Write to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors and express who will get your upcoming vote. Tell them they must protect the people they were elected to serve and stand up to these would-be takers of our resources, clean air and quality of life.

Tony Lauria lives in Grass Valley.

Editor's note: Water released by the mine must be at drinking water quality by regulation and as a requirement of permitting it to operate.

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Wayne Jarosh: Mine detrimental to groundwater

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | August 20, 2021

Wayne Jarosh

Over the next 80 years Rise Gold wants to pump out billions of gallons of groundwater and send it downstream directly to the ocean. I dn't believe this will only affect wells near the mine site. Water seeks its own level and this includes groundwater, so it's possible the groundwater level could drop for miles around.

Until recently in our state's history, virtually all groundwater reached the Central Valley, creating a huge aquifer that reached almost to the surface, even creating wetlands. Today, farmers in the valley are drilling more than 2,000 feet before reaching water. The valley floor has actually dropped several feet in elevation due to the lack of groundwater.

Do you think the valley farmers are going to be happy to see us pumping out groundwater and sending it elsewhere? I don't think so. There never has been and never will be a mine that doesn't create a huge environmental hazard.

I imagine that the shareholders of Rise Gold live in many different parts of the country, and maybe some who live in other countries. They might not care about mining hazards away from their back yard.

Wayne Jarosh

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Nevada City

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Avila Lowrance: Can’t afford to reopen this mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 12, 2021

Avila Lowrance | Other Voices

Can Nevada County afford to share its precious but scarce resources with Rise Gold? Do we have enough good air, clean water, and available power in Nevada County to allow these valuable resources to be exploited by a junior mining company from Canada with a bad reputation?

I believe that these three precious resources are at high risk of being significantly diminished if Nevada County allows Rise Gold to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine. They are not the only resources at risk, but let’s start at the top.

AIR

In 2020 the American Lung Association published the State of the Air Report, in which they evaluated the quality of Nevada County’s air. They gave us an “F.” The report accounted for both high ozone days and particle pollution.

If this mine is allowed, I believe dust will escape from it with continuous rock crushing, loading, hauling, unloading, spreading, and compacting. Air pollution will be increased further with a truck coming through town every five to 10 minutes, hauling and delivering tailings.

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23 comments


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21 comme

More than 100 trips per day is the current estimate. We already have twice the state average of chronic lung disease. We can’t afford any more.

WATER

Rise Gold plans to “dewater” the abandoned mine tunnels under 2,585 acres of Nevada County and send the water into little South Fork Wolf Creek. Their plan is to pump 3.6 million gallons every day for six months and another 1.2 for up to 80 years! Because the geology of groundwater in fractured rock is extremely complicated and unpredictable, private wells in the mineral rights area and nearby are at risk of failing or becoming contaminated.

Habitat destruction: The dewatering would treat little South Fork Wolf Creek like a storm drain, likely damaging the downstream riparian zone. In addition, Rise Gold plans to erase 75 acres of woodlands, grasslands, and chaparral, replacing them with giant built-up pads of mine tailings. We cannot afford to lose 75 acres of valuable habitat and risk the loss of private wells.

POWER

In order to protect our power grid, the Nevada County Energy Action Plan calls for a significant reduction of residential electric use by

2035 (42 gigawatt hours annually).

But the mine would require massive energy usage that would be a whopping 12% of what all of Nevada County uses annually (an estimated 42 billion watt hours per year).

This would strain our power grid and completely erase our county’s planned cuts, which are designed to save the environment, reduce the use of fossil fuels, and curb climate change. In other words, the mine would erase our planned gains.

We already struggle with power shutoffs when PG&E can’t keep up with the demand on hot summer days, not to mention our new reality of Public Safety Power Shutdowns. Dramatic increases in demand will likely cause power interruptions for local businesses, homes, and for people who need medical support.

With our vulnerability to wildfires and the potential loss of lives and community, we cannot afford the weakening of our power grid and the threat of even more shutdowns during the warm, dry season.

Nevada County cannot afford this mine. For more information, visit https://www.minewatchnc.org

Avila Lowrance lives in Grass Valley.

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Carrie Monohan: Key facts related to Idaho-Maryland Mine re-opening

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | October 26, 2020

On Aug. 17, The Sierra Fund, along with many area residents, submitted comments to the Nevada County Planning Department to inform the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) about reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. While the project proposal is complicated with many unknowns, there is one aspect of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) that must be addressed first and foremost.

The NOP states that there are really two sites under development as part of the mining activities proposed — where the gold is accessed at the Brunswick Industrial Site, and where the waste rock will be piled at the Centennial site. However, the ongoing Centennial site cleanup is not part of the material presented in the notice. The proposed project cannot work without the Centennial site. Previous investigations have concluded that tailings material currently on the site from past mining activities are contaminated with arsenic, chromium and lead and pose a risk to persons accessing the site and represent a threat to the environment. The Idaho-Maryland Mine Project EIR must evaluate the impacts to and cleanup of the Centennial site as an integral part of the project. They are one project and need to be addressed that way in the DEIR.

Carrie Monohan

Nevada City

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-cea-board-of-directors-just-say-no---the-mine-can-t/article_16550866-1161-11ee-bd70-cbfdec85875c.html

Ideas & Opinions — CEA Board of Directors: Just say no - The mine can't be fixed

CEA Board of Directors | Other Voices
Jun 23, 2023

On May 11, the Nevada County Planning Commission unanimously voted "No" on the Idaho Maryland Mine project and its flawed Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Even Rise Gold's last minute "carrots" to reduce its impacts did not sway the Commission. And now that we have seen Rise's conspiratorial rant about unfair treatment and indications of a lawsuit as the "stick", we can expect that they will add more "carrots" before the project goes before the Board of Supervisors for a final vote later this summer.

Regardless, the unavoidable reality is, you can't fix this mine project. It sits in the middle of a neighborhood that is reliant on private wells for drinking water. There is no viable solution for disposing of the mine waste. And it has an unacceptable energy footprint.

THE MINE WASTE PROBLEM CAN'T BE FIXED

The mine project depends upon being able to dispose of the mine waste (sand tailings and waste rock) by off-site sales as fill materials or construction aggregate. Rise has tried really hard to sell the idea that the mine waste is clean enough to be used without restrictions, but the Water Board stated that

the testing results were insufficient to make this determination.

At stake is the risk of long term toxic mine waste discharge into our creeks, like we have from past mining projects. The most reliable test data on the potential for this hazardous drainage is from the water that currently flows out of the mine drain, and those tests show high levels of arsenic, manganese, zinc, and iron. So it is unlikely that Rise's mine waste leachate will be any cleaner.

Compounding the problem, the Air Quality Board will require all exported materials to be categorized as "Restricted" due to the potential health hazards from the rock's asbestos content. There's no real market for "Restricted" mine waste.

Even if some or all of the mine waste tests clean enough to allow off-site sales, the market for aggregates is flooded. The EIR falsely interpreted data indicating that Sacramento would be a viable market, and failed to note that there are abundant supplies of clean aggregate already available nearer there. Furthermore, even if there were a market for the waste, the mine lacks the necessary facilities to produce most forms of construction aggregates.

In other words, Rise Gold has no viable solution for disposing of the mine waste.

THE THREAT TO LOCAL WELLS CAN'T BE FIXED

Numerous experts assert that, because of the fractured rock system around the mine, there is no way to reliably predict the impact on local wells from pumping out the mine water. Even the computer model provided by Rise

acknowledges that more data is needed to validate the model's predictions, yet that model predicts groundwater levels to drop 1-10 feet over a large area.

To complicate the problem, Rise's hydrology documents contained significant errors regarding initial ground water conditions, and no current groundwater data was collected even though at least 3 years of data are needed for a reliable baseline. Thus, the FEIR included no means of accurately determining impacts on individual wells and no mandatory mechanisms for providing remedies.

The Nevada Irrigation District has made it clear that if wells are impacted, it may take years to get easements, design and install water mains, and provide service connections to homeowners. This is unacceptable. The more than 300 well owners in the area should be completely protected from damages.

GREENHOUSE GAS IMPACTS CAN'T BE FIXED

"Net Zero" is the State's goal for carbon emissions by 2045. Yet, the EIR states that the mine will emit over 9000 tons per year of greenhouse gases. The project completely fails to adequately address the emissions for the 80 year lifespan of proposed operations.

The mine's annual electricity use would be equal to 5,575 homes. This use would completely offset the amount of residential electricity reductions the County wants to achieve in its Energy Action Plan. If we're serious about the County Energy Action Plan and the climate crisis, the mine is a non-starter.

IN CONCLUSION

In reaching their decision, the Planning Commission did their homework and

professionally considered the evidence over the two day hearing. We hope that the Board of Supervisors will show the same level of professionalism, neither bow to the “sticks” nor be swayed by the “carrots”, and vote no on this deeply flawed project.

Community Environmental Advocates Foundation Board of Directors, email info@cea-nc.org

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Idaho-Maryland Mine opponents decry report 'riddled with errors'

News FOLLOW NEWS | 18h ago

From a release

CEA Foundation and its MineWatch coalition members on Wednesday delivered comments to the Nevada County Planning Commission on the draft environmental impact report for the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, a news release states.

Experts, volunteers, and legal minds reviewed the report's 1,000-plus pages to provide a review of the technical studies, impact assessments and proposed mitigations.

"Mining is our past, not our future," said retired capital planner Paul Schwartz in the release. "Today's economic engine is recreation-based, but we're also facing historic drought and fire risk. Protecting precious resources like water, air quality, and our peaceful rural setting is job number one."

"This (report) is riddled with errors, omissions, and legal flaws," claimed Ralph Silberstein, president of CEA Foundation, in the release. "The county will have to make significant changes and recirculate the draft. We'll see many more impacts listed as significant and unavoidable. Beyond the EIR, our supervisors will be faced with making the final decision. In the long run, it will very simply come down to whether the mine is good for our community."

CEA states that it performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County.

Trending Articles



CEA was a party in the lawsuit opposing the Dorsey Marketplace, and has appealed a decision dismissing that suit, along with Protect Grass Valley.

According to the CEA release, the applicant for reopening the mine, Rise Gold Corp., was responsible for delivering the vast majority of the technical studies used by the county's hired consultant to determine the impacts.

Dewatering the mine is a key concern, the CEA states.

"Groundwater modeling in fractured rock systems is considered unreliable even when everything is done right," said Silberstein.

According to CEA's experts, Rise Gold's model has fundamental flaws in the initial start point of the model and baseline data assumptions — all of which throw off the entire analysis. The result is a report that concludes that groundwater levels would drop a maximum of 10 feet, and no more than 30 local wells would be a risk.

CEA's experts, however, say there is an extremely high degree of uncertainty involved.

Comments submitted to the county by the community and the Nevada Irrigation District include request to expand the potential area of impact, provide a comprehensive groundwater monitoring program, and post a $14 million bond.

Contacted Wednesday, Rise gold responded to the release.

"Our vision for reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine has always been about more than creating hundreds of good-paying jobs, an increase in fire safety, and a boost to the local economy — it is about building an environmentally conscious state-of-the-art operation," said Jarryd Gonzales, spokesman for Rise Grass Valley, a subsidiary of Rise Gold Corp., in an email. "Nevada County hired its own independent experts to conduct a two-year scientific analysis that looks into the possible environmental impacts of the project, and it has concluded there are no significant impacts on the environment — including air and water quality. We are confident that the county prepared a thorough report and we look forward to the final EIR and a decision by the Board of Supervisors."

OTHER CONCERNS

Dealing with mine waste is another major concern.

"Looking at the rock core sample analysis, it is abundantly clear that asbestos will be a gnarly problem that will require comprehensive management. Mining operations don't get to just haul and dump rock like the days of old," said Silberstein. "Air and water quality regulations will significantly restrict throughput and the costs will be exorbitant."

CEA's experts found the plans to mitigate fugitive dust to be inadequate. They also found no credible evidence that the mine tailings could be effectively sold to third parties for fill or off-site construction.

Climate change has increased forest fires and parched lands, resulting in the newest federal and state greenhouse gas reduction goals. The report used a threshold of 10,000 metric tons per year for greenhouse gas emissions, but failed to include some elements that put the project over that limit and make it a significant impact.

That limit defined in the report is likely to be found irrelevant, CEA claims. Recent changes mean the county's threshold must be established at "net zero."

CEA also said gaps in the report include the clean up of the toxic, pre-superfund Centennial site that would be used to dump mine waste and is not included in the report, but is required by the California Environmental Quality Act; missing construction time estimates throwing off the entire analysis of noise, traffic, and air; and the incorrect assessment of nighttime noise, and underestimation of the noise of dumping mine waste near established residential neighborhoods.

Additionally, air traffic hazards and aesthetic impacts need to be studied further due to the likelihood of a massive fog plume that could be created by warm, saturated air ventilation; blasting plans don't follow U.S. mining guidelines that restrict blasting during evening hours; the plan doesn't demonstrate that the impact on biological and aquatic resources would be less than significant; and meteorological data used to assess the health risk of airborne pollutants doesn't fit Grass Valley's profile or accurately reflect local conditions.

Source: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation

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Conversation FOLLOW LOG IN | SIGN UP

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ALL COMMENTS 1 newest 7

IV **IndePenndent Valley** 14 HRS AGO

Every time their paid sales people lie in public about "no" impacts, just remember the report says there are definitely multiple significant and unavoidable negative impacts, and it very clearly lists a total of 83 negative impacts covering every facet of life in Nevada County. None of them are good. All 83 are negative, and the report says none of them disappear. And some are considered significant. And unavoidable.

So: 83 negative impacts, several significant and unavoidable...it's right there in the report.

They actually expect local people to not read any reports and to believe their paid lies. Don't be one of those people.

To say "it has concluded there are no significant impacts on the environment" is a bald-faced and easily disproven lie to put in print. Shame on Rise Gold. Lies lies and more lies from people paid to lie to us as their job...no thanks...find another community to swindle

REPLY 4 0

7

ACTIVE CONVERSATIONS



Linda Campbell-Kelleher: Some facts about opinions

84



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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---charles-brock-county-policy-says-existing-development-shall-be-protected-from/article_53d62180-ee01-11ed-82d0-4ba581c8e7f5.html

Ideas & Opinions – Charles Brock: County policy says existing development shall be protected from adverse effects cause by mining

Charles Brock
May 9, 2023

I'm having considerable heartburn over our Planning Department's Staff recommendation that the Planning Commission vote to certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Idaho Maryland Mine (IMM). General Plan Policy 17.14 states "Already existing development – commercial, residential and community, shall be protected from adverse environmental effects caused by mining through enforced use permit conditions and mitigation measures, OR DENIAL OF THE PROJECTS." The FEIR identifies three SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS that CANNOT BE MITIGATED: Aesthetics, Noise, and Traffic/Circulation. Asbestos should have been a fourth. Accurate measurement of asbestos contained in the tons per day of mine waste rock, cannot be determined until TWO WEEKS AFTER the rock has been trucked away. The FEIR also fails in its arbitrary and inadequate attempt to mitigate admitted threats to water wells, using sparse data collected over 15 years ago! This is a clear violation of California's Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) which requires "current data be used to assess impacts and mitigations." To deny certification of the FEIR requires identifying its inadequacies. I have spent countless hours reviewing all planning documents from DEIR and FEIR to Use Permit Applications

documents, Variance Applications, Technical Reports, Management Plans, etc. and often found these documents incomplete, frequently incorrect, self-contradictory, and basically nowhere near worthy of certification or approval by our County decision-makers.

To build the main mining operation on the Brunswick industrial site, Rise Gold needs to rerecord the County Final Map of that site and erase a 1500' long fault line that is shown running directly through the middle of their building site. In an "abundance of caution", after admitting potential "SIGNIFICANT IMPACT" of removing the fault line, the FEIR concludes that "the fault line and its 200' setbacks, can be removed from the Final Map if the mine's building plans are reviewed and approved by the County Building Department". Justification for this decision is that the mine is located in the Foothill Fault System which is reported to have "low seismicity...and low rate of recurrence", with the nearest recent(1975) "activity" having occurred 25 miles to the north on the Cleveland Hill Fault, which is also part of the Foothill Fault System. The mine's DEIR, FEIR, Geotechnical Engineering Report, and Management Plan for Potential Seismic Hazards all fail to note that a portion of the Cleveland Hill Fault is now designated within a high risk potential Alquist-Priolo ACTIVE FAULT ZONE! Each of these critical project documents also fail to mention an August 1978 article in California Geology which notes "Damaging earthquakes occurred in 1909 and 1888 15 km northeast of Nevada City."

To build on the Brunswick Industrial Site, Rise Gold needs a Variance to work within the County's 100' riparian setback, and permission to exceed 30% slope standards within these same areas. The FEIR informs us that "temporary and permanent ground-disturbing activities of jurisdictional

waters/wetlands cannot be avoided". Mitigation is achieved by payment of "an in-lieu fee or off-site wetland creation… or purchase of habitat credits". Let me get this straight, "modern/clean" mining decimates the Wolf Creek watershed and mitigates this waste by paying into a fund to restore habitat or wetlands somewhere else? Read the mine engineer's 1/2/20 Steep Slope and Sediment Control Management Plan (outdated) to learn that "due to the proposed development and existing site topography, there is no alternative feasible location on the subject property that would have less impact on the Site and surrounding area, and "no feasible alternatives were identified…that could avoid these environmentally sensitive resource areas".

The FEIR states "no groundwater level measurements have been completed since 2007, which creates some uncertainty to the predicted impact…of the water column in domestic wells".(pg.147) Just the suggestion of millions of gallons of subsurface water being pumped out of the ground has already had an impact on the desirability and demand for real estate in Western Nevada County! The FEIR also makes the outrageous statement that "water quality impacts to domestic wells are speculative impacts that do not require analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act".(pg.151) If local Realtors were required to include an accurate disclosure of IMM's FEIR there's no doubt that housing values throughout Western Nevada County would plummet!

A certified Final Environmental Impact Report leaves us with the specter of potential future development of the Idaho Maryland Mine. Rise Gold's FEIR must not be certified! Rise Gold's Use Permit must not be approved! The examples I've quoted above just begin to scratch the surface of the incorrect, inconsistent, self-contradictory, and misrepresented information contained

throughout Rise Gold's EIR's and Permit application documents!

Write your Supervisor! Attend the Planning Commission hearings this Wednesday, May 10th (and 11th if necessary), at the Rood Center, Nevada City. Carpool. Ride the bus. Go to minewatchnc.org for more information.

Charles Brock, Realtor Emeritus, Past President Nevada County Board of Realtors

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---jim-bair-opportunity-to-head-off-a-major-threat-to-our/article_77050ff0-e54a-11ed-9cd1-f3a2416f1480.html

Ideas & Opinions – Jim Bair: Opportunity to head off a major threat to our County

Jim Bair
Apr 28, 2023

What is the worst thing that could happen to us in Western Nevada County? I bet we all have answers to that question. But there's a more likely threat than wildfires or additional atmospheric rivers. As a 22-year resident of Nevada County, having been a Planning Commissioner (Grass Valley), volunteered for several non-profits, and run two businesses, one threat has been completely consuming over the past two years: the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine (IMM). There are hundreds of excellent publications in The Union and online at Minewatch.com explaining why it's a very bad idea.

Proposed by Rise Gold Corp. of Nevada State and Canada (RISE), the project has generated over 10,000 pages including a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). As a former scientist, I dove into the "science" in the report. The most dangerous impact I found is asbestos air pollution, one of a whopping 86 NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS. Based on dozens of reports, I have concluded that asbestos air pollution cannot be "mitigated." The FEIR's claims that asbestos can be made safe are dependent upon government agencies that do not agree it's possible to measure airborne asbestos, let alone mitigate it. Literally everyone agrees that airborne asbestos can cause cancer and death. So how do we stop 55,845 pounds of airborne

toxins including asbestos from being released into our air every year for 80 years?

We must support our deciders, the County Supervisors and Planning Commissioners in rejecting the threat. Knowing our Supervisors for many years, I feel that they are committed to doing the best for us. They depend on County planners to provide them and our Commissioners with analysis and RECOMMENDATIONS for approval.In addition, several hundred of us have delivered the results of our investigations in meetings and written comments. So have numerous organizations such as NID, the City of Grass Valley, the Northern Sierra Air Quality Resources District, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and legal firms.

BUT Rise Gold Corp. has sophisticated consultants and lawyers. It's a battle of the Titans, if you include all of us. But as the two sides face off, we volunteers are challenged, not only by the money that RISE has received from high-risk investors and the stock market, but by how the approval process works. We volunteer our time and rely on donations to get legal advice, while the County process is to serve applicants for project approval giving them ongoing access to the Planning Dept. We submit thousands of "comments" which are delivered to the County and, although most are copied in the FEIR, many are relegated to "master responses" in the FEIR (starting p. 74).

A project of this magnitude must also fit in with a huge number of other action items managed by the County government. I know that reviewing the thousands pages of the FEIR and related documents is onerous because I have.In addition, the County must deal with the project's consultants and lawyers whose business is to promote developments. These "expert" consultants are highly skilled at making projects pass the CA Environmental

Quality Act (CEQA) and dismissing 100s of public analyses of the negative environmental impacts (see FEIR Chapter 2 – Responses to Comments Page 2-1.)

I know that Planning Commissioners are looking for our comments while diligently reviewing both RISE and public input which we can still provide:

ATTEND THE PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING, MAY 10, AT OUR ROOD CENTER, 9 TO 5. I expect that RISE's arguments will be presented by the Planning Department and RISE consultants with numerous slides and "science". We, including agency representatives, get THREE MINUTES each to speak and NO slides. I've submitted over 40 technical pages, but we can all rise to the time limit challenge. We also can deliver our written comments of any length at the hearing. (Note: I have received clear advice from Commissioners to make our comments specific to the FEIR.)

But believe it or not, JUST BEING THERE COUNTS ALMOST LIKE A VOTE! Sorry about those who work all day, but with hundreds of businesses taking a stand against the Mine, you could be able to get some time off. Attend and help stop this greed grab from destroying our environment and our health.

Jim Bair, Grass Valley

[730 words to here]

Stop the Mine Task Force Leader; former Planning Commissioner and Scientist.

See https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/47876/0---Idaho-Maryland-Mine-Project-Planning-Commission-Staff-Report

Mine documents including our letters are at:

https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/46397/IMM-FEIR_Volume-I---Volume-VI-Chapters-1---4 OR
https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/3195/Idaho-Maryland-Mine---Rise-Grass-Valley

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John Vaughan: Alternatives not considered

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 25, 2022

John Vaughan | Other Voices

I have many concerns with the draft environmental impact report on the proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. One that stands out is the lack of inclusion and review of the already approved (Ordinance 1853, February 1994) Nevada County business and industrial center alternative, which with existing zoning could include a 54,000-square-foot business park, 242,000 square feet for service business/light manufacturing and 238,000 square feet for Industrial uses (DEIR pages 6-11/12).

The draft report's Chapter 6 "No Project" section discussing "Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Further Analysis" (pages 6-8) is incorrect and incomplete. Analysis of the currently permitted alternative notes examples of negative impacts that are extremely unlikely to occur in the real world.

In the summary section for the business and industrial center alternative (pg6-13), the draft report concludes a negative impact and rejects this option assuming noise, traffic, aesthetics and air quality would be the same or worse for this alternative vs. reopening the gold mine. Unlike the Rise Gold project, in virtually all cases for the types of businesses that would actually locate there (using existing zoning) the traffic and noise would be daytime, mostly weekdays, not 24/7, comprised largely of passenger cars and small trucks. Diesel truck traffic would be substantially less than the 236 trips a day for the Rise Gold project (page 4.12-34).

The impact report identifies distribution facilities, auto dismantling yards and planing mills as examples of business that would "cause substantial noise, traffic, aesthetic and air quality impact."

While these business types are permitted under existing zoning, the likelihood of such ventures at this location is extremely low. They require easy access to major freeways like Interstate 80 and therefore are not realistic for this site.

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In the case of large 24/7 distribution facilities, anything further than 10 to 15 minutes from a major freeway is not feasible and 238,000 square feet is far too small. Even if you attracted a distribution facility tenant, 238,000 square feet would not support enough loading docks to create the same diesel truck traffic as the Rise Gold mine.

Additionally, for distribution facilities and other permitted businesses, at the scale available at this site, the semi-truck traffic would be limited to weekday or daytime use as small to mid-size facilities are unlikely to operate 24/7.

The draft report also notes that "milling and planing facilities would potentially create noise similar or greater to the proposed project." Frankly, that's hard to believe as there was a saw mill/planing mill at that site for decades and there is already a planing mill on East Bennett Road.

Regarding air quality and traffic: The impact on air quality would be reduced with business and industrial center tenants reflecting what would happen in the real world vs. the unrealistic scenarios in the draft impact report. The report suggests that car and truck traffic to and from a business and industrial center would generate the same pollution as projected traffic to and from the proposed mine, which includes 236 semi-truck trips/day.

Each diesel semi-truck emits as much pollution as 150 cars (cleanairtrust.org/trucks.dirtytruth.html). Producing the same emissions as 236 diesel trips a day day requires 35,400 trips a day from cars and light trucks, an unlikely scenario for businesses that might actually occupy the business and industrial center.

Regarding aesthetics: Given the site is already zoned for the buildings and businesses noted, aesthetic issues could be easily mitigated and included in a proposal for development of all or part of the business and industrial center.

Virtually all of the businesses listed in "Examples of Permitted Uses" (pages 6-12/13) already exist or have existed in Nevada County without hundreds of local residents protesting about potential traffic, noise, water usage or pollution. It seems like a reasonable model to follow to do more of what we already know how to do without changing the nature of our community for the next 80 years.

I believe many of the people who oppose this mine would support a "No Project" alternative with the business and industrial center as the best outcome.

Assigning a "not feasible" label to the business and industrial center alternative using unrealistic assumptions makes it appear the impact report authors have not done their homework.

I'm not saying that the business and industrial center should be built now (or ever). That's not my decision. But to reject this alternative without a detailed review using real world scenarios and real world outcomes makes no sense.

Rise Gold's advertising postcard claims the "science is clear." That's debatable. What is clear is this is the wrong project for Nevada County.

John Vaughn has been a resident of Nevada County since 1967. His water is served by a well approximately 100 yards from the southwest edge of the Rise Gold mineral rights area.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-mark-hotsenpiller-the-planning-commission-voted-with-the-people-of-nevada-county/article_08c16b32-f9d2-11ed-84ce-8b93e18216a7.html

Ideas & Opinions — Mark Hotsenpiller: The Planning Commission voted with the people of Nevada County

Mark Hotsenpiller
May 24, 2023

Wow. Lawrence Lepard has absolutely no touch with reality. There isn't one fact or comment in his Other Voices on Saturday (05/13) that is couched in truth. (His comment about cars in 1930 has no bearing on today.) Maybe he is a ghost writer for a former US president? Real, scientific polls consistently showed little support for the mine. The EIR was and is seriously flawed. How can they ignore an earthquake fault running through the property? The planning commission voted with the people of Nevada County. I presume that Mr Lepard is not a local resident. Perhaps it's time for him, Mr. Mossman, and the rest of the Rise Gold sour grapes to return to Canada to deal with the mess they left there. We want none of that in this thriving community, which will continue to thrive in no small part due to the fact that there is no active mine with its massive water use, tremendous filth, and noise.

Mark Hotsenpiller, Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-martha-turner-kudos-to-the-planning-commission-kudos-to-the-people/article_68584c68-f6b3-11ed-a903-2320f25432d8.html

Ideas & Opinions — Martha Turner: Kudos to the Planning Commission! Kudos to the people!

Martha Turner
May 20, 2023

Kudos to the Planning Commission! Kudos to the People!

The past two and a half years of working to prevent the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine by Rise Gold Grass Valley has been eye opening and inspiring for me on several levels. The unanimous vote by our Planning Commission to recommend to our Board of Supervisors to REJECT the mine permit and to NOT certify the FEIR was beyond my wildest hopes. The efforts of hundreds of individuals, numerous organizations and agencies, and the tireless leadership of CEA/MineWatch has inspired my confidence in the power of a grass roots movement and a peaceful democratic process. The earth itself seemed to voice her sentiment in the astonishing timing of the earthquake, just minutes before the final vote was made.

I give heartfelt thanks to every one of the Planning Commissioners for having the wisdom and courage to do the right thing. I am proud to be among our citizenry who support a future of environmentally sound constructs for economic growth in our community. Let's continue to support and encourage the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to listen to the people, to listen to their Planning Commissioners and to DO THE RIGHT THING!

Hoping for another unanimous vote in August!

Martha Turner, Grass Valley, District 3 resident

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Michael Shea: Draft environmental impact report displays inadequacies

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 2d ago

Michael Shea | Other Voices

The Union's March 24 article about the Planning Commission meeting on the Idaho-Maryland Mine misstates what I said.

I did not say, "There's no mechanical activity, which means the noise could be coming from diesel haul trucks." What I said was that, currently, there is just forest behind my house with no mechanical or other human noise-producing activity of any kind, and that the 51 decibels the noise study said could be heard at my house had be from Brunswick Road, because that's the only place it could be coming from. (By the way, no one came to my house — day or night — to measure the noise.)

I did not say "data shows five heavy duty machines running 500 feet from (my) yard moving a half-ton of rock every minute 24 hours a day would create less noise than ambient sounds from the roads during the day."

I pointed out that according to the noise study the draft environmental impact report is based on, the engineered fill operation would take place 500 feet behind my house. The equipment to process the fill includes diesel haul trucks that would be dumping 20 tons of rock out of steel bed trailers, bulldozers, excavators, and other equipment. The study estimated the noise at my house from all this heavy equipment would only be 47 decibels, which would be quieter than road noise coming from further away.

I also pointed out that the mine operation would hoist half a ton of rock a minute 85 feet above the surface and drop it into a steel chute, then transport it 335 feet across a conveyor and then grind it down 24 hours a day. According to the noise study the draft report was based on, all this activity would produce less noise than we currently hear at night without the mine.

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I ended my remarks by saying the noise study's claim that noise from the mining and engineered fill operations would be quieter than it is now is ridiculous and shows the inadequacy of the draft environmental impact report.

Speaking of ridiculous, how about the biological study Rise paid for? I made a short video challenging the part where the biologist concluded "The field surveys did not record any observations of deer. The Centennial industrial site and Brunswick area do not contain any known major deer migration corridors, known deer holding areas, nor critical deer fawning areas."

A deputy from the Sheriff's Department came to my house and advised me that a Rise attorney had called the Sheriff's Office about the video. Check out the video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c4b9hrLl4s to see what the real native wildlife situation is on the Brunswick site and why Rise didn't like it.

Michael Shea lives in Cedar Ridge.

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Paul S. Schwartz: Negative impacts of the mine are too many to list

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

Paul S. Schwartz | Other Voices

Reading the Draft Environmental Impact Report is an exercise in blocking out and ignoring how terrible the Idaho-Maryland Mine project is.

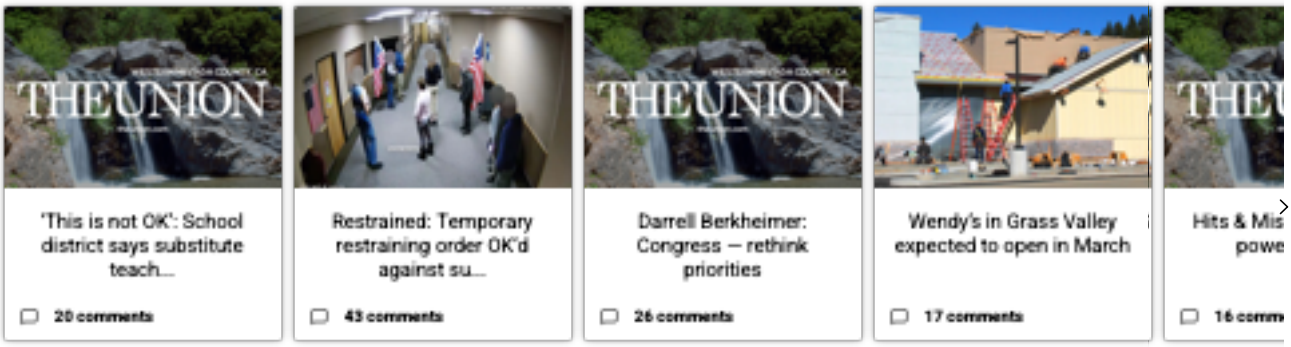
The negative impacts this project will have on our community are lengthy, requiring 23 bullets in the report (Chapter 2, 2.5 Areas of Known Controversy, Executive Summary).

The consultant goes on to offer mitigations for most of the problems the project causes.

All of the mitigations assume Rise Gold is a willing and responsible participant. All of the mitigations assume Nevada County can provide the oversight, inspectors, expertise, legal support, and diligence to camp at the Idaho-Maryland Mine seven days a week, 16 hours a day and enforce the mitigations an approval from Nevada County Board of Supervisors would commit to.

If we were talking one, two, or three areas to mitigate maybe we could be successful. Canada, British Columbia, governing oversight was not successful, and they are on the hook for at least $1.4 million in cleanup costs left behind by a bankrupt mining company lead by Ben Mossman.

Trending Articles



To approve the project the Nevada County Board of Supervisors would have to ignore current guidelines for building height, rezone the property to allow mineral extraction, and allow underground drilling and blasting in addition to approving a number of other permit issues requiring special handling.

Special allowances will be needed for grading and development within the 100-foot setback from riparian areas of perennial watercourses and development within areas of steep slopes that are in excess of 30% with high erosion potential.

If this project were located in an isolated desert or remote valley, there might be a reasonable discussion how to work with the property owner. That's not the case.

The mine is located in a pristine residential area with some light industrial businesses operating behind closed doors. Although the property carries the scars from a history of heavy industrial activity, you only need to drive by and look at it to know there is a better future for it if we choose wisely.

The cumulative impact of the 23 "Areas Of Known Controversy" (Chapter 2, 2.5, Executive Summary) scream out this is an impossible project to execute with any reasonable measure of success in the real setting at Brunswick and Bennett streets.

The proposal has issues with air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, noise, lights, dust, vibration, truck traffic, explosions, extreme power requirements, millions of gallons of mine water pumped daily into the South Fork of Wolf Creek, and radical changes to the local topography and scenic vistas to mention about 50% of the "Areas of Known Controversy."

I suggest we table this proposal and consider a different use for the mine property. I presented a different vision in a previous opinion

piece. Others have suggested a green waste facility. Let's add a biopower generation plant to turn our green waste and compostable waste into energy to this idea. Another idea I have heard is a drive-in movie theater and outdoor performance venue.

What are your ideas? Surely there are many good ideas for this amazing piece of property that are consistent with our county's general plan, favorable to Grass Valley's sphere of influence, and doesn't require zoning amendments, variances and special permits.

Let's consider projects that build on our current economy of tourism, green industry, seniors and recreation.

Paul S. Schwartz lives in Grass Valley.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-idaho-maryland-mine-project--final-comments-on-the-eir-and-proposal-to/article_bc6526aa-b63e-11ee-ba55-730fd1c501a3.html

Ideas & Opinions — Idaho Maryland Mine Project- Final comments on the EIR and proposal to reopen the mine

Paul Schwartz | Other Voices
Jan 19, 2024

The Rise Gold proposal to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine raises many issues. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) will consider approval or rejection of the IMM Project EIR on February 15, 2024. Study of the document by professionals, informed residents, public sector engineers, scientists, and managers, and the Nevada County Planning Commission have said the EIR is incomplete, unfocused, in many cases based on poor science, and ignores and misrepresents major issues. The only conclusion is for the BOS to reject the EIR, support the findings of the Planning Commission, and trust the voices of over a thousand of our neighbors.

Our economy, environment, and cultures in Nevada County are fragile. We are blessed to have both a balanced and diverse economy. The depth of our local culture is also both diverse and a wonder to be proud of. We evolved and survived the invasive and destructive gold mining era. Many communities did not. We embraced the logging industry until it became evident it was not our future. Through the ups and downs of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2020s we grew a balanced economy that has most metrics needed to be sustainable into the future. We have taken a moderate and diligent approach to managing the toxic waste left behind by the gold mining industry. Personally, I am angry at

those who took millions worth of gold from underneath our cities and fled with it, leaving behind a toxic plume, contaminated streams and rivers, and open mine-shafts. The damage will take generations to mitigate. This occurred, not just in Nevada County, but up and down the entire State. Aside from mitigating the environmental disaster of our gold mining history, we are faced with the global impacts of climate change, electric grids that are marginally reliable, water resources that are both essential and uncertain, and the challenges of moving from a car centric transportation model to one that is sustainable and affordable. The Rise Gold mining proposal would impact all of these fragile evolving elements.

Visit any mining town in the western United States and you will see communities in decline. The wealth from mining does not stay local, but the impacts do. The energy and water required to support large scale mining taxes local infrastructure leaving little room for local or regional clean industry to expand. The challenge to County and State regulators to police the environmental, safety, and infrastructure pressures that are inherit in large scale mining are immense. If the BOS were to allow this project to move forward, do you direct NID to prepare plans and projects to provide water to over 300 homes dependent on their wells, or do we wait and see what happens? Does the Nevada County Board of Supervisors direct PG&E to upgrade the power distribution grid serving western Nevada County, or do we wait to see the reliability impact from doubling electricity demand the IMM will require. What are our responsibilities in reducing our carbon footprint to meet local and State climate goals? How do we assess the health consequences to our residents of adding increased particulate to pre-existing high levels in the air we breathe? Like the frog in the pot, on the stove, when the heat is turned up, the planning decisions we make today will slowly reveal

consequences for decades to come.

Paul Schwartz

Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---ray-bryars-do-not-approve-the-feir/article_43c2d118-ee05-11ed-afcb-1fa2b59fd5b8.html

Ideas & Opinions – Ray Bryars: Do not approve the FEIR

Ray Bryars
May 9, 2023

The recent “Other Voices” submission from Paul Schwartz (Ideas & Opinions 03/31/23) that discussed “Incompatible Uses” for the defunct Idaho Maryland Mine property, triggered my ongoing concerns about safety related to the delivery, storage and use of Ammonium Nitrate Explosives.

As Paul identified, there are few if any mines with as many neighborhoods so close to an operating mine as the proposed mine. He used the example of the City of Auburn that when reviewing the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan, determined that “Mining is Incompatible with adjacent Land Uses” This is the exact situation that we have in Nevada County; Mining is in our history and we should appreciate the fact that it spurred development in this beautiful foothill area, but it should never again be part of our environment. There is absolutely no reason why we should expose anyone in the community to all the hazards and pollutants related to opening and operating a mine

In a February 2022 Letter to The Union, I questioned why we could possibly allow the use of explosives in this community. I listed 6 (there are many more) instances where Ammonium Nitrate explosions intentionally or accidentally caused death and injuries to hundreds of people. It is so dangerous that it needs extremely high levels of security at all times.

In the Draft Environmental Impact Report it states that compliance with applicable federal, state and local regulations would “minimize” the potential for the mine project to result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use to disposal of hazardous materials” Why should the community be exposed to ANY significant hazard? It makes absolutely no sense. We must insist that mining is an “Incompatible Use” in our community.

I applaud the fact that the County Staff has made recommendation “A” to the deny the rezoning for the Brunswick site, to deny the height variance for the tall structures, and to “take no action” regarding approval of the Use Permit. Taking “no action” effectively kills the project.

The recommendation to the Board of Supervisors was to take NO ACTION on the following project components and entitlements:

Approving a Development Agreement, approving a Use Permit and Reclamation Plan, approving the Management Plans, approving the Boundary Line Adjustment, approving the Parcel Map Amendment.

However the recommendation to approve the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is not acceptable. Numerous experts have provided feedback on how seriously flawed the FEIR is. The explosives issue is just one of many legal challenges that will take place should this be approved. Let’s put this painful chapter of our history behind us and encourage the property owners to develop the property in a way that complies with all the zoning requirements and makes a positive impact on the economy and our environment.

Join me and the many others who oppose the proposed mine on May 10th and

possibly May 11th at the Rood Center. Prepare a 3 minute comment to let the Planning Commission know how you feel. I'll be there with a "No Mine" sign and possibly an "Incompatible Use" sign.

Ray Bryars, Nevada City

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Ray Bryars: Questions about explosives at mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 22h ago

Ray Bryars | Other Voices

Like many concerned residents in our community, I have been struggling to gather information from the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project Draft Environmental Impact Report.

After recent news items about disastrous explosions related to ammonium nitrate used for explosives to mine for gold and use in fertilizers, I decided to see what the report says about explosives.

I have reviewed section 4.7 – Hazards and Hazardous Materials section of the report and was shocked at how they could possibly conclude that there are "No significant issues." This is explosives materials they are addressing — how could there not be issues?

But first a reminder of some (condensed) historic cases of explosions:

Toulouse, France, 2001, an explosion at an ammonium nitrate depot killed 31, injured 2,500.

West Texas, 2013, ammonium nitrate stored in fertilizer plant detonated in a massive explosion that killed 14, injured about 200.

Chinese port of Tianjin, 2015, explosions at warehouse storing ammonium nitrate and other chemicals killed over 116 people.

Port of Beirut in Lebanon, 2020 a catastrophic warehouse fire caused ammonium nitrate to explode, killing over 200, injuring over 6,000 more. It was so large that it was initially registered as an earthquake

2022 headline: "Truck carrying explosives for mining collides with motorcycle, setting off massive deadly explosion in Ghana." Resulted in 13 deaths, over 50 people injured and a small town partially destroyed.

As I write this, an ammonium nitrate plant in North Carolina is burning out of control for a third day, 6,000 people evacuated and it is projected to be one of the worst explosions in U.S. history. Does Nevada County need to take a similar risk? I urge our Nevada Country supervisors to say no.

Ammonium nitrate can be mixed with other substances to make bombs. It was used in Irish Republican Army bombings in London in the 1990s; the 1995 explosion that blew up a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people; and the 2002 blasts in Bali nightclubs in which more than 200 died. Many of the homemade bombs that were used against U.S. troops in Afghanistan contained ammonium nitrate.

From what I've seen, there is not one standard, but there are a lot of detailed requirements that if followed could make the storage of explosives safer.

Unfortunately Ben Mossman, who is the head guy at Rise Gold, does not have a good record when it comes to following safe practices. His Banks Island Gold Company was charged with causing a toxic waste spill in British Columbia, Canada, back in 2015. Commercial production started in January and he was ordered to stop operations in July. The company filed for bankruptcy in January 2016. It sure didn't take him long to make a mess and screw things up.

Below are some comments that I'll be sending to the county regarding the draft report:

Explosive storage:

On page 4.7-27 it specifies that no mining is proposed closer than 500 feet from the surface, thus explosives in transit would be at least this far from the surface. Again, a ridiculous statement. At this point it is not known what impediments will be found in the mine shaft. It has been decades since anyone has been into the mine, so there could be huge blockages that will require explosives to blast through.

Question: Can they guarantee that no explosives will ever be used above 500 feet below ground level?

Report conclusion:

On page 4.7-30 it states that “compliance with applicable federal, state and local regulations would minimize the potential for the proposed project to result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials.”

Question: Why would the county knowingly subject its residents to any risk? We all know that humans make mistakes and accidents happen. If this project is approved, it is almost a certainty that a disaster will happen. Does Nevada County need to take this risk? I urge you to say no.

On page 4.7-31 it states: “It is conservatively concluded that the proposed project could result in a significant impact related to the routine transport, storage and use of explosives.”

Question: Why should the community of Grass Valley subject its residents to these risks? It makes no sense, for any period of time, let alone the proposed 80 years? Please send your comments regarding the draft environmental impact report to Matt.kelley@co.nevada.ca.us.

Ray Bryars lives in Nevada City.

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William Clark: Rise up and wise up

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | October 12, 2020

Recently I viewed the Rise Gold website to learn about the project to re-open the Idaho-Maryland gold mine. I read a news item dated March 17 which stated, "All technical reports required for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) are now either complete or in final draft. The technical reports conclude that the Idaho-Maryland Project has no significant environmental impacts after mitigation has been incorporated." Based on the results of the technical studies, the company believes the DEIR will arrive at a similar conclusion with no significant environmental impacts after mitigation is incorporated.

It appears Rise Gold has produced all the information required for the DEIR and has offered mitigations to address the environmental impacts. The company has produced 36 technical reports that treat key environmental issues. So is it a done deal? Well, not so fast.

Since the Rise Gold project has potential for significant environmental issues, Nevada County is preparing the DEIR to address the following issues, including but not limited to: air quality; biological resources; greenhouse gas emissions; cultural resources; geology, soils, and mineral resources; hazards and hazardous materials; hydrology and water quality; noise; traffic and transportation; and wildfire.

Nevada County has contracted with an outside consulting firm to produce the DEIR which will be based on a review of the technical studies submitted by Rise Gold and their subject matter experts. A 45 day comment and review period will follow the completion of the DEIR.

I have several concerns about this project:

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Is Rise Gold Corporation fully capitalized? Do they have sufficient funds to take on a project of this magnitude? Will they be operating on a shoestring or are they financially able to proceed?

Rise Gold seeks an 80-year operating permit. This is way beyond my lifespan and beyond that of our children. I would prefer a 10-year period of operation with a complete review and renewal option every 10 years.

Rise Gold must establish a remedial bond prior to any construction or operation. This will protect Nevada County in case Rise Gold pulls up stakes and leaves.

The Rise Gold project is expected to process 1,000 tons of gold-bearing ore per day and with a projected yield of 0.46 ounce per ton. This comes to 460 ounces of gold per day. This amounts to an income of $782,000 per day ($1,700 per ounce). Not one penny goes to Nevada County.

What is Rise Gold's experience in operating a sub-surface mining and extraction operation within the boundaries of a city such as

Grass Valley? To what extent was this activity in harmony with the urban environment?

The Rise Gold operation has potential to impact our air quality due to ground ozone, smoke, dust, exhaust plumes and diesel engine particulates (PM10 and PM2.5). Nevada County has one monitoring station in Grass Valley located at the Litton building. It would be proactive to have an additional monitoring station for ozone and particulates at a location determined by the Northern Sierra Air Quality Monitoring District. The additional monitoring station would be able to measure airborne contaminants from the Rise Gold operation. Rise Gold should be required to fund the installation and operation of the monitoring station before any site construction begins.

Rise Gold plans to dewater the 73 miles of mine tunnels. Proposed mitigation is to supply NID water to residential properties whose wells become unusable. The mitigation should also require Rise Gold to pay the cost of NID supplied water in perpetuity.

Time to wise up. The purpose of an EIR is to examine environmental issues surrounding any project that can potentially damage the surrounding environment. Once environmental issues are identified then mitigation begins which seeks to minimize the damage. This means problems won't go away and residents must decide to accept the mitigation or not. Residents of Nevada County must be vigilant and take a hard look at proposed mitigations proposed by Rise Gold.

William Clark lives in Grass Valley.

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I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
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Alana Cash: Why reopening mine isn't a good idea

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | April 29, 2022

Alana Cash | Other Voices

There's a little community in Arizona called Wendon (population 556) just north of Interstate 10 so small it doesn't even have a stop sign, let alone a stop signal. Wendon is in La Paz County, and the total population of the county is about 16,000. This is arid desert land where rainfall averages 7 inches a year. It is also snowbird country, where people from icy places like Minnesota and Wisconsin and Nebraska spend the winter along the Interstate 10.

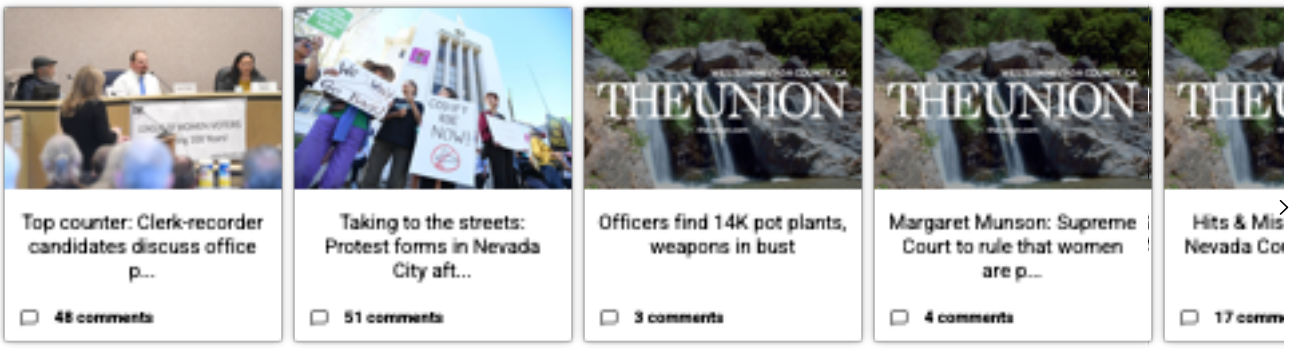
So what is so special about Wendon? Well, a Saudi Arabian company bought up big swathes of acreage around Wendon and sought permission from the county, possibly the state of Arizona as well, to grow alfalfa. The Saudis promised jobs and economic stimulation for this little town, the ones near it, and the whole county.

And the Saudis did bring jobs. They brought Chinese immigrants to live in tents for the Arizona hot days and cold nights. These immigrants were paid, who knows how much, to sow and reap the alfalfa. But they didn't spend their wages in Arizona because they had no vehicles, no way to get to Wendon or Salome, or any other town. The Saudis brought them food and they cooked on camp stoves.

Jobs they promised. Jobs La Paz County got. They also got a drain on the water table because the Saudis were given permission to drill wells and to irrigate — not using trenches as is common on desert farms, but using sprinklers and the dry, hot desert air would evaporate some of it. And when the alfalfa was harvested, it was shipped over to Saudi Arabia to feed their horses.

You'll find many articles on the internet on how Saudi Arabia squandered its groundwater and that some 1,000-year-old wells were drained dry after two generations. And between spray irrigation and piping water to the golf courses in Phoenix, the water table in La Paz County is down two feet. Doesn't sound so bad until you realize that in Arizona it takes 1,000 years to replenish one foot of groundwater.

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What does this have to do with Nevada County, you might ask? Well, there's a proposal for a gold mine being investigated. Lots of jobs promised, but probably not to locals because there aren't a lot of professional miners in Nevada County. Where will they come from? Maybe West Virginia, but most likely from out of the country. Where will their money be spent? Some local, but most will probably be sent home.

Are we not in a drought? Any gold mine will use thousands of gallons of water a day. Environmentally, gold mining often is a disaster.

And, what is the point of gold mining? Some people get rich. What happens to the gold? Well, 50% of mined gold is used to make jewelry. The second biggest use is to make gold bullion for investors as a hedge against inflation and for governments. Governments who are having trouble getting loans need to prove gold reserves (gold has been used in dentistry to make crowns as well as the manufacture of electronics, but that's too expensive now and other metals are substituted).

So basically, a gold mine could ruin Nevada County environmentally, but those who profited from it would purchase some nice bracelets and watches.

Alana Cash lives in Penn Valley.

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B.J. Griffin: No gold mining at Idaho-Maryland Mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | September 4, 2020

As a resident whose property is bisected by South Wolf Creek, I write to express my vehement objection to approval of this gold mining operation.

Impacts to the creek would be severe due to the extensive dewatering. Riparian habitat, ground water, and wells along this beautiful and currently healthy creek would be immeasurably harmed in the near term and for generations to come. We are still monitoring Nevada County from the effects of mining operations of the 20th century.

The effect of the coronavirus on the real estate market has been the subject of numerous articles. Residents are fleeing the Bay Area and relocating to the foothills. Our county is attracting them because of its beauty, quality of life, recreational opportunities, art and culture, and, most importantly, our clean environment. These qualities would be denigrated by the existence of a mine operation that brings noise, air pollution, water pollution, heavy equipment traffic and use. Greenhouse gas emissions are estimated at 9,000 metric tons per year.

We are wisely spending millions on improving our broadband service, which will attract relocated technology workers and clean businesses to Nevada County. This is where Nevada County's future lies. To allow this mine to be developed and operated is totally antithetical to the success of this endeavor to improve our technological capabilities.

I urge the county to take action to disallow the Idaho-Maryland mine. It threatens to severely and permanently damage South Wolf Creek and, by extension, the entire county. For the sake of those of us who live along this precious resource, South Wolf Creek, and all the residents of our wonderful paradise known as Nevada County, I implore you to stop this atrocity.

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B.J. Griffin

Grass Valley

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Barbara Rivenes: Publisher's column reads like a PR piece

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 28, 2020

I am writing to express my disappointment in The Union publisher's recent opinion piece.

It expressed disturbing and dismissive writing from a "community" newspaper publisher which reads like a public relations piece straight from Rise Gold.

My entreaty to you is "not so fast" in discounting the residents and citizens trying to call attention to a serious threat to our two small towns from an industrial polluter.

Barbara Rivenes

Grass Valley

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Don Pelton JULY 28, 2020

Good letter, Barbara!

It's hard to fathom what motivates a publisher to attack the majority of people in his own community.

I say "majority" because -- given the huge extent of IMM's underground workings (a fact still not widely appreciated) most of us could be considered "neighbors."

REPLY 0 0

9+

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Bob Clark: Where is our city government on Rise Gold's bid? Silence won't cut it

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | September 6, 2021

Bob Clark | Other Voices

Slowly, but surely local residents are becoming aware of the perils of the possible reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine.

If you were to visit http://Www.MineWatchNC.org and simply start reading articles in their library, I can't imagine anyone not opposing it. I know it has resulted in hundreds of letters, emails to the county, submissions to The Union, etc., stating reasons for opposition.

So far the county has pretty much just said to wait for the draft environmental impact report. Theses two issues should not be tied together.

So what is and should be the city of Grass Valley's role in this? Is it simply to sit and wait for the county to decide our city's fate? Do they really think that we will simply absolve them of any responsibility and blame it all on the county if it happens?

I thought the City Council was elected to work in our best interest; to protect us from things that can harm us, economically, environmentally, socially, etc. The mine certainly fits all of those!

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28 comments



Our View: Updating the history books
23 comments


Susan Bewle Build Bac
21 comme

The last time around with Emgold, it was the city's job to approve or not approve the reopening. This time, the county has the responsibility to approve or not approve the application, and perhaps the city doesn't want to tangle with them. That doesn't make it right.

Have they forgotten that the Centennial site is barely outside the city limit and is part of the city's sphere of influence and been part of the city's plan.

Have they forgotten we've been through this mine thing before? How did that work out last time? When Emgold tried the same thing a few years ago, we lucked out. They ran out of money.

Would the city have approved it if they hadn't? Before they ran back to Canada, did they clean up the toxic mess at the Centennial site? No. They owned it and the clean up job was theirs, permit or no permit. Did the city even attempt to make them do it? Surely the city could have at least taken ownership of the property or placed a lien. No, they just waved goodbye.

We all know that if Rise Gold doesn't get their permit to open the mine, they are gone. Does anyone believe they would clean up Centennial before they went? Here's a novel thought: Clean up the toxic mess, prove you will fulfill your responsibilities and then we

might discuss a permit. Not until.

What could be any possible benefit to the city or county of approving any application before the cleanup is finished? All it would do is throw away any leverage to get it done.

Maybe the city is still as gullible as they were before when it comes to jobs. The last time they seemed to be enamored by the promise of hundreds of jobs from a ceramics plant converting mine waste into tile.

Never mind that it had never been done in the history of mining. Do they buy into Rise's claims of jobs and economic benefits for the area? Hey, maybe they think they could get one of those $94,000-a-year apprentice jobs. Maybe they think our mom and pop shops will start selling drill bits or repairing rock crushers.

The county has declined so far to do an economic impact report. Does that mean the city shouldn't? How about the city formally polling our local real estate agents and asking for their professional assessment of the mine reopening on local property values? One hundred percent of those who have been polled have told property owners that we would lose values amounting to tens of millions of dollars.

The county supervisors say they have to remain unbiased. The city sure doesn't have to. How could they not have an extreme bias against the single biggest issue our city has had or might ever have that could damage our community and its residents more?

It's time for us to force them to go on record!,Now, before it's too late. Maybe a few hundred emails and calls would get their attention even if their obvious responsibility doesn't.

My wife tells me I expect too much from people to think things through logically. I ask, how else can you think and still face your neighbors, voters, and yourself? I don't know all the rules, regulations, etc., and they really don't matter. All I know is what you were elected to do. At least that's why we cast our ballots.

Council members, we're listening and waiting for you to fulfill your elected responsibility to us.

Bob Clark has lived in Grass Valley for more than 20 years.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---bob-mora-board-of-supervisors-should-vote-no-on-mine/article_3d3b9a5a-bea8-11ed-860f-bf3041394c6b.html

Ideas & Opinions - Bob Mora: Board of Supervisors should vote NO on mine

Bob Mora
Mar 10, 2023

I cannot understand why the Board of Supervisors or anyone else would even consider granting a use permit to Ben Mossman and RGV. Ben Mossman is going through court proceedings now for a failed mining venture in British Columbia that he left with the Canadian tax payers having to pick up the clean-up bill. Just the light pollution alone from a plant running 24 hours a day 7 days a week less than a mile from central Grass Valley would be enormous. We can have a town that is a Mecca for art, music and tourism, or an industrial town — but not both.

There are several good articles in the Grass Valley Union newspaper, in the "Other Voices" section articulating why the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine is a very bad idea: "RGV, Time for a financial reckoning", Randy Newsome, Friday Feb.24, 2023; "The mine's Economic Impact Report," Ray Bryars, Jan. 20, 2023; and "Save our Town", Patricia Sharp, Feb. 22, 2023. I would encourage the board and everyone considering the use permit for Rise Gold to read these articles and vote NO on reopening the mine.

Thank you for reading!

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https://www.theunion.com/news/ideas-opinions-cea-foundation-opposition-refutes-unfair-treatment-claims-of-rise-gold/article_09929280-1b78-11ee-9ab7-731e66428952.html

Ideas & Opinions — CEA Foundation: Opposition refutes unfair treatment claims of Rise Gold

CEA Foundation | Other Voices
Jul 6, 2023

Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) reports that it sent a letter to the Nevada County Supervisors containing a legal analysis of a complaint letter submitted to Nevada County by Rise Grass Valley. Rise Grass Valley is a subsidiary of the Canadian-headquartered junior mining company Rise Gold, and is applying to reopen the long-shuttered Idaho-Maryland Mine.

At a public hearing on May 12, the Nevada County Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend a NO vote on the Mine project and Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

In response, Rise Gold submitted a 164-page complaint letter to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors on June 1 containing numerous assertions of unfair treatment, bias, and violations of due process in the processing of the Mine application. A story about the complaint was published in The Union, and in various other media including online investment sites.

“Rise Gold is apparently attempting to create a false narrative of conspiracy and bias in order to sway public opinion and discredit the unanimous vote by

the Planning Commission recommending that the project be denied," stated Ralph Silberstein, President, CEA Foundation.

Nevada County staff and the Board of Supervisors generally respond to such complaints under the guidance of County Counsel and in this case are likely informed as to the validity of the Rise objections, but CEA Foundation submitted their legal analysis of the complaint to the County in order to shed more light on the subject. A full copy of the analysis is available at cea-nc.org/cea-foundation-response-to-rise-grass-valley-letter-6-27-23/. The original Rise complaint document can be downloaded from cea-nc.org/rise-grass-valley-inc-letter-to-board-of-supervisors-june-1-2023/.

According to CEA Foundation's legal analysis, the Rise complaint letter makes allegations of violations in due process and alludes to the requirements for the Planning Commission to act in a quasi-adjudicatory (court-like) capacity. However, the Commission was acting in a quasi-legislative capacity when it made its recommendations on the Project, not quasi-adjudicatory. This is because they were making a recommendation on a rezoning issue. It is well established law that rezoning decisions are categorically considered legislative acts.

The analysis goes on to say that the hearing process was entirely consistent with the legal principles that actually govern these types of legislative decisions. Courts have long recognized that local decision makers have "not only a right but an obligation to discuss issues of vital concern" with their constituents and to "state [their] views on matters of public importance." (City of Fairfield v. Superior Court 1975). In addition, under the County's Land Use and Development Code, the Commission was tasked with determining whether the rezone would be "consistent with and further[]" the County's

General Plan policies and “will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare of the County.” The Planning Commission satisfied these obligations, heard from the public, scrutinized the documents provided to them, shared their personal views and experiences, and made a unanimous decision.

CEA’s analysis points out that even if one assumed that the court-like standards did apply in some way, the Commission satisfied those requirements. The Planning Commission has “an obligation to discuss issues of vital concern with [their] constituents.” (Fairfield) And association with members of community groups opposed to a project, or even membership in such groups, does not establish bias. Nor does having a point of view about a question of law or policy a disqualification by itself.

Moreover, the Planning Commission was merely issuing a recommendation. Nothing in Rise Gold’s complaint letter threatens the validity of the Board’s own upcoming decision on the Project. Additional grievances were stated by Rise, including violations of the Brown Act, but no evidence was provided.

In summary, CEA Foundation’s analysis found that the allegations made by Rise Gold appear to be unfounded, and that what was evident in the hearing was active engagement on the part of the community and an informed and attentive Planning Commissioner fulfilling its responsibilities under the law. The Board of Supervisors will make the final decision on the project during the public hearings, currently scheduled for Oct 2 and Oct 3.

Silberstein was appreciative of the legal analysis, adding “the processing of the Rise application, the active engagement of the public, and the conduct of the Planning Commission were a good example of how democracy is supposed to

work. We encourage the Board of Supervisors to continue with the normal processing of this project, to not be intimidated with threats or accusations of foul play, and to deny the project."

For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: www.MineWatchNC.org

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About CEA Foundation: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. www.cea-nc.org/ CEA Foundation is the sponsor of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine. www.MineWatchNC.org.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-charles-brock-kudos-to-the-union-for-their-outstanding-and-balanced-coverage-of/article_7b080096-0587-11ee-a234-cf625e1624bc.html

Ideas & Opinions — Charles Brock: Kudos to The Union for their outstanding and balanced coverage of Rise Gold's efforts to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine!

Charles Brock | Letter to the Editor
Jun 8, 2023

I was particularly pleased to see the lengthy "Forward Looking Statement" appending the paper's 6/6/23 front page article. Clearly the story was written and submitted by Rise Gold, and this ending statement (required by the Canadian Stock Market) makes clear the fact that every publication put forth by Rise should indeed be taken with a very large grain of salt! It states "there can be no assurance that 'such expectations' will prove correct".

This article implied that Planning Commissioners had made up their minds prior to the hearing, and in so doing trampled on Rise's "constitutional rights".

Nothing could be further from the truth! Each and every commissioner began their public comments by disclosing that they had met with constituents including THE APPLICANT prior to the hearing. Undoubtedly they had also spent countless hours educating themselves studying Draft and Final EIRs. Any expectation on Rise's part that the a commissioner would be derelict in their duty by forming opinions throughout that process, is patently absurd. For two days commissioners listened carefully to public testimony pro and

con, from a wide spectrum of the public - well informed experts to deeply concerned citizens.

Their unanimous rejection of the FEIR and Use Permit were based on thorough preparation and represent a job well done! There is absolutely no reason whatsoever that the citizenry (including Rise Gold) should expect our Supervisors do do any less in their efforts to prepare themselves to make a well informed decision on this vitally important issue. I commend the Union newspaper for your continued and thorough coverage of this story!

Charles Brock, Nevada City

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-charles-brock-kudos-to-the-union-for-their-outstanding-and-balanced-coverage-of/article_7b080096-0587-11ee-a234-cf625e1624bc.html

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Charles Brock, Nevada City

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Cheryl Morris: Proposed mine causing collective anxiety

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 21h ago

Cheryl Morris

Much has been written about the negative public health, environmental and quality-of-life impacts from the possible reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. An additional concern is its negative impacts on mental health for individuals and the community.

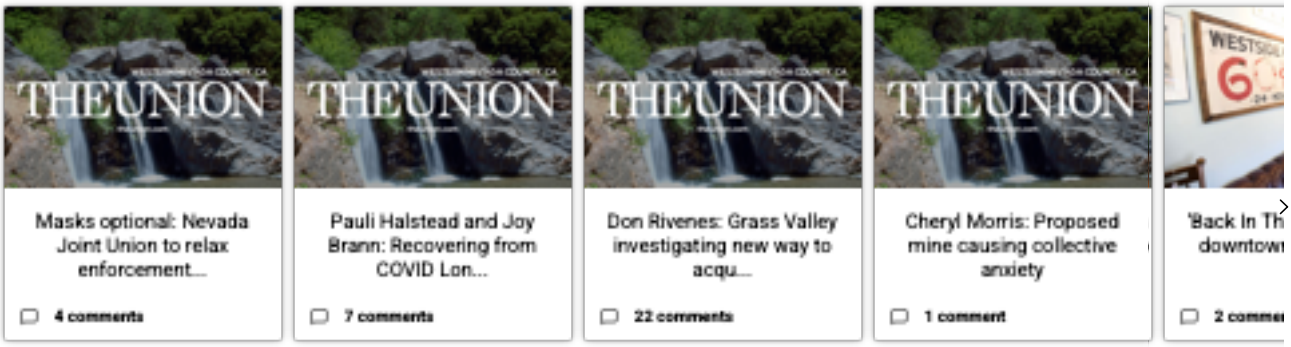
Nevada County has a higher rate of depression and suicide than the California average, combined with a lower percentage of mental health providers per capita, according to the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment (www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/27995).

The pandemic has led to an even greater demand for mental health services, and there has been an alarming increase in overdose deaths.

It is clear from the number of people mobilized in opposition to the mine that the possible reopening has already led to considerable anxiety and depression in the community. Worry about property values, loss of well water, noise, traffic, environmental impacts and increased health problems is widespread.

Additionally, the possible reopening of the mine is yet another divisive issue in the community.

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At a time when our cohesiveness is challenged on many fronts, this is an issue for which there is a clear solution, and that is to deny the Rise Gold proposal.

Cheryl Morris

Grass Valley

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Cindi Anderson: Let's think about impacts if opposed to Rise Gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 27, 2021

Cindi Anderson | Other Voices

Let's look at the big picture. This community was founded with gold mining, the timber industry and ranching. These are heritage industries that built this area.

Granted, the gold mining of the 2020s and beyond is not that of the 1900s and before. In today's world things have become so very scrutinized that a person can't even change a water heater without their local county government becoming involved in some communities.

Gage McKenny wrote a book about our local area called "No Depression Here," about how Nevada County didn't even know what the rest of the country was going through. Granted, that was the 1930s and we are in 2021 now.

When I read how opposed people are about Rise Gold reopening the mine, I shudder! Not because of opening the mine, but the attitude that goes along with the opposition.

I think we need to really consider what era we are in — 2021. More restrictions than 1930s. The Draft Environmental Impact Report on the water needs to be looked at and considered no matter who does this report. Remember, more water is sent to the oceans to support the aquatic life, fish, than is supplied to households.

Trending Articles



Now the reality of it all. When I was young, our school visited the Loma Rica Ranch, and Henry Freitas showed us around and taught us what a working horse ranch was all about. Amazing to think of that history alone.

Fast forward to 2021 and as I drive past Loma Rica Ranch, I think about not just the fact that part of our heritage is going away, but also the fact that someday there will be hundreds of homes in this area.

When our family moved here, they had just developed what is called Starbright Acres, which was a ranch, also. I believe the difference is we came here to be involved in the community as it was, without wanting to change things and bring with us what we were getting away from. The area off of Gold Flat Road, Ridge Road, and the area behind the new Safeway is all new houses and condos.

These can all work if we work with new industries. Rise Gold is one of those industries. They will bring jobs and economic values to our area maybe with less impact than the developments that are going on. We need the people to work these jobs with the development of our resources. Not only within the mine, but also the management of the water, new products developed from the waste of the overburden.

They talk about the fact that "200 trucks a day" will be working. I worked at Brunswick Sawmill and there were close to that many trucks delivering to that mill daily. There were not 200 trucks a day all at once, but 50 trucks making four loads a day to that mill or the equivalent, not all at one time. That was in the 1980s with less infrastructure than today.

They talk about the impact and concerns that Rise Gold will have. What kind of an affect do you think these homes with the number of people living in those homes will have on not only our water, but also the ecosystem that once was in the meadow on the west side of Brunswick Road at Idaho Maryland Road?

Does anybody think about the sewage, water, riparian areas, air quality, traffic, road conditions, the serpentine rock disturbance and the concerns of asbestos within the rock?

Economic impact on our area alone needs to be considered. How many of these people will buy locally and not down the hill or over the internet? I don't want the superstores here. We moved here, accepted this area for what it was. Never once did we want to bring what we left behind. We moved away from it for a reason.

I, as someone who grew up in this area, need to voice my opinion on having a company come to our area to create jobs and a strong economic base that supports our local area and maybe return our heritage industry, gold mining.

Don't get me started on the timber industry. So, before you point your fingers at companies like Rise Gold, consider your friends and family and don't ignore what made this area or you may be pointing your finger right back at yourself for the one who really impacted our area, not Rise Gold. Who is calling the kettle black?

Cindi Anderson lives in Grass Valley.

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Ideas & Opinions — David Briceno: Negative aspects of proposed mine considered

David Briceno | Other Voices
Apr 15, 2023

Who says the proposed mine is controversial?

If the Rise Gold mine project gets the official go-ahead from the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, detrimental consequences could result when the Idaho-Maryland Mine starts operating constantly full-swing as the company proposes.

Among the negative environmental impacts to the Grass Valley community is possible exposure to hazardous-to-health heavy metals, such as arsenic, mercury, among other toxins that can pose serious medical risks. Water supplies will be affected.

Not merely in the great volumes of water used to clear the tunnels, but area wells can go dry as a result of underground mining with no replacement — even involving ground water contamination becoming unfit for human use and consumption. Water is the area's precious commodity. But as company compensation for water pollution from their tailings, a special pipe will be installed along a thoroughfare so that only immediate residents can enjoy harmless potable water.

Additionally, operations can even adversely affect local wildlife over the mine's roughly 175-acre surface area. Historically, over 100 years of mining hurt the habitat harming native plant and animal populations altering ecology. So understandably, local environmentalists oppose the mine's reopening. What's so controversial?

The major project is located too near population even though the bulk of the mining work would extend throughout unseen labyrinths up to approximately 2,585 acres underground. The company will own all mineral rights: no gold for townsfolk. At least one toxic waste dumping "pond" eyesore will be created on site, too, that the company alleges their biohazards will be routinely "cleaned." Unsafe mine water will be flushed out downstream flowing nearby. Flows can affect those downriver.

And there's a question of noise pollution and minute toxic dust particles as increased traffic from trucks haul out chunks of worthless rock waste to dump. Surrounding area residents could suffer even more related ill-effects. Not controversial.

Mining is WYSIWYG, but sometimes what you don't see is what you get, also. They're called problems. Complications will arise with Rise. As in life, Murphy's Law also applies to mining.

Rise pushes safety, technology and environmentalism in a pristine media presentation, but the area still runs serious consequences with such an endeavor. Even with the use of the best state-of-the-art high tech equipment that the private company boasts owning, things will go wrong. Rise's CEO track record leaves a lot to be desired. Mining, after all, is not an exact science. Sinkholes occurred here.

Additionally, if Rise fails, who pays cleanup for all contamination, among other things? And mining's ranked among one of the most dangerous professions: Freak accidents occur with risks of injury, disabilities and fatalities.

There are also economic factors to be considered.

Rise touts the project will generate "hundreds of jobs" while listing only 312 in its DEIR. Why? Because if many rich veins are discovered the workforce will grow even more. There's no guarantee locals will be mostly hired, which raises the question of where's everybody going to live. Commute? The region routinely experiences housing shortages. Immediate neighborhood property values could plummet.

Also, there's no guarantee that a criminal element won't move into the area. Gold can attract very unsavory types. Early regional miners weren't exactly all well-behaved gentry from the highest echelons of society. Many crimes were committed. That doesn't sound controversial.

California's history shows that with the discovery of gold the resulting Gold Rush brought in thousands upon thousands seeking their fortune so much so that the population increase soon qualified our Golden State for statehood in 1850. If Grass Valley eventually grows into a gold mining boomtown again, too great of a population influx might not be adequately sustainable. If it gets to that point, housing prices, cost of living, and property taxes most likely will increase; so, quality of life will suffer through Aspenization. The region could not only see its negative effects, but also other adverse unintended consequences of widespread economic growth. Local infrastructure might not be able to handle such huge population increases. So, Grass Valley's once

small town charm could possibly dissipate, replaced on the map by being known as a premier industrial mining center solely and less a favorable tourist destination.

Putting gold back into “Gold Country” seems favorably nostalgic, but has unforeseen far-reaching repercussions. Is the town prepared to expand? More importantly, does Grass Valley want to? Controversy.

There’s nothing controversial about any of this? What’s that saying? All that glitters isn’t gold. All that glitters is Rise’s gold. Nevertheless, the county wants its tax revenue. Done deal.

David Briceno, Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-not-as-simple-as-they-hoped/article_541a1686-f457-11ed-b9ae-8f343bec51a5.html

Ideas & Opinions — Not as simple as they hoped

David Heinen
May 17, 2023

Mr. Lepard's whine (other voices 5-13) contains all the misinformation and distortions that doomed Rise's land grab from the start. He states that 59% of the County supported opening this boondoggle. Really? That survey created and sponsored by Rise was so lame that few were fooled by its carefully biased questions. Also, over the last two years or so, there has been a blizzard of submissions to 'Other Voices' opposing this charade, many from experts in their fields (hydrology, atmospheric and watershed pollution). There were a couple supporting the mine – one of those from a guy who apparently lives in Roseville, but works here. When he goes home, his sleep will not be bothered by the endless parade of thunder trucks proposed by Rise to run for eighty years (!).

The EIR was based, clearly, on RISE data, which bore little resemblance to the world in which we live, and know about – our Western Nevada County aquifer is fragmented rock, not a lake, and unpredictable. The data presented was

fifteen years old, collected before recent serious droughts. And so on. Several PhD's and Medical professionals, in submissions to the Union, put the lie to RISE's absurd contention that air pollution could be mitigated. Hell, we already know that is impossible, since because of our position up wind of the Bay Area we have some of the worst air in the nation, especially for those with lung problems. Eighty years of mine and road dust can only make it worse.

And there are the promised mitigations. NID hook ups for dewatered wells, watershed restoration, etc., are RISE promises. Not guaranteed by, what one analyst suggested, should be a bond of several billions.

Now we come to RISE's track record – top guy Mossman is still being prosecuted in British Columbia for the exact same offenses local Mine opponents worry about — leaving an environmental mess behind and then finding yet another community to despoil.

One can imagine the meetings – in Canada? — where this madness was first proposed – 'There is a huge mine with un-extracted gold in some Podunk Northern California village, and they have a history of mining! We can take this mine, and this town!"

Our community consists of many well-traveled people who have lived all over America, and other countries. Some have grown up here, left, and returned. Some never left. Many have made a considered choice to live here because of the bucolic nature of the land, the Victorian architecture, the small- town atmosphere. There is a lot of diversity, sophistication, and common sense afoot in the village. RISE corporation, mounting an amazingly tone-deaf PR approach to this project, underestimated how easily the community would see through the dishonesty of its marketing.

And, in response to Lepard's rather snarky question: "How are residents going to pay the bills?" I took that to mean that without RISE, our community is doomed to penury. However, it seems that some real businesses have seen opportunities – countless millions have been committed by outside investors into the National and Holbrook hotels, financing beautiful restorations, some other restaurants are reopening, after closures during the Pandemic, some small retail shops have emerged, and low-cost housing projects are moving forward. It seems economic progress is possible without returning to nineteenth century extraction industries, with all the incumbent ravaging of the environment.

What we really need is comprehensive Broadband, not a dusty, noisy, polluting mine.

David Heinen, North San Juan

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Don Rivenes: Reopening mine solves no priorities

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 2, 2021

Don Rivenes | Other Voices

Recently a poll conducted on behalf of Rise Gold asked the respondents what were their top three priorities for the government? The highest three answers were: keeping our community safe from wildfire 40.6%, fixing homelessness 33.0%, and helping to ensure housing remains affordable for locals 28.8%.

Creating and running a gold mine is the opposite of keeping the community safe from wildfire. Given our current drought and forest conditions, it is smart for the county to concentrate on safety protections and ways to reduce its electric grid usage to limit the need for large transmission and distribution lines. Operating the mine will nearly wipe out the energy savings projected from actions under the recently passed Nevada County Energy Action Plan. It also would use the electricity equivalent of 5,500 homes.

A re-opened gold mine would appear to have no effect on fixing homelessness, except to divert attention from the issue.

The Nevada County Housing Element had a 2014-2019 allocation of 300 very or low income housing from the Regional Housing Authority of which 147 were actually provided. The new plan calls for 842 very-low or low income housing. Given past performance it appears the County should concentrate its efforts on meeting the regional goals. The only effect the opening of the mine would have on affordable housing might be to lower the real estate values of the housing near the mine or again to divert attention from the County housing problems.

It is interesting that the survey in question one had only two choices for the environment — water/drought and environmental issues. And for question two, clean air and clean water and the environment were the only environmental choices. The words — climate change — were nowhere mentioned, even though it is covered extensively in the Nevada County Energy Action Plan.

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Question three of the survey was: Would you be willing to consider supporting a new mining operation in Nevada County if it provided [name the three services respondent identifies in question two] to your community?

I suppose if I had taken the survey, and my top three personal choices were clean air, clean water, and fire safety, then I would have answered yes to question three. Unfortunately opening the mine will have an opposite effect on those issues. How running a gold mine would improve the air and water quality and stop a fire is beyond my understanding. Projected respiratory impacts of the mine could exacerbate heart and lung disease in Nevada County whose residents already must adapt to the particulates associated with a long wildfire season.

Nevada County should be talking to the Rise Gold Company on how to make better use of its land to benefit themselves and the county. Cleaning up the Centennial site is an admirable undertaking. After cleanup, a business with some housing would work just fine there. The Brunswick site could include a green waste facility, such as recently run by the Fire Safe Council. It could feed a small biomass plant. This would keep our waste locally in the county instead of shipping it out. Each of these investments would be considered sustainable providing good jobs for the county.

Calls have begun for a global ban of the unnecessary mining of certain metals such as gold, since by 2020 there was enough gold in vaults and national reserves to meet global demand in perpetuity without extracting another ounce from the ground. More than 90% of gold was mined exclusively for luxury and financial markets, whereas less than 10% went toward industry and technology applications.

Gold price is currently $1,700 per ounce. Since only 10% of gold is of use to industry, the real value price is $170 per ounce. Thus the production and environmental costs of Rise Gold mining far exceeds the value produced for society.

As for job creation, many of these jobs will be filled by people out of the county and some temporary. Only 9% of fulltime workers in the mining industry are women according to a survey by the NSW Minerals Council. Can't the county find a better way to meet its job needs?

In conclusion, stop wasting time on a project that has little real value and does not meet Nevada County needs. Nevada County should concentrate on protecting its current residents and environment, by meeting its citizen's priorities as brought out by the survey, fulfilling its Energy Action Plan goals, and not gamble that this mine would provide the jobs it claims will appear.

Don Rivenes is a member of Nevada County Climate Action Now NCCAN. He lives in Grass Valley.

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Donald Rivenes: I have a different understanding

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | September 15, 2021

Donald Rivenes

A recent article in The Union by a freelancer contained statements that were wrong. First, engineered fill from the Rise Gold mine is not part of a restoration project. Fill is proposed to be put at the Centennial site after completion of an independent voluntary toxic cleanup project at Centennial. The article said: "The Centennial site, where engineered fill will be used as part of a restoration project ..."

Second, haul trucks would be going down Brunswick Road toward Highway 20/49 for 70 years, not 15 years. The February 2020 Rise Gold Air Quality report indicated that in regard to long-term operations, engineered fill would be trucked to the Centennial industrial site for five years, to a pad at the Brunswick industrial site for five years, and off-site to support local construction projects for 70 years.

The Union article said: "The Centennial site ... is expected to take five years to complete, during which time the trucks will be divided between the two routes. For the next 15 years, the number of trucks on the road will not decrease, but will move entirely to the Highway 20/49 route."

Please set the facts straight on this important issue.

Donald Rivenes

Grass Valley

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Earth Justice Ministries: A spiritual and moral perspective on reopening the mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1h ago

Guarionex Delgado, Brian Fry, Dianna Suarez, Sharon Delgado, Jonah Platt, Becky Gillespie, Michelle Montgomery, Daryl Grigsby and Josie Crawford

Our organization, Earth Justice Ministries, is a local nonprofit that brings a spiritual and moral perspective to bear on issues of our day. We echo the concerns of everyone who is speaking out against the harmful effects that would come from reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Our organization signed on to the coalition statement critiquing the draft environmental impact report submitted for the mine. We fully support that statement.

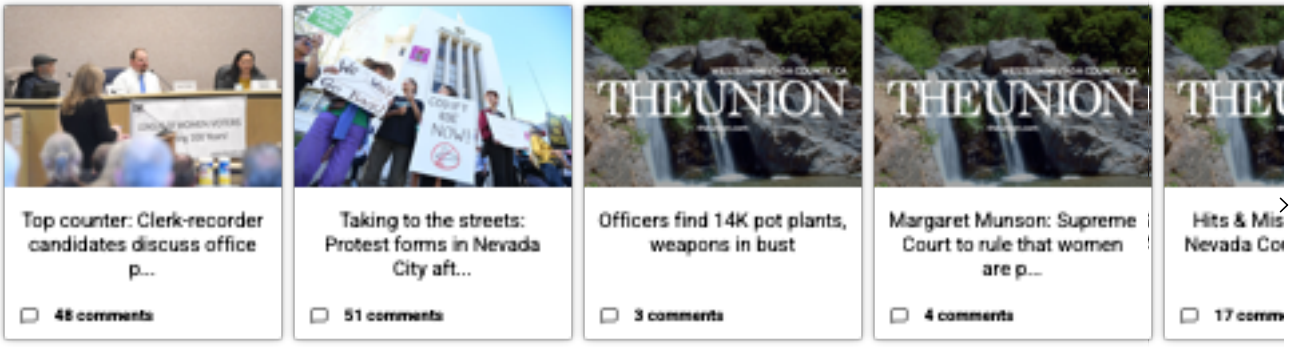
Our statement focused on what is listed in the report as "aesthetics," the mine's cumulative impacts, and the need to repair harm done.

Aesthetics are downplayed as a concern in the report, but beauty is a value, as in "the beauty way" of the Navajo people. A beauty that touches the hearts and minds of people. It is that natural beauty of Nevada County that brought so many of us here, and that brings so many visitors — the sights, the sounds, the smells of this place — the taste and feel of clean water, the fish in the streams, the wildlife.

People come here to experience the beauty, to experience a deeper reality that puts things in perspective. To many, the natural beauty here is like church, reconnecting us to what is most meaningful in life. The final environmental impact report must adequately list in detail the mine's specific aesthetic impacts.

The aesthetic value of this region may be classified as quality of life, especially in the vicinity of the mine. There would be more truck traffic, higher noise levels, and possibly vibration from blasting. The natural landscape would be buried beneath mine waste and paved industrial areas. The final report should honestly report that such aesthetic damage cannot be quantified or mitigated.

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As an organization concerned about environmental harm, we support the Nevada County Energy Action Plan, which calls for gradually reducing annual residential electric use by 12% in accordance with California state goals. Rise Gold's projected electrical use would cancel out this goal and add significant carbon to the atmosphere.

The California Air Resources Board 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan states: "Achieving no net additional increase in greenhouse gas emissions, resulting in no contribution to greenhous gas impacts, is an appropriate overall objective for new development."

This should be our goal. The final environmental impact report must establish a net zero threshold for new greenhouse gas emissions from the project and declare that it has significant and unavoidable impacts.

Mitigations cannot overcome the mine's cumulative impacts. Those impacts would work together to decrease our quality of life by risking increased air and water pollution, dewatering wells, harming Wolf Creek, higher greenhouse gas emissions, injuring plants and animals, raising noise levels, damaging roads, and yes, wounding the beauty of this place.

Even if Rise Gold's proposed mitigations were implemented, monitored, and enforced for 80 years, such mitigation would only lesson harmful impacts, not eliminate them. The mine's inevitably harmful impacts to our community are not acceptable at any level.

Cumulative harm should be listed in the final environmental impact report as significant and unavoidable.

There is still much damage to repair from the Gold Rush, including genocide committed against the Nisenan people and other nearby tribes. The earth and people were so damaged that the toxic legacy continues today.

Healing from the past includes respecting the earth that gives us life, making reparations for harm done, restoring the land and air, and changing our ways so that we are in a right and good relationship with this place, its people and creatures.

We cannot heal from the past if we continue adding to the harms by opening this mine.

Guarionex Delgado, Brian Fry, Dianna Suarez, Sharon Delgado, Jonah Platt, Becky Gillespie, Michelle Montgomery and Josie Crawford sit on the board of Earth Justice Ministries.

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'The allegations in Rise's letter are meritless': CEA attorneys provide response to letter to the Board

Submitted by Ellison Folk
Jul 7, 2023



Members of the Nevada County Planning Commission listen to comments from members of the public regarding the proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine by Rise Gold during a recent public hearing.

Elias Funez File Photo

HUTE, MIHALY & WEINBERGER LLP

Dear Board Members:

On behalf of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, we write to address the letter that Rise Grass Valley, Inc. (“Rise”) submitted to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors (“Board”) on June 1, 2023. The letter alleges that Rise was deprived of due process at the County Planning Commission’s hearing on the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project (“Project”).(1) During this hearing, the Planning Commission unanimously voted to recommend that the Board deny the Project and decline to certify its Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”).

The allegations in Rise’s letter are meritless. At the outset, Rise fundamentally misunderstands the legislative nature of the Planning Commission’s action. This misunderstanding renders virtually all of Rise’s many complaints irrelevant. Regardless, the Planning Commission’s consideration of the Project comported both with due process principles and with the Commission’s obligations to consider public input on a matter of great local importance. Rise might have preferred for the Planning Commission to ignore the community’s views or reach a different decision. But this does not make the Commission’s process or recommendations illegitimate. In any event, Rise’s allegations have no bearing on the Board’s own future decision on the Project.

(1) The letter includes a single cursory allegation that County officials also violated the Brown Act. Rise never explains what Brown Act violations it believes the County has committed and nothing described in the letter implicates the Act.

Rise’s entire letter is premised on an assumption that procedural due process requirements applied to the Planning Commission’s decision. That assumption is wrong. The due process principles that Rise cites apply only

when a local decision-making body is acting in a quasi-adjudicatory capacity. Save Civita because Sudberry Won't v. City of San Diego (2021) 72 Cal.App.5th 957, 983–84. They do not apply to quasi-legislative acts.(2) Id.; id. at 994 & n.45.

The Planning Commission was acting in a quasi-legislative capacity when it made its recommendations on the Project. The Project cannot be developed unless the County rezones the Project site. And the Planning Commission expressly recommended to deny the rezoning application.(3) The California Supreme Court made clear over forty years ago that such rezoning decisions are categorically legislative. See Arnel Dev. Co. v. City of Costa Mesa (1980) 28 Cal.3d 511, 524 (in bank) ("[T]he current California rule that rezoning is a legislative act is well settled by precedent and comports with both federal and state constitutional requirements."); see also id. at 514, 521–25. As a result, the Planning Commission's decision was not subject to due process principles.(4) See id. at 521; Save Civita, 72 Cal.App.5th at 994 & n.45. In overlooking these basic rules, Rise's letter wastes a dozen pages arguing that the Planning Commission violated requirements that did not apply in the first place.

(2) Consistent with this rule, each of the land use cases that Rise's letter references involved a quasi-adjudicatory decision. See Petrovich Dev. Co., LLC v. City of Sacramento (2020) 48 Cal.App.5th 963, 972; Woody's Group, Inc. v. City of Newport Beach (2015) 233 Cal.App.4th 1012, 1021; Nasha LLC v. City of Los Angeles (2004) 125 Cal.App.4th 470, 482; Breakzone Billiards v. City of Torrance (2000) 81 Cal.App.4th 1205, 1223–24; Clark v. City of Hermosa Beach (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1152, 1170–71; Cohan v. City of Thousand Oaks (1994) 30 Cal.App.4th 547, 554–55, 559.

(3) Specifically, the Planning Commission unanimously voted "to approve Recommendation A [in the Planning Commission Staff Report], with the exception of not certifying the Environmental Impact Report." May 11 Special Meeting Rec. 7:37:20. "Recommendation A" includes the recommendation "that the Board of Supervisors deny the Rezone (RZN12-0002) to rezone the parcels located at the Brunswick Industrial Site from Light-Industrial with Site Performance Combining District (M1-SP) to Light Industrial with Mineral Extraction Combining District (M1-ME)." Staff Report 5. Recommendation A involved taking no action on the necessary Development Agreement (MIS22-0019), since the denial of the rezone would be sufficient to deny the Project outright. See id. But any express decision on the Development Agreement would also be a legislative action. See S.F. Tomorrow, 229 Cal.App.4th at 526, 528; Govt. Code § 65867.5(a), (b).

(4) The same is true of the Planning Commission's recommendation to decline to certify the EIR. Because the "underlying action that the [County] was analyzing in the []EIR" was quasi-legislative, the Planning Commission's decision regarding the EIR was itself quasi legislative, and thus not subject to procedural due process requirements. See Save Civita, 72 Cal.App.5th at 992–94.

The hearing process was entirely consistent with the legal principles that actually govern these types of legislative decisions. Courts have long recognized that local decisionmakers have "not only a right but an obligation to discuss issues of vital concern" with their constituents and to "state [their] views on matters of public importance." City of Fairfield v. Superior Court (1975) 14 Cal.3d 768, 780 (in bank). These obligations are especially acute when the decision involves the location and construction of a major project

that could have significant economic and environmental impacts on the region. See id.; see also Cohan, 30 Cal.App.4th at 559 ("[O]pposition of neighbors to a development project is a legitimate factor in legislative decisionmaking.").

Moreover, under the County's Land Use and Development Code, the Planning Commission was specifically tasked with determining whether the rezone would be "consistent with and further[]" the County's General Plan policies and "will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare of the County." Nevada Cty. Land Use & Dev. Code ("LUDC") § L-II 5.9(G)(1), (2); see also Staff Report 78, 85–86, 116–19. And, under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), the County was required to solicit, consider, and respond to input from the public and other agencies regarding the Project's environmental impacts. See CEQA Guidelines §§ 15086– 15088.

The Planning Commission satisfied these obligations. Its members heard and respected the public's views regarding a sprawling, complicated Project that would impact the community for decades. They carefully scrutinized the analyses provided by their own staff, Rise and its consultants, and other agencies. And they disclosed their personal views on these matters, which were informed both by the information presented during the hearing process and by their own relevant experiences. After considering that wide range of input, they reached a unanimous decision that the Project would not advance the County's policy interests. This was not a biased adjudication. It was a legislative process working as intended.

Additionally, even assuming that due process principles applied in some way to the Planning Commission's action, the Commission satisfied those

requirements. While Rise's letter sets forth a laundry list of purported transgressions, a few core legal principles show that the Commission was not biased against Rise:

· First, because none of the Planning Commissioners had a "financial interest in the outcome of the" vote, they are all "presumed to be impartial." Hauser v. Ventura Cty. Bd. of Supervisors (2018) 20 Cal.App.5th 572, 580. Rise's scattered allegations cannot overcome that starting presumption.

· Second, because the Planning Commissioners have "an obligation to discuss issues of vital concern with [their] constituents," Rise could not have been deprived of a fair hearing simply because the Commissioners were contacted by or met with members of the public. City of Fairfield, 14 Cal.3d at 780; see also Petrovich, 48 Cal.App.5th at 974; Hauser, 20 Cal.App.5th at 580. It is puzzling that Rise would suggest otherwise, given that Rise itself has met with County officials multiple times and apparently intends to do so in the future.

· Third, although Rise faults Planning Commissioners merely for associating with members of community groups opposed to the Project, a decisionmaker can be an active member of such a group without being impermissibly biased against a project. See Petrovich, 48 Cal.App.5th at 971, 974 (holding councilmember's active membership in neighborhood association opposed to project "did not establish bias" in and of itself).

· Fourth, even in a quasi-adjudicatory context, decisionmakers retain some ability to express their views on the merits of pending projects. See City of Fairfield, 14 Cal.3d at 780; Petrovich, 48 Cal.App.5th at 974; Cohan, 30 Cal.App.4th at 559 ("[A] councilperson has a right to state views or concerns on matters of community policy without having his voted impeached.");

Breakzone, 81 Cal.App.4th at 1234 n.23 ("[A] point of view about a question of law or policy is not a disqualification by itself, and . . . a predisposition about legislative facts that helps answer a question of law or policy is not by itself a disqualification."). The Planning Commissioners' remarks were consistent with these guidelines.

In short, the Planning Commission's action plainly was not adjudicatory. Yet Rise nonetheless received all the due process to which it would have been entitled if it were.

Finally, putting all else aside, nothing in Rise's letter threatens the validity of the Board's own upcoming decision on the Project. Consistent with the legislative nature of its actions, the Planning Commission merely issued recommendations to the Board. It did not—and could not—definitively deny the rezone, decline to certify the EIR, or address any of the many other approvals the Project requires. See LUDC § L-II 5.9(E); Govt. Code § 65855. Those final decisions rest within the independent judgment of the Board and will be made only after another public hearing process. See LUDC § L-II 5.9(F); Govt. Code §§ 65856, 65857; CEQA Guidelines § 15025(b). During that process, Rise is free to present any complaints that the Planning Commission got the facts wrong, considered improper evidence, or weighed the public policy considerations incorrectly—as Rise already has, and surely will continue to do. Once the Board has considered those allegations and all the relevant information, it can and should reach the same well-reasoned conclusions as the Planning Commission. But those decisions will be the Board's alone.

THE UNION

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Eric Zibbel: Another alternative to the mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | January 11, 2022

Eric Zibbel

This letter is in response to Paul S. Schwartz's Jan. 7 commentary, "Better uses for the Idaho-Maryland Mine property." Like Mr. Schwartz, I also have an idea for a better use for the Idaho-Maryland Mine property. I propose a facility that will expand the Nevada County Fire Safe Council's free green waste drop-off in the springtime to a year-round service.

More than just a free green waste drop-off location for county residents, the facility would be operated as a sustainable business enterprise. PG&E contractors, tree companies and landscapers would have to pay a fee to bring waste to the facility. Green waste would be processed on site to make wood chips, compost and other products to be sold to the public.

The facility would still provide a job engine for county residents with heavy equipment operators, truck drivers, mechanics and technicians being central to daily operations. With a robust business plan, the facility could expand operations and hire more staff to create the jobs of the future.

Over the summer I pitched my idea to a group of informed citizens. They pointed out that Rise Gold Corp. owns the property where the mine is located. How do you propose an alternate use for a property owned by a foreign corporation?

Could the county access state funds set aside for green house gas reduction programs, hardening properties against wildfire and other sources to purchase this property? A park would be nice, too.

Trending Articles



Eric Zibbel

Grass Valley

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Ideas & Opinions — Gail Johnson Vaughan: No one has Constitutional rights to zoning and building changes

Gail Johnson Vaughan | Letter to the Editor
Jun 9, 2023

RE Rise Gold's June 1 article claim that their constitutional rights have been violated.

When Rise Gold purchased the Idaho-Maryland property they were fully aware that the property was zoned light industrial and had height restrictions, both of which would require county approved variances to pursue their plan to reopen the mine.

Apparently what they did not know was that no one has a Constitutional Right to have Zoning and Building Codes be changed in their favor or that no one has a Constitutional Right to demand an EIR be certified because they believe it's perfect as is.

Zoning, Building Codes and the California Environmental Quality Act exist to ensure all parties follow the rules and all constituents have a voice in the process. Our Planning Commission and Planning Department staff have provided their recommendations to the Board of Supervisors who are far too qualified and professional to be intimidated by Rise Gold's posturing of outrage and intimidation even if it is on legal letterhead.

Gail Johnson Vaughan, Grass Valley

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George Boardman: The best thinking of a monkey mind

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | Dec 7, 2022

George Boardman

Being a thrifty fellow, I originally started Observations from the Center Stripe as a way to utilize random thoughts and observations that would never be developed into a column. Waste not, want not, as Ben Franklin supposedly said.

Somewhat to my surprise, the exercise turned out to be a well-read feature of my column. Some people tell me Observations is the first thing they read (anything to get them in the tent) while others say it's the only thing they read (thanks, I guess).

Observations are basically a product of my monkey mind, which can easily dart from one subject to a totally unrelated matter. Web sites that try to tailor the news to my tastes are wasting their time; I'm interested in just about anything but soccer or really complex science.

Observations can occur to me at any time, but usually pop-up in the morning as I go through my daily routine of reading two newspapers and perusing several news sites. Driving seems to be a productive time as well; the longer the drive, the more my mind wanders.

Most of these thoughts end up in a file I call "Future Stuff," a collection of thoughts, column ideas, and articles that might be useful in future columns. When I actually get around to writing Observations every two weeks or so, 98% of the thoughts I save get dumped.

What follows is a selection of some of my favorite Observations from last year. Like a reader who once told me Observations "make me laugh," I hope you get a chuckle or two from this year's selection.

Wee the people

THE COUNTY health department basically told you to stay out of the water at Lake Wildwood without actually saying it. Why the reluctance to get to the point?...A CAREFUL shopper informs me that Briar Patch stocks an item that is cheaper there than anyplace else in town. Really...IF THE Union's coverage of the opposition to the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine is an accurate reflection of the community's mood, any supervisor who green lights the project will be booted out of office...I HAVEN'T seen so many residents get this agitated about something since the days of NH2020...PEOPLE MAY not like the high price of gas, but it hasn't changed their driving habits. Check out the long lines of cars idling in the drive through lanes...WHY DO the high school district trustees remind me of the Keystone Cops?...WHO WILL Police Chief Alex Gammelgard supervise once the new deputy chief takes over both divisions of the department? The deputy chief?...I DON'T think the governor is losing any sleep over the prospect of facing Brian Dahle or Reinette Senum in the general election...WHATEVER HAPPENED to those guys who were going to recall the supervisors? As they say in Texas: Big hat, no cattle... AFTER PUNTING the decision to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine to the Board of Supervisors, the Grass Valley City Council has hired a consultant to give the supes its two-cents worth. Brilliant...THERE SEEM to be almost daily reports of fire agencies responding to burn piles getting out of control. Shouldn't we start fining these people?...

Snowmagedon

PG&E ADMITS it underestimated the severity of the snow storm that hit us last December, thereby delaying their response. These are the same guys who decide when to cut the power during fire season...THE COUNTY seemed to have been surprised as well. Where were the contract workers they normally deploy?...AS THE sheriff said in response to a complaint about our unreliable broadband: "We don't know what we don't know"...WHY DO some people have to call 1-833-DIAL211 to get 2-1-1 service? The whole point is to make it easy to remember and simple to use, like 9-1-1 and 4-1-1...THERE ARE more than a few people in the county who should embrace the old motto of the Boy Scouts: Be prepared... I HOPE we can get the snow storm damage cleaned up before the fire season starts...BASED ON the amount of wood still around from last December's Snowmagedon event, I'm glad I'm not in the firewood business...

We're Golden

IT IS estimated that California will need to increase its electric capacity by 30% to accommodate all of those electric cars in 2035. We strain to meet our basic needs now... CALIFORNIA'S BUDGET surplus ($97.5 billion) is larger than the budgets of every state except New York, Florida and Texas... IF RESEARCHERS are correct that California can look forward to a future of megafloods, why worry about water?...GOV. NEWSOM and the state Legislature refused to block an increase in the state gasoline tax from 51.1 cents a gallon to 53.9 cents on July 1... BRIAN DAHLE insists he's not one of those "crazy Republicans" who wants to be governor. Talk about alienating your base!...MOST PEOPLE ASSUME Gavin Newsom's next political target is Dianne Feinstein's Senate seat. With Joe Biden sinking in the polls, why wait?...WHAT A coincidence: Those state gas tax rebates are going to be mailed in October as people decide how they're going to vote...

4

Politics

IT'S HARD to believe that so many people bought into Donald Trump's voter fraud fantasy without any proof that would hold up in a court of law. The Republican Party is becoming the Jonestown of politics…THAT WAS sound advice Jerry Brown gave progressives who are upset with Joe Biden's personnel selections: "Get a good joint and just chill"… PRO-GUN types love to bring up the mental health issue whenever there's a mass shooting, then oppose background checks for people buying guns… IF THE economy is a major election issue for you, it doesn't really matter who you vote for. Republicans think tax cuts—especially for the rich—are the magic elixir that cures all economic ills, while Democrats think throwing money at the poor is the way to go…I HAVE a hunch we won't be hearing much about voter fraud if the Republicans take control of the House and/or the Senate…REPUBLICANS WANT you to forget about their extreme positions on abortion until after Election Day, but you can bet the winners will revisit the issue in January…DESPITE HIS low numbers, Biden leads Trump in a matchup, according to at least one poll… NATIVE AMERICANS know all about great replacement theory… WHAT WAS the typical Republican's reaction when a recording showed House Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy lied? Hunt down the traitor who leaked the recording…IF YOU put the heads of Republican Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene, Lauren Boebert, Matt Gaetz, Madison Cawthorn, Paul Gosar and Louie Gohmert together, you'd have an impressive rock garden…

Speaking of sports

I KNOW WE'RE in the age where everybody gets a trophy, but you shouldn't be able to make the playoffs with a losing record…WHY DO football players hit each other on their helmets when they make a good play? Don't they get enough of that just playing the game?… IT WAS said that 49ers great Hugh McElhenny, who died recently at 93, took a pay cut when he left the University of Washington to turn pro. Now that over-hyped college football players are being paid, that won't be unique…OAKLAND shouldn't be surprised by the dismal attendance at A's games. Fans won't support you if you don't try…

Navel gazing

CAMPING IS where you spend a small fortune to live like a homeless person…WOMEN SPEND more time wondering what men are thinking than men spend actually thinking…DO YOU need a split personality to live in the moment without becoming self absorbed?… THE OLDER you get, the fewer things worth waiting in line for…MOST PEOPLE have to get really old before they stop lying about their age and start bragging about it…HAVE YOU noticed that the Roman numerals for 40 are XL?… IS AN argument between two vegans still called a beef?…IF SOMEBODY being interviewed says, "That's a great question," it usually means he or she doesn't have a good answer…IF YOU think there's good in everybody, you haven't met everybody…DON'T ASSUME malice when stupidity can explain the actions of people… WHY DO so many people feel isolated in our increasingly connected world? Because they substitute devices for people…

George Boardman lives in Nevada City. His column is published biweekly on Tuesdays by The Union. Write him at notboredgeorgeman@gmail.com.





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Ideas & Opinions — George Olive: Add a voice to 'No' on the mine

George Olive | Other Voices
Apr 13, 2023

Are you paying attention to the Idaho-Maryland Mine controversy? Do you understand what a mess re-opening this mine will make? Not might make; will make. The proposed mitigations are pitiful. The Economic and Environmental Reports are misleading and full of holes. Tune in to a group of your fellow citizens dedicating a pile of volunteer hours digging into the thousands of pages of misleading environmental details, incomplete data, and empty “fixes” for what an operating mine would spin-off. Their concerns? The negative impacts on Wolf Creek. Piles of toxic mine tailings. Continuous heavy truck traffic on Brunswick Road. Substantial damage to air quality from asbestos. Damage to wooded acres with healthy identified floral and bird species. Threats to local wells. And noise, lots of noise.

What can you do to push our county’s decision-makers to say “NO!” to this backwards-looking project?

First, mark your calendar: On May 10 (and likely May 11, too) plan on committing hours to attend a critical County Planning Commission meeting. Just attend. All or part. If you have something to say – three minutes – this is the time and place. Should Grass Valley revert to being a mining community? The Commission will recommend one way or the other, to proceed with this project or not, to the Board of Supervisors. Your presence at the Rood Center at 9 a.m. — or earlier if you have a comment — would be your worthy statement on our local quality of life.

Second, as you drive around Brunswick Basin or on Whispering Pines (that road name would be meaningless if the mine opens ... maybe, Toxic Dust Pines?) or out Brunswick Road by the mine site or along E. Bennett Road, picture the mine in full operation. Be aware of the sweet little So. Fork of Wolf Creek that runs through the mine site and along E. Bennett and the State Park's meadow there. Picture toxic mine waste in the creek. Real estate for sale signs. Picture a truck full of tailings on your bumper. They'll be dumping — thousands of cubic yards of toxic waste rock for a decade — in the Centennial site right there off Whispering Pines where the fire was. Kiss that whole area good-bye. Some of that site looks ugly now, but it is reclaimable — unless Rise Gold ruins it.

Third, imagine you own property on E. Bennett, Brunswick Road, or Greenhorn ... or you have a business along the trucking route. This mine project is right in your face. This is heavy, polluting industry in the middle of a peaceful residential part of a small town. People have wells. Nights are quiet. Folks commute or drive to schools safely on these roads. Bike riders cruise these routes. Kiss all that good-bye, too. The operation of a gold mine in town is so incompatible to our lifestyle that it's a sad joke. A head-shaker. The

current light industrial zoning designation is correct, proof that a mine does not belong here. Rise Gold — or whatever mining outfit from far away they sell the mine to — will blast and excavate and pile mine tailings in a huge, toxic mound visible from Brunswick Road. Folks on Greenhorn will get to hear the cacophony. These safe roads will change for the worse, will deteriorate under Rise Gold's fleet of trucks. The surrounding neighborhoods will be next door to heavy industrial mining. The County's General Plan will have to change to allow Heavy Industrial in this neighborhood.

Please commit to involvement, first by imagining a noisy, messy, incompatible mine in operation in our quiet, small town; and second by joining your neighbors at the Planning Commission meeting on May 10 and 11. Each of us is represented by one of the Commissioners. We need these individuals to know what we think about our county's bringing industrial scale gold mining into our neighborhoods. Our Planning Commissioners are preparing to make motions about the mine project and cast their votes. Join in on opposing this incompatible, impactful mining project.

George Olive, Banner Mountain

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Glen Garrod: Reading a campaign tea leaf

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | April 22, 2022

Glen Garrod

Let me first say, in the most absolute way possible, I believe the absurd idea of giving Rise Gold's project the go-ahead would be the most massive affront to the citizenry of Nevada County in regard to traffic, noise pollution, air pollution, ground pollution and quality of life — all for a small handful of, most likely, low-paying jobs. Jack getting a few beans for his cow comes to mind. The whole concept of reopening the mine is so ludicrous it is almost laughable.

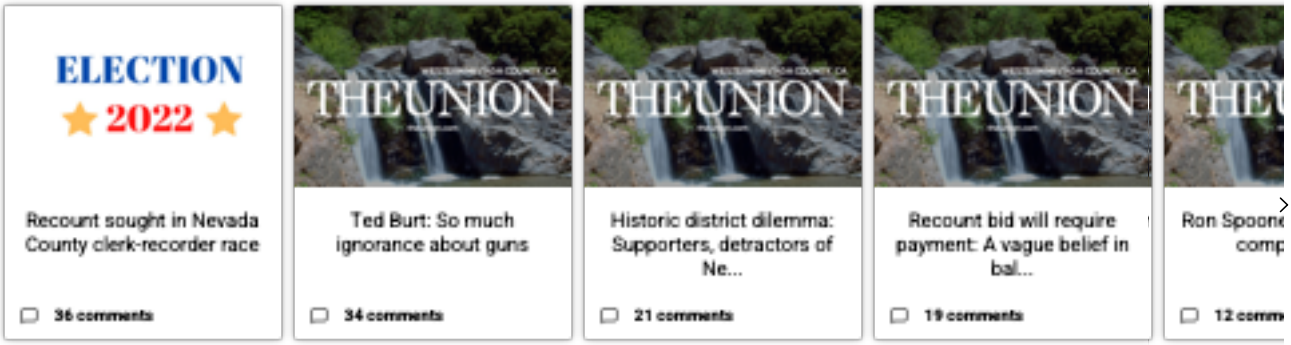
I trust that most thinking, caring residents feel different degrees of the same. I believe it is the most important decision to come before the Nevada County Board of Supervisors I can recall. If a final decision is not reached prior to the June 7 election, I hope all candidates for supervisor will go on record with their position on Rise Gold.

After reading The Union's article regarding Supervisor Dan Miller endorsing Patti Ingram Spencer for his seat — and I saw the names of other contributors to Ingram's campaign, particularly Doug LaMalfa — I was left to wonder.

Glen Garrod

Nevada City

Trending Articles



Editor's note: Supervisor Miller has given no indication of his position on the mine, nor could he in the event that he would vote on the matter if it came to the board this year. Likewise, neither has Spencer. There is no evidence to suggest either would be more likely to vote one way or the other at this point. The role is to weigh the merits and flaws of the proposal thoroughly and fairly, and then reach a decision.

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Hits & Misses: A MISS to the closure of Walker's store

Opinion FOLLOW OPINION | 23h ago

Each week we'll run through the sublime, the trivial and profound issues, decisions and goings on that strike us as Hits or Misses. you can join in, too, by emailing your Hits & Misses to editboard@theunion.com.

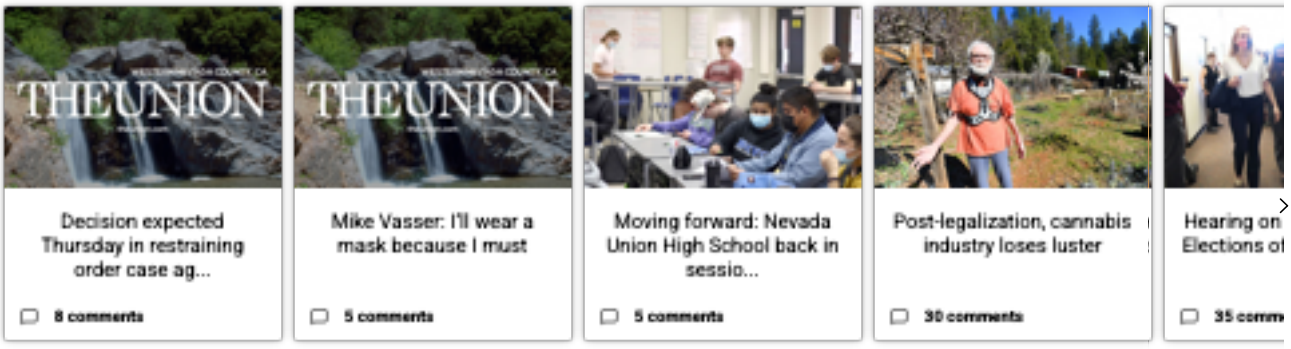
MISS (from reader Susan Rogers): To the closure of Walker's retail store here. They could print very inexpensive large-format black-and-white posters, two feet or three feet wide of any length, which was a great way for people doing genealogy to create affordable printed family tree charts. They also carried individual real rubber erasers for your worn pencil ends (not synthetic like from the chain office supply, which will just smear your paper, not erase). The small-town personal service from Connie and Andy was a dream. Glad to know the company is still in business, but a special service has been lost.

HIT (from reader Peter Arnold): To The Union's recent page containing an entire page of the opinions of four writers who so strongly oppose Rise Gold's reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Doubtless there would have been lots more opinions had there been space. Now it is the turn for Mr. Mossman to find enough of those 300-plus responders to the heavily slanted questionnaire pimped last year by Rise's PR firm, those 300 who "favored" the mine's reopening, to fill another page. (No comments from Rise itself or that PR firm it retains would be eligible). At least that many of you must be as impassioned in its favor as those opposed. You must be out there. Speak up!

MISS (from reader Pauli Halstead): To the lack of a Sheriff's Office investigation into who was burning toxic trash and garbage Feb. 9 on newly purchased East Bennett property slated for annexation into Grass Valley and a housing development. Burning trash and garbage is illegal, as per Nevada County Air Quality Management.

MISS (from reader Daryl Grigsby): To Terry McLaughlin's piece on George Washington. Minimizing George Washington's slave-ownership because slavery ("egregious today") was "an established system," then spending 18 paragraphing highlighting his virtues. No mention that he held 150 slaves and was more than a slave owner, but a vocal advocate. When his unpaid enslaved housekeeper Ona Judge escaped, George and Martha Washington spent years employing slave catchers to hunt her down and bring her back. When he learned British Gen. Sir Guy Carleton allowed former slaves to migrate to Nova Scotia, our founding father had a temper tantrum. He sought to return those humans back to slavery. Ironically, McLaughlin notes as a virtue that Washington "served without pay" ... as evidence of his total commitment. No mention he could afford that generosity because 150 humans generated his wealth — also for no pay. According to her concluding comment, I'm intellectually lazy and shortsighted if I don't join in celebrating a man who fought for freedom for white men (of property) and left black Americans, my ancestors, in chains for, what, almost another century?

Trending Articles



HIT (from reader Susan Tomlin): To Terry McLaughlin in the Feb. 24 issue for her admirable analysis based on careful research of the life and times of George Washington. Any criticisms of George Washington as a plantation owner who used slaves on his plantation should be tempered with the understanding that they were a vital element in those days for plantations to survive. George Washington was a highly respected leader in our battle for freedom and as the first president of this nation. Thank you, Terry, for highlighting the importance of recognizing George Washington on Presidents' Day!

MISS (from Tomlin): To Katherine Quintana's misguided letter to the editor. Most Americans do not want us buying gas and oil from

other countries and raising gas prices. We have the ability to provide fuels that are produced in our own country cheaper and more efficiently or via the Keystone pipeline extension. We don't want to deal with faraway hostile nations like Russia and China to buy fuel for our cars and equipment. You want to eliminate fossil fuels entirely? Watch what happens when one of those hostile nations shuts down our grid and look at all those cute electric cars stranded on the roads. So better that you lecture those Third World countries spewing black smoke into the atmosphere. The Senate should wisely defeat this outrageously expensive climate bill and replace it with something more sensible without all the pork!

MISS (from reader Phil Reinheimer): To editorial board member Jo Ann Rebane's criticism of people wearing masks. As a matter of personal choice, people who are medically at risk or fragile may still want to wear masks in public, even though the pandemic is lessening. We hope COVID continues its decline, but individual vigilance is still sensible.

MISS (from reader Claudia Taylor): To all those who claim that the high school district administration and board broke the law by passing the resolution on Tuesday, Feb. 22. The resolution does not dismiss the mask mandate; it only changes the method of enforcement. The teacher's union complaints are no more than a distraction. Interesting how comments made at the meeting by union reps and teachers did not reference the well-being of the students — until after they had lost (open letter by union president). Passage of the resolution was a demonstration of constitutional republic governance, not the bullying of a democracy (biggest and richest wins).

HIT (from reader Dennis Babson): To Call 211 service. A recent article extolling the virtues of this service was appreciated. For those who are unaware of this service, it is a great local resource. By calling 211, you will reach a skilled volunteer who can advise you on a lot of little-known assets within our area. 211 is a free and confidential service that connects people to local resources. Can't find what you're looking for? give it a try.

HIT (from Babson): To the recent paving along Freeman Lane from Mill Street to West McKnight Way. We've suffered with Band-Aid patches for too long. Thank you! Now I know what the roads in heaven are like.

MISS (from Babson): I miss walking along Mill Street between West Main and Neal Streets. Those grand old buildings have always kept me company. I think closing the street was a mistake. All those folded umbrellas shooting up through empty tables; the steel livestock watering tanks used as planters; and, those concrete K-rail barriers make it look like a Third World country.

HIT (from Editorial Board member Judy Silberman): To the vibrant return of Mardi Gras to Nevada City with its color and playful joy.

MISS (from Silberman): To war in Ukraine and the global worry and suffering that come with it.

MISS (from Editorial Board member Thea Hood): To Gov. Gavin Newsom for continuing the state of emergency for the endemic phase of COVID. This would basically give him permanent one-man rule. Over the past two years of COVID, he already created 561 executive order provisions. Can you imagine what the tyranny of a one-man rule will do to California? Time to vote him out in the next election.

HIT (from Hood): To Don Jans' presentation last week at the Miners Foundry in Nevada City reminding the audience that the American love for freedom burns deep in our being. He also reiterated that in a republic, all rights and liberties come from God, and government is the servant, whereas in a collectivist state, the individual has no rights ... the government controls and regulates one's natural rights. Which type of government do you prefer to live under? To read Jans' blogs, visit http://www.mygrandchildrensamerica.com

MISS (from Editorial Board member Jo Ann Rebane): To teachers at Nevada Union and their union, which did a "sick-out" over changing masking realities. Surely any teacher who feels a mask will protect them should continue to wear a mask. Meanwhile the community and the nation have seen enough evidence that masks in schools don't do anything but slow down learning.

HIT (from Rebane): To the checkers and clerks at the grocery store where I shop. They showed up and worked every day of the pandemic through fear, shutdowns, social distancing, Plexi-glass shields, mask requirements, disinfecting regimens, COVID surges, vaccination pushes, changing science, changing rules, etc. And yes, they came to work and faced the public every day, not knowing who would or wouldn't spread COVID. These people are and were essential, and they never claimed or sought special recognition or gratitude.

HIT (from Editorial Board member Paul Matson): To the Seven Stars Gallery, which is opening soon! The Nevada City Odd Fellows Hall is a wonderful facility, with frontage at 225 Broad St. running through to 210 Spring St. The Spring Street building, home of Rogers Picture Framing for over 50 years, is being revitalized as the Seven Stars Gallery. It will serve as an affordable community gathering space, a show place for the work of local artists and musicians, and a presentation hall. This wonderful, unique space will continue to benefit our community as it has for nearly 150 years. Allan Rogers would be pleased. For more information please visit http://www.nevadacityoddfellows.com or call 530-362-4888.

HIT (from Editorial Board member Tom Durkin): To Nevada Union teachers who went on strike to protest an arbitrary, unilateral decision by the administration and board of trustees to violate a memorandum of understanding with the teachers. The strike was not about masks. The strike was to assert the right of professional teachers to have a say in what directly affects them in the classroom. I hope the teachers taught the administration and district a lesson that won't have to be repeated.

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J.P. Kelly: The mine — let's avert this disaster

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | February 3, 2022

J.P. Kelly

Congratulations to Martin Webb on his succinct summary of the many hazards facing the inhabitants of Nevada County in his guest column, "The Extreme Retirement Zone."

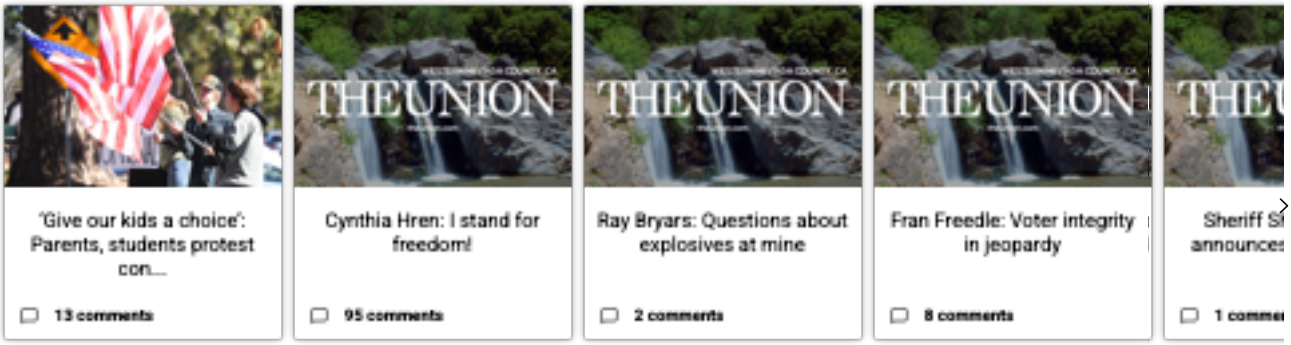
All of these hazards are real and difficult to eradicate. I was surprised that he did not add to the list the proposed re-opening of a local gold mine. I assume because it is, as yet, only a possibility.

If it is approved, however, it will add another huge bundle of worries to the load we are already carrying. Immediate possible consequences to the quality of our air and water quality, noise levels, property values, traffic, landscape and the consequences of greatly increased demands upon our already shaky grid cannot be denied and I believe the likelihood of very serious damage to our entire water table and the ecosystem.

If you agree with Mr. Webb and me that we already have more than enough problems, now is the time to write to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors and protest.

Let them know about whatever concerns you, from danger to wildlife to health issues, loss of property values to added risks in the event of fire.

Trending Articles



Be specific, be clear, but write! There is a limited period for public comment. Make your voice heard while we can still avert this disaster.

J.P. Kelly

Nevada City

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Jeff Ackerman: There they go again, but not very far when it comes to mining

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | January 12, 2020

Jeff Ackerman
Columnist



If history repeats — and it generally does — we'll probably spend a good chunk of 2020 reading and hearing about meetings and studies and promises and permits relating to the most recent bid to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Spoiler Alert: Hard rock mining in Nevada County, or most anywhere else in California, is as dead as a Senate impeachment conviction.

The Union archives are filled with stories from the last time someone tried to reopen the mine. And the time before that and the time before that. I suspect the newsroom might simply change the dates and names this time around, since the debate will be fairly predictable.

The difference this time is the anti-mining sentiment, or, better stated, the concerns with climate change. A recent poll among California Democrats found that climate change is the number one concern, outpacing health care almost 2 to 1.

> "Quick show of hands. Who wants to live near a working gold mine? ... That's what I thought.

That's important because Democrats run things in California. And if they fail to stop mining, the courts will likely hold things up until most of us are too old to remember what we were waiting for.

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At a time when we've already targeted farting cows, straws and grocery bags, pushing an industry associated with terms like "acid" and "cyanide" will be a hard sell. Especially when the guys selling it are from Canada.

I know ... we don't need a bunch of know-it-all Canadians telling us where to dump our contaminated mine water.

Rise Gold Corp is headquartered in Vancouver, B.C. It's had some decent success convincing investors that there is "gold in them thar hills," pointing south to the hills where the Idaho-Maryland Mine is located, which is also home to a couple of thousand neighbors who weren't there the last time the mine was being gouged for gold.

Last I checked the company stock was trading at less than 70 cents per share. According to its website, Rise Gold was "focused on generating shareholder value through advancing a gold project in California." They reportedly raised $2.4 million in three months.

Investors are licking their chops at the prospect that the Idaho-Maryland Mine still has more than a half million ounces of gold trapped inside its water-filled shafts and with gold selling for some $1,500 per ounce, that's ... math is hard ... enough money to buy a hockey team.

In a column last year for an online mining industry newsletter called "The Critical Investor," some guy (he doesn't give a name) who was probably paid to promote Rise Gold touted the opportunity to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

He points to the Trump election as evidence that mining in California will fare much better than it did under Obama.

"California didn't exactly build the best reputation as a mining friendly jurisdiction over the years, caused predominantly by permitting issues," wrote the Critical Investor. He goes on to remind us that, "a lot has changed since Trump took over, as he is pro mining and anti-permitting."

I'd like to believe Trump has a pretty full plate these days. Between launching missiles, midnight tweet fests, golf, impeachment hearings and an upcoming election, there's a good chance he won't be much help to the Canadians hoping for a mining permit.

The Critical Investor says Rise Gold may not need to play its "Trump Card," or even deal with California state agencies because the mine is on private land.

"Nevada County, not the state, is the lead agency," he wrote, noting that the mine would not need permission from the BLM, or U.S. Forest Service.

That, according to the Critical Investor, makes the investment risk, "manageable."

The Critical Investor doesn't know Nevada County. Nothing much happens in Nevada County unless there have been at least 1,000 town hall meetings and 2.5 million pages of studies, reports and surveys. And that's just for a stoplight.

The Nevada City Council has been debating 5G wireless telecom regulations so long that 5G is now obsolete, replaced by 7F, which is 10 times faster than the speed of light and better for your complexion.

There are other reasons prior efforts to reopen the mine have failed. The largest is water. The miles of mine shaft are filled with water that is likely contaminated. In order to get the gold, they need to get rid of the water and nobody really has much use for contaminated water.

Even if they could drain the shafts without poisoning the waterways between Nevada County and the Pacific Ocean, it would be difficult to get past the hammering, truck traffic and other distractions neighbors would be impacted by. Not sure I'd want my half-million-dollar home in the foothills next door to an operating gold mine.

And those homes belong to Democrats, Republicans, Greens, Independents and one or two "Declined To States." Quick show of hands. Who wants to live near a working gold mine?

That's what I thought.

It's like asking who wants to live near an airport, garbage dump or prison. Even if the county granted a permit, there would be 100 lawyers lined up with petitions to stop it, or at least delay it long enough to sink Rise Gold.

None of this means the latest effort to reopen the gold mine won't make for some good coffee talk. We all knew how the Titanic movie would end, but still bought tickets.

Jeff Ackerman is a former publisher of The Union. He may be contacted at jackerman726@gmail.com

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Jim Lewis: The mine — a great unifier

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 23h ago

Jim Lewis

Thank goodness for the mine! It has done the impossible: It has re-united much of Nevada County around this huge local issue. As I travel around our beautiful county, I see anti-mine posters in towns and in the countryside; in richer and in poorer communities, and in presumable pro-Trump and anti-Trump areas.

I ask everybody I can about their opinions of the potential mine. My unofficial poll tells me that about 80% of Nevada Countians are strongly against the mine. Not only that —those in the 20% who tell me they are supporters usually do not strongly favor it — they often make vague comments about "more jobs" and "the rights of businesses." They usually know little about the serious environmental concerns and the disastrous track record of Rise Gold Corp. and its directors.

I have just one question: Is it possible that only three (out of five) supervisors will make this critical decision about our future? If so, then I am officially a one-issue voter. Supes and candidates — I do not care about your overall politics. I just want to know how you plan to vote on the mine. Tell us. Stand up and be crystal clear!

Jim Lewis

Grass Valley

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Jim Otto: Rise Gold Comedy Club

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 21h ago

Jim Otto

I received a letter from Rise Gold dated Feb. 11 stating, "We are reaching out to you to provide further information" on the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine.

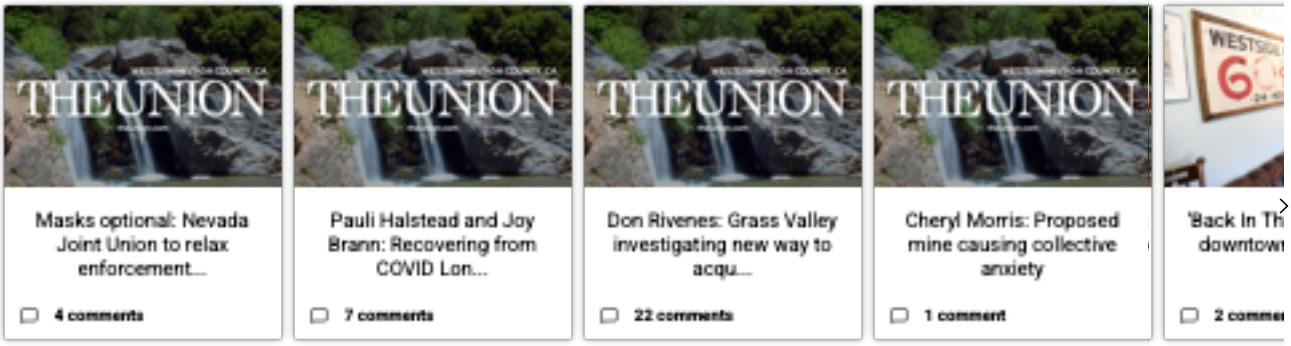
Awesome. I'd love more information about the mine, since I live off East Bennett Road and directly on top of mine. I've been reading the 1,000-page draft environmental impact report, and it's tough slogging. So many significant impacts!

Anyway, here's some tidbits from the Rise letter:

"The county has determined that no domestic water wells will be drained by mine dewatering." That's funny since previous impact reports to reopen the mine stated several nearby wells would likely experience complete dewatering.

Then there's this gem: The current report says Rise Gold plans to explode 1,860 pounds of ammonia nitrate seven days a week under my home. But not to worry. Their letter says that the blasting will be "unnoticeable and undetectable." I'm thinking not.

Trending Articles



And the finale, their real estate consult concludes there would be "no negative impact on home prices." In fact, employment from the mine could drive nearby home prices higher! I guess living next to a highly industrial 24/7 rock crushing plant is desirable. Who knew?

Jim Otto

Grass Valley

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John Brady: Possibilities with having a mine in your town

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 23, 2021

John Brady | Other Voices

I have resided in Grass Valley and Nevada City as a builder for 25 years and a Realtor for the past 23 years.

My uncle worked in the Idaho-Maryland Mine for a while. He died at the age of 50 working in a mine. My father worked in lead and silver mines when young in Idaho. He left the mines young to work in insurance. He lived to be 92. Raised an Irish Catholic, his theology was simple — "always stay in the state of grace."

A local well-drilling expert tells a close friend that likely 300 wells will be ruined quickly by this plan of Rise Gold to pump 3.6 million gallons per day in mine tunnels for six months and then 1.2 million a day for the next 80 years.

Worrywarts fret about mercury, arsenic, lead, cyanide, and dioxin. Practical folk feel these contaminants are no biggie as filters work sufficient to pass monitoring. Watchdogs of purity will transform the heavy metal infested sewer slop (as critics so unfairly designate the water) to class 2 drinking water, allowed to stink mildly and able to rust pipes. A faith-based transformation, fluffed up with science! You get past official tests, so everyone feels better. Worrywarts: play "the Sound of Music" and drink up. Sissies,repeat this mantra: "Thank God for bottled water!" Subsidence could add concern. Learn to tolerate your sinkhole.

An exceptionally severe drought has taken hold of the entire Western part of the USA, including Nevada County. What a time to play Russian Roulette with a stressed water table!

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Darrell Berkheimer: Threats, false issues and toys
47 comments


Linda C... Constitutio... can't s...
26 comme...

Terry McLaughlin, in The Union, wrote an enchanting article ("Skeptical") about reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. An estimated 1,500 tons of rock per day will be the focus of a "drill and blast regime" 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 80 years.

About 2.4 million yards of tailings and rock waste will be deposited in two locations, apparently in piles about 70 feet high.

Traffic could be challenging with 100 round trips a day of huge trucks with 20-ton crushed rock waste payloads, belching lung-searing dust, and diesel particulate 16 hours a day. A problem for health but with Prozac and gas masks, adaption is a slam-dunk!

In another commentary in The Union, one soil engineer explained convincingly the unstable piles of waste, reaching 70 feet in height, would leach into Wolf Creek and other nearby creeks. This would be a classic massive pollution scene. Please withhold any negativity! After all, mining has always been a little rough around the edges.

Mineral rights for the mine cover 2,585 acres underground and travel from the Loma Rica airport to Glenbrook Basin and to Highway 174 and much of Cedar Ridge.

If this Rise Gold plan to diminish or improve property values for thousands of residents of Grass Valley is approved, 1,800 parcels could contemplate the excitement of being possibly as close as 220 to 500 feet from the mine's mineral harvesting, a pristine drill and blast operation. The mine owners are eager to promote the modernity of their operation. I understand they will use ANFO (ammonium nitrate and fuel oil) — the modern explosives said to have decimated downtown Beirut in 2020.

World War II ended and the United States recruited Nazi scientists for modern weapons research. Tom Lehrer did a cute song "honoring" one such fellow with this: "Ze bombs they go up / who cares where they come down / That's not my department says Werner Von Braun."

Hopefully, Sierra Nevada Hospital will tolerate any possible disconcerting disturbance with stoic discipline. That takes the sharp edge off shock waves of beds rattling and shaky X-ray technology. In mining parlance, "grin and bear it."

Ben Mossman, the CEO of the fragile penny stock-financed Rise Gold, claims the project is designed to "have no impact on the environment." Should his project fail, Ben's future could be bright as a stand-up comedian.

If you think, as so many professionals do, that the supervisors could not possibly be remiss in protecting community interests, think again. If you want to ensure a greater focus on community interests, protect property values, avoid ear-shattering noise and toxic air, encourage tourism, block massive traffic disasters and protect the beauty of our fair city, then contact Minewatch.com.

John Brady is a Realtor in Grass Valley.

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Conversation

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Corniglio Digli AUGUST 24, 2021

I'm not so smart, so I'm gonna credit that predicament with the fact that I find your Column a bit...confusing.

However, I'm relatively sure that you could have gotten your point across without resorting to the phrasing, "Sissies", which is...offensive to some.

Stop the Mine! A patently Bad for Nevada County proposal.

REPLY 2 REPLIES 3 0

SW **Steve Willer** AUGUST 27, 2021

Reply to **Corniglio Digli**

Yeah, I wasn't sure at first where this guy was going or what side he was on either.

Since moving here over a decade ago, what I have learned when talking with locals, when somebody rambles and seems confused when trying to make a point, they are smoking WAY too much weed. I've learned that from my neighbors that I have gone over to talk with in the morning and there is a haze in their living room from pot smoke at 9 am. If people drank booze like that they would be in need of rehab, big time.

REPLY 1 REPLY 0 0

Corniglio Digli AUGUST 29, 2021

Reply to **Steve Willer**

Uh...I'm sorry...What were we discussing?

REPLY 2 0

9+

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-john-brady-urge-the-supervisors-to-slam-this-project-into-the-trash-bin/article_69c4655e-f9d4-11ed-b115-1f2e45556464.html

Ideas & Opinions — John Brady: Urge the Supervisors to slam this project into the trash bin of history

John Brady
May 24, 2023

Urge the Supervisors to slam this project into the trash bin of history

I must compliment The Union for continuing a fine job of local and national coverage. Considering being sold twice in one year, I'd say the Union has landed on its feet quite well.

After merciless March storms, Nevada County was confronted with the unpopular Idaho-Maryland toxic mine rezoning option. The idea of re-opening a heavy industrial mine with its unfortunate elements of air and water pollution, dust, grotesque noise, and diesel trucks parades day and night- in a now thriving suburban area where substantial real estate devaluation would be a result...that was an old dog that couldn't run. Imagine: pumping 3.5 million gallons of water per day, ripe with pollution,slammed into Wolf Creek for 6 months & the 1.2 million into the creek daily for 80 years. Blasting in 2700 underground acres that run under Sierra Nevada Hospital , among other delicate sites. One well driller mentioned to a broker friend he estimated 300 wells would be wiped out in under a few months.

Happily, the Planning Commission slammed this project and its mockery of

an EIR report into the trash bin of history with a 5 to zero vote. I urge the Supervisors to follow this thoughtful decision with another 5 to zero vote.

John Brady, Nevada County

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Jonathan Keehn: Reopening Idaho-Maryland Mine still a bad idea

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 24, 2020

Other Voices
Jonathan Keehn

Once again, a junior mining company from Canada has arrived in town with an eye to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. So far, Rise Gold Corp. has not made a good impression.

If you're new to the area, or your memory fades on the subject, here's a quick refresher:

Every 5 or 10 years, gold mine investors get excited about the idea of re-opening an abandoned mine. These investment companies are often from out of state. In particular, "junior" mining companies from Canada operate in California because they enjoy funding loopholes that encourage speculation. The last such company, Emgold, threw in the towel after it was unable to complete the permitting process in 2012.

Rise is the latest case, and has been behaving as these companies often do. So far, Rise has had difficulty complying with some of the most basic Nevada County land use regulations.

In 2017, at their site off East Bennett Road, they began by removing a healthy stand of trees without a Timber Harvest Plan. Cal Fire issued two citations for this infraction — one to the property owner and one to the logging company. Then they started construction of an equipment storage pad. However, South Fork Wolf Creek, a perennial tributary of Wolf Creek, runs close by, and Rise neglected to follow the simple minimum 100-foot riparian setback requirement for streams in Nevada County. This is not a complicated rule: one simply needs a measuring tape, some wooden stakes, and a hammer. Start at the "Ordinary High Water Mark" of the stream, measure 100 feet, and drive some stakes. To be safe, add 5 feet. Connect the dots and you have a line showing the non-disturbance zone: no construction, no equipment, no disturbance is allowed.

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Nevertheless, Rise's newly-graded pad was clearly located on the wrong side of the line by 10 feet or 20 feet, and they encroached even farther with heavy equipment, a large pile of logs, and stacks of brush and small trees. For these violations, the County required Rise to file a Management Plan, which told them to remove the logs and clean up the worst of the thrashed non-disturbance zone. When this was done, the company moved in their big exploratory drilling equipment. Apparently, still no one had pulled out a measuring tape; the equipment was set down on the wrong side of the line. This time the County insisted on a second, much more comprehensive Management Plan. Eventually, they installed the stakes correctly and relocated the equipment once more to protect South Fork Wolf Creek.

All of this took about a year, and then Rise fired up their heavy equipment. That's when the neighbors really started to complain.

You probably know the area around the intersection of Brunswick, East Bennett, and Greenhorn roads. Since the last of the Grass Valley mines closed in the 1950s, this has become a quiet, highly desirable, rural-residential neighborhood. Most lots are 1 to 5 acres, with easy access to both downtown Grass Valley and Glenbrook. The homes are on private wells and septic tanks.

The exploratory equipment operated by Rise for 16 months was essentially a super-sized well-drilling rig. It could go a mile deep and was multi-directional, so it could "explore" under neighboring properties. There was no county or state oversight on damage it might do to local aquifers or water wells. And it operated 24/7. The neighbors, being subjected to continuous loud noise and bright lights, had to call the sheriff in the middle of the night and file complaints; eventually Rise constructed a 20-foot tall "sound barrier," to almost no effect. One county supervisor visited a neighboring house and was astounded by the noise impacting a residential area.

Despite the problems outlined above in following simple rules, in November 2019, Rise submitted an application to Nevada County for a use permit and reclamation plan to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine.

Rise Grass Valley is a brand-new company registered in California in 2017 as a subsidiary of Canadian-based Rise Gold Corp. Ben Mossman is CEO of Rise Gold, Rise Grass Valley and was CEO of failed Banks Island Gold Ltd., which reportedly accumulated fines and citations due to as many as 35 violations of Canadian Fisheries, Environmental Management, and Water Acts. The company went bankrupt.

Like the previous two attempts to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine, Rise will be spending millions of investors' dollars to learn, once again, that it is still a bad idea.

Jonathan Keehn is president of the Wolf Creek Community Alliance.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---joyce-hoffman/article_8b267322-e08e-11ed-ab04-3f49d1f99243.html

Ideas & Opinions - Joyce Hoffman:

Joyce Hoffman
Apr 22, 2023





Joyce Hoffman's No Mine sign continues to show her stance against the proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine. One that many others in the community share with her.

Courtesy Photo

This is my "no mine sign" which has been mine for over three years. It's been dragged across the street by blustering winds. It's been pelted with hail and soaked by atmospheric rivers. It bent under the weight of heavy snow and found its way back home from neighboring yards thanks to sympathetic neighbors. I stand behind its message 100% just as I did on the day that I adopted it in early 2020. That's a long time ago. Since the beginning of the pandemic this sign has been a part of the landscape at my address. As much as I believe in its message I am, nevertheless, tired of looking at it.

I wish that the Nevada County Board of Supervisors would get off the pot and just say NO! Enough already! Take a stand with most of your constituents.

Joyce Hoffman, Grass Valley

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Katharine Popenuk: Nothing settled about mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 2h ago

Katharine Popenuk | Other Voices

Science is clear, but Rise Gold's most recent mailing is anything but. Rather, it is an intentionally misleading attempt to skew the facts regarding the mine reopening.

Has the mine reopening been approved?

No, Nevada County has not just completed anything regarding approval of the mine reopening. The Nevada County Board of Supervisors has yet to conduct its first meeting to discuss the contents of the draft environmental study. They have not yet fully considered nor approved the contents of the study. No final determination has been made as to the safety, environmental impacts, or adequacy of the proposed regulation of a reopened mind.

The draft environmental impact report has not laid to rest anything. Rather, the report enumerates 83 impacts considered significant enough to require some measure of intervention so as to make them not as bad as they actually are anticipated to be.

Some impacts are so severe there is nothing that can be done. We will just have to live with them. I think we are being asked to accept a lower quality of life in Grass Valley.

Trending Articles



None of these concerns have been "put to rest." Grave concerns remain about drained wells, spoiled aquifers, dust, exhaust, noise, and airborne chemicals associated with the transportation of residual waste. There is no confirmation that there will not be spills, seepage, accidents, oversight, or callous disregard of regulations or safety practices.

What is the draft environmental impact report?

The report's only purpose is to lay out the ways in which the mine will impact our community and the possible ways some of these impacts could be dealt with.

This report was paid for by Rise Gold. It is important to note that this report relied on information provided to the consulting firm by Rise Gold, and many of the conclusions reached in the report are based on assumptions and best case scenarios. The report does not guarantee in any way what will be the actual outcome.

The fact remains the the mining industry is the single largest source of toxic waste and one of the most destructive industries in the country.

But what about the new jobs?

Rise Gold states we can expect 612 new jobs, 312 of which are directly related to the mine operation. The other 300 are presumed increases in our current employment base, in response to an estimated $50 million poured into our community. What in Grass Valley will the mine be spending $50 million on each year?

Two-thirds of the 312 mine employees are to be local hires. The remaining 104 employees would be the top paid technical and managerial positions. Are these highly trained specialized employees already a part of our local community? Or will these positions more likely be outsourced? I doubt each of these managerial, technical, scientific professionals and CEOs will ever reside in and thereby contribute to our local economy.

Do mine workers really earn $122,000 a year?

When Rise Gold says "average," they are including all salaries, including the top third salaried positions in the calculation of that average. This includes the CEO's anticipated very generous salary.

An entry-level miner can expect to earn an average total compensation (includes bonus and overtime pay) of $18.55 per hour, based on a survey of typical existing salaries. An early career miner with one to four years of experience earns $20.26, and an experienced miner with 10 to 19 years of experience earns $27.56 (source: payscale.com). Truck drivers, janitors, front load operators, security staff, etc. will all be making the current going rate as for a non-mining town of Grass Valley.

Do we get to keep the gold? No, we don't. All of the gold and all of the profits will be leaving Grass Valley. The city of Grass Valley and Nevada County will not be receiving a piece of the gold pie. Profits, if any, will be distributed to the owners and shareholders of Rise Gold.

So what's in it for us?

That is a very good question. Grass Valley assumes all of the risks, and for what? It's a case of trading the family cow for a handful of magic beans. We would be risking so much for so little — our beautiful quiet community, our neighbors, our scenery, our streams and rivers, our air quality, our water quality and habitat, our well-paved traffic-free streets, our peace and quiet, and our tax dollars for mitigation and reparation 24/7 for the next 80 years. For what?

Please let the Nevada County Board of Supervisors know what you want for your community. Email BOS.PublicComment@co.nevada.ca.us.

Katharine Popenuk lives in Grass Valley.

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https://www.theunion.com/opinion/letters/extend-public-comment-period-for-idaho-maryland-mine/article_3710b325-312a-55bd-ac7c-dfc8efea9133.html

Extend public comment period for Idaho-Maryland Mine

Aug 26, 2020

While our community is busy worrying about contracting COVID-19, to mask or not to mask, and sending (or not) our children to school, a Canadian company has been fast-tracking an 80-year permit to operate the local Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Under the California Environmental Quality Act, Nevada County is required to give our community 30 days to comment on the scope of the draft environmental report. The deadline was Aug. 17. The county has denied multiple requests to extend the 30 days. Why? What's to lose?

First, consider that many impacted residents were not promptly notified. That's just wrong. Second, the public has been advised not to meet in large groups. So Nevada County put out a 34-minute video on the project. Really? That does not substitute for a discussion on this mammoth project.

Third, the application contains over 100 documents that the average citizen would not have had time to read, let alone absorb, by Aug. 17.

This project will impact our community for 80 years. It's time to be careful and deliberate, not rush through a process that fails to meaningfully engage our community. Extend the deadline so we can appropriately weigh in on this

critical decision.

Katherine Thompson

Grass Valley

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Kathryn Gerwig: Mine concerns understated

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 20, 2021

Kathryn Gerwig

Benjamin Mossman, president and CEO, Rise Gold Corp., met on July 16, 2020, for questions about the Idaho-Maryland Mine. These included ones about water pollution. The noise on a continuing basis may be legally low enough, but we can hear the noise from the county fair all over the valley. Roads will need to be rebuilt.

We just had an earthquake big enough to move my bed and sway things in the house. That was 100 miles away. Mr. Mossman said the earthquake fault on his drilling map and the empty mine shafts causing “sink holes” appearing aren’t important. I believe they are very important. This may destroy any ambiance in the entire county area.

Kathryn Gerwig

Grass Valley

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Kevin Rhodes: Reopening mine a mistake

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 21, 2021

Kevin Rhodes | Other Voices

As a 20-year resident of our fine city of Grass Valley, I got a good giggle out of Christian Stewart's commentary about opposition to mining from a recent emigrant and a rightly concerned community.

As both our newer Grass Valley resident and Mr. Stewart point out, mining is a central part of our community's history. Exactly. Our history. Like dirt roads, horse-drawn carriages, treeless surroundings, drunken brawls, blacksmiths and the like. A cool history it is.

Mr. Stewart also rightly points out the reasons folks like this new resident move here. It's because of the history, the natural beauty, the community spirit, the character, the trails, the water, the music. Our future.

As Rise Gold promises in their public meetings, the mine will bring more jobs. Yes, perhaps, but for how long and at what price? How many qualified residents will fill those jobs? Or will they come from outside or from Rise Gold themselves? Does Mr. Stewart have insight into this?

Perhaps instead of a mine, what Nevada County needs more than environmentally destructive mining jobs is higher wages for the jobs folks currently have and some forward thinking to create better, cleaner, and higher paying industries.

Trending Articles



Mr. Stewart also complains about real estate prices, but makes no connection to how mining is going to remedy that, in part because the two are completely disconnected. There are no affordable houses because the county has opted not to construct more.

Those folks who are selling now are reaping big rewards from their investments. and those choosing to stay have greater future value. What's wrong with that? Not to mention the benefit of a little new blood in the county that will bring new ideas, more tax revenue, more progress and greater improvements to our way of life.

Young kids aren't interested in mining jobs. Few folks actually are.

And lest we not forget that the part owner and spokesperson for Rise Gold has already gone bankrupt elsewhere and the former company sued for environmental violations.

If mining's so great and the environmental impacts negligible, why are we still dealing with the remnants of the last operations at great expense to the community, the county and state?

Where will Rise Gold be when future problems pop up 20, 40 or 60 years from now? Will they provide for a trust? What will happen to my quality of life? My property value? Our draw as a community to those young couples Mr. Stewart so wants to have? I don't think

any of us as mine opponents have anything but eyes wide open.

The evidence of mining having a negative impact on us is all around. Malakoff Diggins? Mercury-laden sediments? Empire Mine tailings and many, many others.

And like Rise Gold, I'd bet my boots that all those former companies, none still around for the cleanup, told residents the same story that Rise Gold is telling us today. Perhaps it is Mr. Stewart who should be looking forward to our future and not backward to our rich, yet tarnished history.

Kevin Rhodes lives in Grass Valley.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-kim-cote-rise-gold-has-a-bad-track-record-and-you-will-regret/article_153e9178-41e4-11ee-84cf-f3257f4470d9.html

Ideas & Opinions — Kim Cote: Rise Gold has a bad track record, and you will regret allowing this foreign invader to taint our town

Kim Cote | Letter to the Editor
Aug 25, 2023

Dear Nevada County Supervisors.

Please vote no on a mine in Grass Valley for the next 80 years. Putting our air, water, and peace at risk for profit is wrong. We've moved on, that era is over. The values and environment of this county must be preserved. I don't want to feel the concussion of the underground blasts at my home. We must stop pillaging our planet without regard for living systems. Gold does nothing to keep us alive. Just because someone buys a mine does not mean they get to mine, especially now that our community has grown so close to it. Even entertaining the idea of a mine means we have not learned from the past. Now that employers allow remote work, we do not need this kind of industrial work in our area. There are so many open construction and service jobs that are not filled. We don't need new industrial positions in this area at all. Rise Gold has a bad track record, and you will regret allowing this foreign invader to taint

our town. Their arguments for the mine are weak, it's all about greed. They don't have enough money to pay for the damages they are going to do. This is what happens when corporations take over the world. This is what happens when profit is more important than life. When did corporations get a license to steal, corrupt, and destroy our world? Please don't allow this to happen to our Grass Valley.

Kim Cote, Grass Valley

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Linda Lanzoni: Regarding opening of the Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | August 27, 2020

To the Nevada County Supervisors and County Planners, Mayor Lisa Swarthout, Vice Mayor Ben Aguilar and Grass Valley City Council Members:

With regard to the Rise proposal to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine at Brunswick Road and Bennett Street at Greenhorn Road, I'm sure you have heard the protests from my neighbors and many other residents within the county. Most of them are far more well-versed than I in stating all the detrimental effects this mine project will bring about so I will just say that the noise, dust, traffic, damaged roads, and air pollution could never be outweighed by the benefits our county may or may not receive from the mine.

From what I have read, there will likely be no real benefits as most of the workers will come from out of the area and most of the profits will end up in Canada.

Linda Lanzoni

Grass Valley

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Linda Schuyler Horning: Too precious to plunder with reopened mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 5h ago

Linda Schuyler Horning | Other Voices

In the winter of 1955-56, a massive rock and earth slide engulfed Highway 89 and tumbled all the way down to Emerald Bay, forcing an 11-month road closure. Frustrated business leaders in the basin campaigned for a freeway, thereby opening Tahoe to a year-round economy.

If it ran straight and low along the shoreline, it would cross Emerald Bay at its mouth. Opponents to a bridge here got an unlikely assist from Gov. Ronald Reagan, who appointed William Penn Mott Jr. as state parks chief. Mott came out against the bridge.

You can breathe now.

Not all projects proposed in areas with natural beauty have as many ardent defenders as Emerald Bay, but some threaten the quality of life for nearby residents, both human and animal.

Take the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. One could say a return to an industry that once dominated our region and provided wealth to many of its citizens would be a perfectly logical goal, but we all know times have changed since then.

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23 comments


Susan Bewle Build Bac
21 comme

Thanks to Community Environmental Advocates Foundation and member Jim Bair, I am able to provide the following facts about the proposal:

The 56-acre Centennial property remains as the primary processing and access site for the Idaho-Maryland Mine. It now contains over 270,000 cubic yards of legacy tailings, including toxic material. Rise Gold plans numerous large buildings there, covering nearly three acres. Structures include a six-story tall 425-foot-long mineral processing facility along Brunswick Road with a 16-story head frame.

One of the piles of waste rock and tailings would be located here, and would grow to seven stories, covering 44 acres. It would likely be visible from the Centennial Business Park area and residential units off Sutton Way. The hospital would also have a view of it, as would drivers along the Highway 49/20 freeway. It would also be visible from the proposed Dorsey Marketplace apartments looking across the Wolf Creek valley and to cyclists and walkers along the proposed Wolf Creek trail.

A second tailing pile would be located at the southern portion of the main processing area on Brunswick Road. It would cover 31 acres and grow to nine stories. It would be plainly visible from homes and empty lots of surrounding neighborhoods, including the new subdivision currently under construction diagonally across the intersection, and also to drivers along Brunswick Road.

Mining operations would include de-watering the abandoned mine shafts by pumping 3.6 million gallons of water daily into South Fork Wolf Creek. Since an average Californian uses 85 gallons of water each day (DAO Report), I believe this is like depriving 42,353 residents of the water they need. In addition, the discharges would change the natural flow of Wolf Creek, possibly disrupting life cycles of organisms and threatening its natural ecology.

The San Juan Mine (Siskon) is an example of how a de-watering strategy can go wrong. It opened in 1995 and was subsequently forced to shut down after a disastrous draining of local wells. Impacts are still being felt among the residents, as some wells were permanently damaged.

Construction noise would be heard for about 18 months before mining operations begin, then blasting and vibration from heavy equipment would continue underground for the next 80 years. Waste rock and tailings haul trucks would make as many as 100 round trips a day between the New Brunswick mine access shaft and the processing site on East Bennet to the Centennial site. Trucks using Brunswick Road to reach Whispering Pines Lane and to access Highway 49 would further congest traffic in the area. Additional truck trips would be required to transport dangerous combustibles, such as fuel oil, diesel fuel, explosives, and other supplies.

Not convinced yet?

A survey conducted by The Union among Realtors has concluded real estate values would decrease approximately 20% near the mine sites.

We can't breathe yet on this one. It's time to be horrified. Learn more and become involved at http://www.minewatchnc.org and on the Minewatch Nevada County public Facebook page.

We need to scrap these plans while there's still time, just as the Tahoe freeway plans were scrapped. Returning to the noise and dirt of a mining town does not serve our interests.

Grass Valley citizens have worked hard to build a community that provides quiet and peaceful surroundings, with clean streets and roadways. Grass Valley is too beautiful, too quiet, and too precious to plunder in this way.

Linda Schuyler Horning lives in Nevada City.

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Lynn Wenzel: Virtual meeting examines mine impacts

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 20h ago

Lynn Wenzel | Other Voices

Even though we live in an area famous for gold mining, who among us has ever really thought about what the impacts of mining really were? As Rise Gold mining company intends to mine gold again in Grass Valley, Business & Professional Women of Nevada County is presenting a program on the projected impacts of such activity.

The community's key concerns include impacts on health, quality of life and the economy.

For example, what about noise and air pollution caused by large trucks? According to project plans submitted by Rise, haul trucks will be a familiar sight on certain Grass Valley roads around the mine for the next 20 years.

"These companies come along and want us to not notice they're going to have a huge amount of mine-waste rock," says Elizabeth Martin, retired CEO of the Sierra Fund. Rise's draft environmental impact report says the plan will result in about 182,500 tons of material produced per year that will need to be transported and used as fill. As an example, a large dump truck can carry about 14 tons.

"Multiply that by more than 10,000 and the visual is beyond most people's imagination," says Martin. What does this mean for us? Thirteen-million, thirty-five thousand, seven-hundred and fourteen trips!

Trending Articles



Maybe you're not worried about the impact on roads or the environment. But have you thought about the effects on water? Your well if you are close to the mine? Dewatering, which can cause nearby homes, businesses and schools to lose water during the reopening of the mine, happened with the Siskon Mine in the 1990s. Rise has promised to replace the water lost to individuals through NID. Do you want that?

Does noise or vibration bother you? Rise promises it will be "less than significant." One woman's "less than" is another's nightmare. According to the California Environmental Quality Act, some areas will see increases of up to 2.6 dB. A 3 dB is about the smallest change in volume that most people hear easily.

Are you concerned about your property values? A recent study found that rock mining operations significantly decrease property values within a 10-mile radius. What about traffic delays near the mine? Do you care about that?

And what about mine waste? Will arsenic and heavy metals stay put in the paste-backfill material Rise plans to use over the long run? What happens in the future when the mine closes and the pumps shut down? Groundwater will then flow in the backfilled tunnels. Low levels of leaching, especially when it rains, can continue for years, potentially contaminating drinking water or nearby rivers and streams.

Join the Business & Professional Women of Nevada County at 6 p.m. on Feb. 16 for a virtual meeting to learn about the environmental and community impact connected to the re-opening of the Idaho Maryland Mine where these questions and more will be answered.

Bring your key concerns regarding the impacts on our health, our quality of life and our economy. You will hear the latest update on the approval process. And you will learn what you can do about your concerns.

After the presentation by Josie Crawford, executive director of Wolf Creek Community Alliance, and Barbara Rivenes, there will be plenty of opportunity for questions. For further information, visit http://www.bpwnevadacounty.org.

Lynn Wenzel lives in Grass Valley.

BEIJING 2022

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MJ

Marc Johnsson 8 HRS AGO

Excellent work, Ladies. You are all to be commended. My family and I shall be in attendance 2/16...we sincerely thank you.

REPLY 0 0

ACTIVE CONVERSATIONS



Terry McLaughlin: The real cost of lockdowns

48



'We just don't know yet': Nevada County officials weigh whether to lift...

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---margaret-burks-pause-and-imagine-the-mine-in-full-operation/article_d2af72dc-ee05-11ed-9a6d-7311aa2dac78.html

Ideas & Opinions – Margaret Burks: Pause and imagine the mine in full operation

Margaret Burks
May 9, 2023

Pause a moment and visualize the Idaho-Maryland mine in full operation: what does that look like?

There's no debate about certain facts: there will be negative consequences in water quality and quantity, in air quality, in traffic, roadway wear and tear, noise levels and toxic waste. These will go on 24/7 for 80 years.

Mitigation is the trade-off: we'll do 'this' good thing to offset 'that' bad thing. The bad thing doesn't go away. Mitigation is a pipe-dream on paper: rarely 100% effective or even doable, expensive, not guaranteed, rarely inspected, rarely enforced. The one thing you can count on with 100% certainty is sooner or later there will be human error. We can only hope no lives will be lost, people will still want to live and vacation here, raise their children and retire here, enjoy our rich, unique cultural life.

It's not just any one impact, mitigated or unmitigated, it's the number of impacts and the accumulated risk. These are not unknown risks, they are known, documented risks throughout the history of mining. We are too often promised new technology will protect us, yet we still have mining accidents,

oil spills, tanker leaks, toxic drinking water, unmet promises of cleanup that linger unfulfilled for decades.

The risks are unacceptable. There are better alternatives for ensuring the vitality of our community and attracting new businesses. A mine in the middle of town is a ruinous concept in and of itself.

Margaret Burks, Nevada City

THE UNION

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Marilyn Nyborg: Common ground

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Marilyn Nyborg

Once in a blue moon I agree with columnist Terry Maclaughlin. Seems like we totally agree with one another on the common concern about the mine. My concern is no apparent role for the community to play.

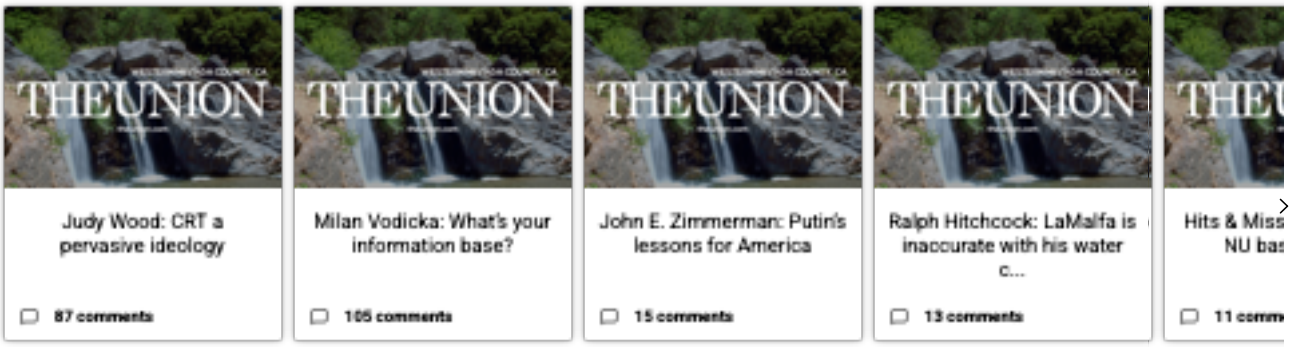
Other than the slick PR Rise puts out, I have yet to speak to a local who was aware of the facts we are facing who wanted it here.

So, Terry, keep on keeping on this subject.

Imagine if we could install solar or wind energy there for the good of all, and profitable as well. And let me add, I consider Terry a friend. A friend where we have listened to one another not to change minds, but to understand the other.

I appreciate her dedication to her beliefs as I do to mine.

Trending Articles



Marilyn Nyborg

Grass Valley

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Martha Turner: Concerns regarding the mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Martha Turner

I have lived in this community most of my life and am deeply concerned about the possibility of Rise Gold reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. I am trying to understand why this company chose to try to open this particular mine in Grass Valley. These are some of my questions:

▪ Was it hoped that the residents of our rural county would simply open our arms to such a heavy industrial operation just 0.6 miles from the Grass Valley city limits?

▪ Was it hoped that we would welcome plans for the waste rock to be trucked, dumped, and compacted at the 56-acre Centennial site, which is two miles away from the mine site and surrounded on three sides by Grass Valley city limits?

▪ Was it hoped we would think this to be a good idea to create a 21 acre, 80- to 90-foot-tall mound on top of an existing toxic waste site?

▪ Was it expected that gold fever and promises of lots of money coming into the economy would keep us from recognizing the enormous cost of such theoretical gains? Most of the jobs they say they will create will be filled by experienced people they bring in.

Trending Articles



▪ Was it hoped that this community would be too unsophisticated to realize the environmental and economic disaster this mine would have on our town? Our town's economic base has moved beyond mining, and later logging, and now thrives on tourism with people being drawn to the natural beauty of the region, which would be destroyed by this mine so close to town.

▪ Was it hoped that we would all have a romantic notion of the good old days, when mining was at the pinnacle of destruction of so much in this region?

▪ Was it hoped or expected that we would be too naïve to organize local opposition to the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine?

I invite everyone in our community to educate themselves about this mine and the impact it would have on the quality of life, the environment, the economy, the health of our citizens and children, and communicate your thoughts to each of the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. It will be just these five individuals who will decide the fate of our community. Learn more at: http://www.minewatchnc.org.

Martha Turner

Grass Valley

8

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Conversation

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CM **Christy M Hubbard** 3 HRS AGO

Well said Martha!!!! GREAT questions!

REPLY 1 0

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Disturbing peace: Residents say pot…

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Mary Anderson: Let the mine continue sleeping

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | May 28, 2021

Mary Anderson | Other Voices

In response to Robert Ross's May 15 Other Voices, "Reopen the mine for world's sake," I would like to offer that those opposing reopening the long sleeping Idaho-Maryland Mine are not hysterical, obsessive, fearful NIMBYs, but a very thoughtful, organized group of people who love this community and don't want to see it destroyed.

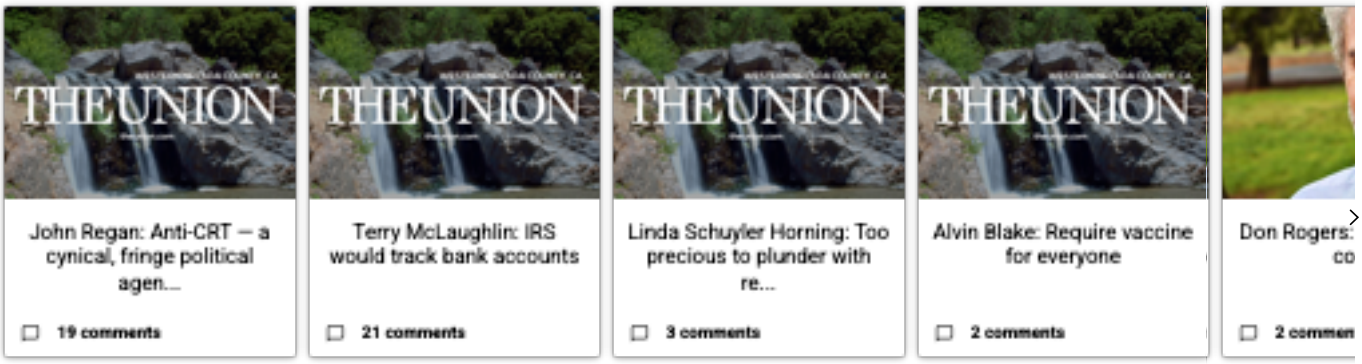
They have spent hours studying verified reports of the effect the mine may have on our community.

I would suggest you take a drive around the residential area surrounding the mine, none of which was here 50 years ago when the mine was operating, and note the significant number of properties where the mine is literally in their backyard. And as the county has had the benefit of property taxes received from those properties all these years, I think the owners should have a say about what goes into their backyards.

So yes, people are very concerned about not just the possible loss and/or pollution of well water, but 24/7 hour noise, the pollutant laden dust, and daily in and out truck traffic that this operation assuredly will bring, to name just a few. There is no guarantee that Rise Gold will be able to mitigate these issues.

As for the water issue alone, there is no plan in place to provide NID water except for a few properties near the mine on East Bennett. Do you have any idea how long it would take to develop a plan, run lines, and the cost to do so if a well happens to lose water? What about the fire hazard if properties lose water?

Trending Articles



And let's not forget the beauty of the landscape that will suffer or the huge carbon footprint from the tremendous amount of electricity that will be required. Since you seem to be concerned about the environment, I would think these things might concern you, too.

I suggest you look at the minewatchnc.org website so you might better understand our concerns. You might even find that gold, even though it has many applications, is still used primarily as a precious metal for jewelry and as a currency stash/investment.

As for monitoring, just because California has strict environmental standards is no guarantee that Rise Gold will meet those standards on an ongoing basis — for 80 years. Which government agencies will be doing this monitoring and how regularly?

Even if the county is "accurately able to test the mine's spoils (pollutants?)," neither is that a guarantee that were there problems, they would be corrected. Then what? Does the mine shut down, go bankrupt and leave us with another mine site to clean up?

I would urge you to go to do some research on Rise Gold's previous mining activities before you trust them to be leaders in safe, environmentally friendly mining. And if the "regulations which will be in place" don't give us a "positive result" and a "clean mine operation," what then?

Yes, environmentalism isn't just about Grass Valley, but I do believe it starts at home.

Mary Anderson lives in Grass Valley.

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Mike Shea: Why I'm against reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 10, 2020

Other Voices
Mike Shea

As you may have heard, a Canadian company, Rise Gold Corporation, and its subsidiary Rise Grass Valley, Inc. (Rise GV), have filed an application with Nevada County for a permit to reopen the Idaho Maryland gold mine.

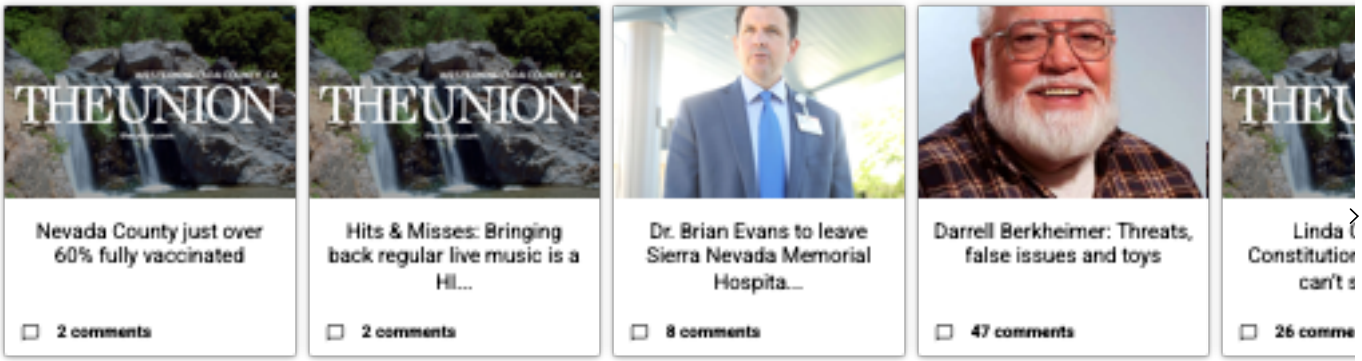
I wanted to know as much as possible about the proposed operation, so have been going through the documents Rise GV submitted to the county to support their application. After reviewing the Project Description, the Groundwater Hydrology and Water Quality Analysis, the Noise and Vibration Analysis, and the Greenhouse Gas Analysis, I am against reopening the mine. Here's why:

Living next door to the proposed mine site, I have some selfish reasons for opposing it. For one thing, my wife and I will have to move, because the noise from the mine will be unbearable. We will no doubt lose money when and if we can sell our house, since the mine will lower the value of our property. After all, who wants to live next door to a gold mine? If you do, I have a house to sell you.

The noise study Rise GV paid for tries to assure us all the nonstop noise will be "less than significant," but I find that self-serving, rather than reassuring. The mine will run 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Each day, 1,500 tons of rock will be hoisted to the surface, dropped into a silo, and then transported over a conveyor system. One thousand tons of rock will be ground down to facilitate extracting the gold. From 6 a.m. until 10 p.m., 1,000 tons of rock will be dumped into metal trailers and then hauled away. Noise from the mine will be nonstop. Right now, all I hear is occasional traffic noise, or a dog barking. In the summer, I like to open my windows and sliding door. I won't be able to do that anymore.

I also have some unselfish reasons for opposing the mine. First, the Greenhouse Gas Analysis that Rise GV commissioned, says at a minimum the mine will emit close to 9,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide a year. Gold isn't a strategic metal vital to modern technology or industry. According to the World Gold Council, 9% of the gold supply is used in electronics, 52% in jewelry, and 27% in bar and coin. That means 79% of the carbon belched into our air would be for jewelry or investments for the wealthy.

Trending Articles



Not mentioned in the Greenhouse Gas Analysis is the contaminated air that will be exhausted from the mine shaft, 24 hours a day, every day. The mine expects to use close to a ton of ammonia nitrate fuel oil and 257 blast detonators every day. The fumes and dust from this blasting will be vented into our air, along with other chemical and physical contaminants found in gold mines. The documents submitted by Rise did not specify where the wind would carry the exhaust, where it might come down, or what it would contain.

The Groundwater Hydrology study Rise Grass Valley paid for used analytical, conceptual, and numerical models to assure us that we'll won't go dry and that "the project would not have any significant impact on groundwater supplies." Yet after the mine shaft is dewatered, they will still suck out over a million gallons of groundwater a day. In spite of their models I wonder how removing all that water might affect our forests. Will it further dry out our trees and increase the fire danger in our community, which is already rated as a "Very High" Fire Hazard Severity zone?

Another concern is the truck traffic. Trucks will be carrying tons of explosives through our town; and every day trucks will be making between 50 and 100 round trips hauling fill rock (containing asbestos and silica). For the first 11 years they will travel to Rise GV's Centennial site next to DeMartini RV and within the Brunswick property. After that they will travel down Brunswick Road to Highway 49 and on to unspecified locations. Every day.

If it's the possible new jobs that make you support reopening the mine, "possible" is a key word. And keep in mind that gold mines aren't a sure-fire thing. What happened to the jobs created by the following gold mines: San Juan Ridge Mine, Sutter Gold Mine, Zortman-Landusky Mine, Buckhorn Mountain Mine, Mineral Ridge Mine, and Pimenton Mine? Gone.

Mike Shea lives in Cedar Ridge.

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Nancy Jacobsen: Disastrous plan for mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 20, 2021

Nancy Jacobsen

I want to commend Sharon Delgado for her recent Other Voices column about the Rise Gold plan. She makes it clear that the environmental impact of the Idaho-Maryland Mine reopening would be disastrous for the community and the planet.

It is inconceivable to me that the Nevada County Board of Supervisors would even consider such a shortsighted proposal. All of the money spent on developing the EIR could be much better spent on other county projects. Hopefully they will put the kibosh on the Rise Gold project sooner rather than later.

Nancy Jacobsen

Grass Valley

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Nora Nausbaum: Not journalism

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | June 30, 2021

Nora Nausbaum

Printing a marketing piece from Rise Gold as news is journalism at its worst.

Nora Nausbaum

Grass Valley

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Conversation

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jezra JULY 1, 2021

Sadly, the follow up 'article' by the Union was also lacking in journalism.

REPLY 1 0

MH **Michael Hill-Weld** JULY 1, 2021

I couldn't agree more. It appears that The Union has become a marketing arm of Rise Gold, Inc. and undermined any credibility it had on the re-opening of the mine. Sad to see The Union get suckered this way.

REPLY 4 0

KN **KN** JUNE 30, 2021

Welcome to this Resort Tabloid!

REPLY 0 2

Corniglio Digli JUNE 30, 2021

Yup. As noted by many here. Thank you, NN.

REPLY 2 0

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Nora Nausbaum: Don’t choose commerce over health

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | April 26, 2021

Nora Nausbaum

The mine is a terrible idea. Who among us would welcome the increased noise and traffic 24 hours a day from heavily leaden trucks on our streets? Not to mention the possibility of nearby wells going dry or our air poisoned, our soil and water table degraded.

It’s naive to think there will be more than a handful of jobs. It is shameful if we choose commerce over health and well-being. I don’t trust the CEO of this corporation based on past environmental violation.

Nora Nausbaum

Grass Valley

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Paul Boisvert: Concern over Idaho-Maryland Mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | June 17, 2020

A reactivation of the old Idaho-Maryland gold mine is being proposed by an outside Canadian business. I am very concerned. To allow mining, Rise Gold Co. will be requesting a use permit. Surely that cannot be fair to people who have purchased homes near that area with an understanding that the mine was deactivated.

An outside business entity has no vested interest in our community. It will operate the mine as long as it is profitable and will abandon our community when there is no more money to be made. Local residents will be left to deal with any collateral damage that may occur, which is always a distinct possibility.

We only need to recall the 1996 San Juan Ridge calamity when a reactivated mine breached an aquifer and drained the wells of a dozen private residences and the well of the local school.

Grass Valley is no longer a Gold Rush mining town. It is primarily residential with a large population of retirees who have been supporting our town and businesses for many years. Their interests should take priority over outside business interests.

Paul Boisvert

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Paul Molino: We have done this before

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | September 18, 2020

Other Voices
Paul Molino

Communities can rebuild and recover amazingly fast after facing challenges like fire, pandemics, or unemployment. We have done this before. The momentum often takes on a life of its own when caught up in the spirit of the times. Nevada County was on a high tech recovery in the 1980s and '90s and the opportunity was not in gold mines.

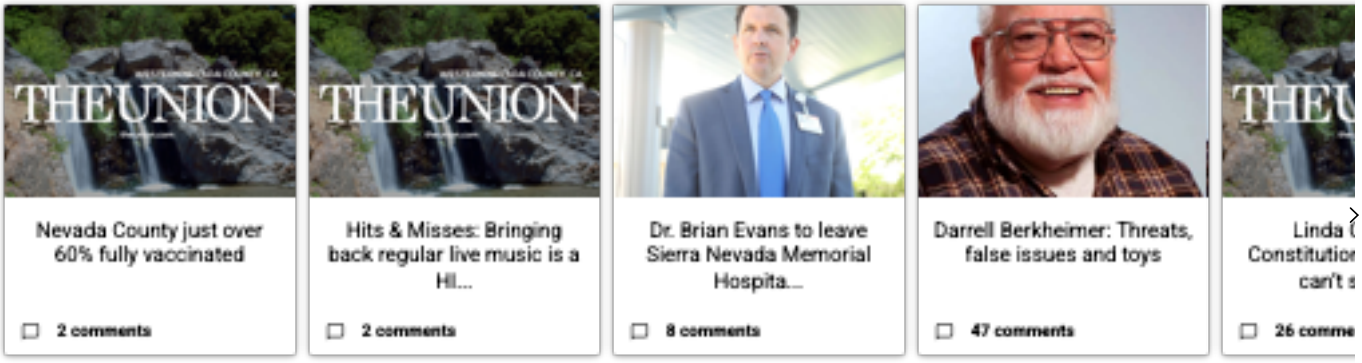
I've nothing against gold mines, having worked in the mine off Tyler Foote Road near the town North Bloomfield. But digging holes in the ground while destroying neighborhoods is not progress.

Idaho Maryland's Errol MacBoyle would want us to invest in the future and not in carpet baggers like Rise Gold. And yet we still do not have affordable high speed internet or the ability to call for a tow truck from the Yuba River.

The momentum was here in our community for newer technologies well before there was an internet. We had businesses that were manufacturing printed circuit boards and small start ups were busy in graphic design and computer based work. Grass Valley Group was designing and making technology. Our own county supervisor, Peter Van Zant, authored one of the best textbooks in the country on semiconductor technology. I've never met Peter but a lot of us owe him for describing a complicated subject in plain English. Nevada County was also home to a number of process engineering firms.

Arts and technology often evolve in partnership with each other and during this technical renaissance visual arts, music and stage performances grew beyond belief and continue today even during the pandemic.

Trending Articles



We had the momentum then but now we struggle. We have not invested in technical infrastructure and that slows down everything. The result is an absence of living wage jobs in an extremely desirable foothill community that could lend itself to a knowledge-based and distance economy.

Sierra Commons in Nevada City is an excellent example of a knowledge-based momentum builder. We want to sustain these types of ventures and to do that we need to partner and invest in affordable high speed Internet for everyone.

We are a resilient bunch with an abundance of talent for restoring old locomotives to learning how to work from home. Locally we have some exciting new faces coming on board in November so its time to set aside petty ideologies about technology and get to work.

The gold in these hills resides not with Rise Gold's mine but with our young people, our resilience, and the shared values we treasure.

Paul Molino lives in Grass Valley.

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Paul S. Schwartz: Better uses for the Idaho Maryland Mine property

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | January 7, 2022

Paul S. Schwartz | Other Voices

There are many development options for the Idaho-Maryland Mine property on Brunswick Road that are better than reopening the mine.

Many options are consistent with the Nevada County General Plan and would not require zoning changes, special use permits, or variances that reopening the mine requires.

There are many development options that bring synergy to current community development and economic strengths. Reopening the ine does not.

There are many options that address community needs, such as low-income housing, employment, carbon reduction and energy efficiency. Reopening the mine does not contribute solutions to any of these community needs.

I would like to offer one development plan vision for the 119-acre Idaho-Maryland Mine property. A good plan would contribute to our growing community economic strengths in tourism, recreation,and the green industry. It would also help solve ongoing and chronic challenges in housing, employment, energy efficiency, and carbon reduction. A good plan would offer opportunities to contribute to the needs of our seniors and the challenges facing the government sector.

Trending Articles



I propose a development that includes five uses for the 119 acres. Two of the uses are currently visible at the mine property. Space would be provided for the senior wood project and the emergency lay-down area for fire equipment staging and PG&E emergency equipment and materials staging. These are two important uses needed to serve our community.

Granted, neither of these two generate ongoing revenue to support their presence and the business plan for the redevelopment of the Idaho-Maryland Mine property would need to address this.

The third use I propose would be a commercial RV park including electric, water, and waste service at each site. When looking at the RV park industry, you will find a portion of typical parks offer space for long-term residents while reserving the majority of the park for visitors staying less than two weeks.

This concept would also increase the inventory of destinations during mandatory fire evacuations. The RV park would add another option for tourists visiting our area.

Which leads me to use No. 4: Partner with Empire Mine State Park and the city of Grass Valley to develop a walking and bike trail from Idaho-Maryland Mine to Empire State Park and Memorial Park. The trail could follow Little Wolf Creek.

If I remember correctly, Grass Valley has a utility easement along the creek that former Senior Planner Bill Roberts assured the city Planning Commission could be used for a future trail. The combination of the RV park and the trail would strengthen recreation assets in the area and would add another attractive dimension to the Colfax Avenue business district.

The final use I would propose is a solar farm that's sized to support the RV park and other uses at the project.

Using the land-use metrics of the current proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine of preserving up to 59 acres of the 119-acre site as open space, leaving 60 acres for the new development. Picture 30 acres designated for the solar farm, trails, and lay down areas.

That would leave 30 acres for the RV park. Picture a conceptual 12 RV pads per acre and the opportunity to develop 360 pads utilizing less than 50% of the 30 acres.

This would leave the remaining 50% for circulation, open space, picnic areas, office, store, restroom and shower facilities.

The property could be purchased by Nevada County or in partnership with the city of Grass Valley and Empire Mine State Park using low interest bond funds. The RV park and solar farm could be operated as partnerships with private sector vendors specializing in those types of enterprise or operated within the public management infrastructure.

Obviously, there is a lot of research and number crunching to complete, but the research I have done suggests this concept would pencil out.

Paul S. Schwartz lives in Grass Valley.

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Ideas & Opinions – Paul Schwartz: Incompatible uses

Paul Schwartz
Mar 31, 2023

The economist representing RDN and the Niehaus Economic Impact Report on the proposal to reopen the defunct Idaho Maryland Mine at the 12/15/22 webinar spoke about their research into comparable projects and the impact of introducing industrial mining on real estate values. RDN stated that there were no comparable studies or approvals of mining enterprises as close to residential neighborhoods as the defunct Idaho Maryland Mine is to the 90 homes within a half mile of the proposed industrial site. They also stated they could find no comparable industrial mining enterprises approved or operating 24 hour a day, seven days a week located as close as a half mile to residential development. Therefore, they could only speculate on the impact to real estate values. The obvious question is how many proposed industrial mining projects were rejected by governing municipalities because of the adjacency to residential development and the resulting negative impacts?

Excerpts From Exhibit A, Draft Statement of Reasons to Permit Development in a Mineral Resource Zone, City of Auburn

Our neighboring city of Auburn approved the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan that proposed a multi-use residential and commercial development in a Mineral Resource Zone. Within this zone, “the State Geologist has concluded

that significant inferred gold resources are believed to exist", however, in spite of potential gold mining tax revenues and jobs, Exhibit A represented that "Mining is Incompatible with adjacent Land Uses". The areas around the Mineral Resource Zone have been developed with low-density residential uses. "Because mining activities would already be incompatible with these developed areas due to noise, dust, traffic and other nuisances, the project site should be developed for non-mining uses." Exhibit A goes on to say that even though mining has been a large part of the past in the area, "mining no longer makes up a substantial portion of industrial activity in the County". Similar to Nevada County, mining in Placer County represents less than .1% of the economy.

Nevada County would be wise to formally acknowledge that industrial gold mining is part of our past and not part of our future. The economy of the future will be built on a diverse mix of clean manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade, healthcare, education, arts and entertainment, recreation and tourism, government and government services. Success will draw on the willingness of County, City, non-profits, State and National Forest, utilities, and private sector leadership to collaborate and partner in solutions that lead us to a sustainable and balanced economic future.

Paul Schwartz

Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-paul-stackhouse-we-were-not-deceived-by-the-economic-help-rise-gold-was/article_dfa5aac8-f9d2-11ed-a765-ebf8a4c87189.html

Ideas & Opinions — Paul Stackhouse: We were not deceived by the "economic help" Rise Gold was pandering

Paul Stackhouse
May 24, 2023

“You may have blocked the mine, but how are Nevada County residents going to pay the bills?” – Lawrence W. Lepard, Director of Rise Gold Corporation (13 May 2023, The Union)

Mr. Lepard, you don’t get it. We were not deceived by the “economic help” Rise Gold was pandering. The residents of Nevada County had no desire to be left with the burden of rehabilitating the inevitable environmental ruin that Rise Gold’s ill-conceived eighty-year mining project would have “gifted” our community. Mr. Lepard, we are not as naïve and ignorant as you perceived us to be. We voted with our voices. We voted with our letters. We voted with our presence. We exercised our collective agency and voted our values. We united in solidarity against your greedy, existential threat to our community. What you heard, Mr. Lepard; what you witnessed, Mr. Lepard; what you experienced, Mr. Lepard; and what silenced the ch-ching of Rise Gold’s bottom line, Mr. Lepard, was the goodness of the folks of Nevada County. You see, we care. We care for our lifestyle. We care for our environment. We care for our neighbors. We care for each other. We are, Mr. Lepard, Nevada County Strong.

Paul Stackhouse, Nevada City

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Ralph Silberstein: In response to The Union publisher's provocative piece on Rise Gold project

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 23, 2020

Columns published by a community newspaper generally endeavor to address issues in a factual and respectful manner. The publication of columns such as The Union publisher's July 10 piece "Not so fast with writing off the mine" seem to cross the line in a way that is a disservice to the community.

Here are just a few of the many points that were misguided:

Regarding the claim that people should support the mine because it will clean up the existing tailings: the legacy tailings are being cleaned up regardless of whether or not the mine project is approved. The clean-up is an ongoing project under the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). Even if the permit to open the mine is never granted, RISE is required to clean up the tailings. That is a good thing. No one is trying to stop that.

Regarding the notion that most of the mining destruction and noise was pre-civil war: the American Civil War ended in 1865, the year that claims were staked for the Maryland Mine. The Idaho Quartz Mining Company erected their first stamp mill after 1867. The major mineral processing and machinery in the area didn't really get started until long after that and continued full-bore and noisily for nearly a century.

> "I think a better acronym would be "NIABYs" (Not In Anybody's Back Yard).

The oft-used denigration of concerned citizens as "NIMBYs" (Not In My Backyard) and "know-nothing neighbors resorting to rumors," belies the legitimate concerns about noise and dust (trucks, graders, compactors) as they build aggregate pads up to 90-foot deep covering 31 acres adjacent to residential neighborhoods. And having one's well go dry or become polluted is a legitimate concern. So if a person wants to stoop to name-calling, I think a better acronym would be "NIABYs" (Not In Anybody's Back Yard). And given the point that the mine would produce greenhouse gas emissions equal to about 5,000 homes while we face a global climate crisis, an even better acronym would be "NOPE" (Not On Planet Earth).

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After all, does it really make sense to blight our town so that a Canadian company can excavate rock from depths of 5,000 feet to get maybe an ounce of gold per ton when it would completely cancel out Nevada County's Electricity Energy Reduction Goals?

To be fair, the conclusions of the column did list conditions for approval. "1. Truly improve the community's environmental health. 2. Benefit the local economy. 3. Fit in the neighborhood." These are good conditions. This mine fails to meet them.

To get the facts, RISE Gold's Idaho-Maryland Mine permit application documents can be viewed at the Nevada County website, at https://www.mynevadacounty.com/2882/Application-Documents—Rise-Grass-Valley. Visit https://www.cea-nc.org/category/the-idaho-maryland-mine/ for additional information.

Ralph Silberstein, a member of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, lives in Grass Valley.

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Ray Bryars: A small aircraft airport, really?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

Ray Bryars | Other Voices

I'm gradually working my way through the Idaho-Maryland Mine project draft environmental report and can't believe the amount of misinformation that I am encountering.

The latest is in the Hazards and Hazardous Materials section, on page 4.7-10, under the heading of "Nearest Airports." The first paragraph states, "The closest public use airport to the project site is the Nevada County Air Park, a small aircraft airport, located east of Brunswick Road and north of Loma Rica Drive, less than one mile (approximately 4,000 feet) from the Brunswick Industrial Site."

By referencing "a small aircraft airport," it appears that there is an attempt to minimize the importance of the Nevada County Airport. There is no acknowledgment that this is a major base for the U.S. Forest Service and CalFire. The location places the airport 20 minutes from other airports, which during fire season provides robust coverage of Nevada County and adjacent counties.

The county website, mynevadacounty.com, has the following information regarding the airport:

"Nevada County Airport is home to the Forest Service and CalFire Grass Valley Air Attack Base. This center of wildland firefighting from the air is the permanent location for two Grumman S-2 air tankers that drop fire retardant, and two air attack aircraft that coordinate the efforts of the tankers and other firefighting assets and personnel. Aircraft from Nevada County Airport are on standby, ready to respond to fires throughout the foothills and mountains. When larger fires occur nearer to the airport, many other firefighting aircraft use the airport as a base for operations. Search and Rescue and med-evac aircraft also use the airport year-round for public safety missions."

Trending Articles



In addition, I found the airport is used for law enforcement, business, transportation, tourism and education for youth through programs such as the Young Eagles Program.

It is shocking that Rise Gold ignores the huge positive benefit that the airport provides by stating that it is a "small aircraft airport."

Does Rise Grass Valley want to minimize the importance of the airport so that we will ignore the fact that they will be transporting and storing explosives within 4,000 feet of the airport and right under some of the flight paths?

In the fall of 2021 we had two potentially disastrous fires just below the airport, plus the River Fire just a few miles south. Imagine what it would have been like if the planes that were fighting these fires became grounded due to the possibility of explosives being ignited. Many of us witnessed the great job that the firefighters did and are very aware of the extremely brisk spread that was only brought under control by rapid action by many brave firefighters and the pilots from the Nevada County Airport.

It amazes me that Nevada County allows a penny stock speculator with his history of running away from the Banks Island Gold to spill in British Columbia, Canada, followed by declaring bankruptcy, can be allowed to hold hostage the residents of Grass Valley and Nevada County.

There must be a way to stop wasting everyone's time and put an end to the possibility of re-opening the Idaho-Maryland Mine forever. I implore our county supervisors to do the right thing for the community and end this whack-a-mole madness. The airport is vital to the safety, vitality and future of Nevada County.

Ray Bryars lives in Nevada City.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/opinion---ray-bryars-economic-impact-report/article_300cd1ca-97cd-11ed-9813-77ce60924d57.html

Opinion - Ray Bryars: Economic Impact Report

Ray Bryars
Jan 20, 2023

Experts review the Economic Impact Report for the proposed Idaho Maryland Mine. The report was prepared by Robert D Niehaus (RDN).

I attended the excellent Webinar discussing the recently released Economic Impact Report for the Idaho Maryland Mine that Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEAF) organized on December 20th. A group of very knowledgable presenters conducted detailed analysis in a number of areas. The amount of information was overwhelming, so this is an attempt to list some, of their concerns — There are many more.

Well monitoring to provide a baseline for the DEIR was a requirement when the most recent San Juan Ridge MIne, also known as the Siskon Mine was approved. A similar requirement must be placed on Rise Gold to ensure that over 300 wells are monitored for at least 3 years.

CEAF is concerned that there are many unanswered questions in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Therefore it cannot be considered “Final”.

Dr David Chambers noted that a Technical Report NI 43-101 has not been

completed for 5 years. So this is all we have to go on. It showed that there is not enough information to specify any mineral resources and mineral reserves. It is highly unusual to ask for a production permit without these being defined. Dr Chambers claims that he has never seen such a lack of information.

Economic impact of Waste disposal. This is a problem because selling mine waste is difficult due to liability risks. Testing is required, but the current samples are not adequate. Most buyers will be reluctant to buy since there are many lower risk alternatives.

Characterization of mine waste is suspect since It was not tested properly. Distilled water was used instead of the typically used, weak acid solution.

Since there has not been proper testing of mine waste rock. If it could not be sold, where would the 2 million tons in 11 years of mining go?

Financial assurance must be a requirement. It is common that mines have catastrophic events that end up being a burden on the community. We need to be assured that if there is a catastrophic event or the mine closes, it is done properly so there is not an impact to the community. The caveat is that historically, financial assurance, never covers catastrophic events. However there should be enough money put aside to compensate the community in case a catastrophe occurs and the the mine goes bankrupt.

Does anyone seriously believe that there can ever be justification to permit a mine operation for 80 years? There is nothing that would justify this.

Rise claims that it will be 3 years to get to full production. This is contrary to

the reality that typically the industry takes 6 — 7 years after the permits are obtained. This will have a huge financial impact and should be seriously considered. Note that the time to get permits was not considered.

The CEAF experts feel that spending patterns of construction and mine workers is overblown. Construction workers will likely be from outside the county, will probably share accommodation and spend much less than expected in the community. Their estimate is that spending would be 1/4 of that claimed.

The cost to mine that Rise Gold is using is 1/2 of the industry average. This is way too optimistic and should have been seriously questioned in the Economic Impact Report.

James Steinmann's conclusion on the Economic Impact Report: "The input data is questionable, the benefits are substantially overstated, the costs of operation are understated and the risks are ignored".

Charlie Brock a local Real Estate expert strongly contests the conclusion that there will be no effect on real estate values. The consensus of surveyed agents was that there will be long term detrimental effects.

Another expert estimated that even a small (5-10%) negative impact on tourism plus the impact on property values would be far greater than any positive financial impact that the mine claims. • The comparisons with other mines that was used for looking at the impacts on property values was seriously misleading. There were none that had the same housing density, so close to the mine. We have approximately 2000 homes within 1/2 mile from the mine.

Not discussed, but important, is that Economic Impact Reports for other mine operations, commonly include a comparison of the economic impact of alternative uses for the property. This may be an intentional omission since there are likely many other uses for the site that could provide greater benefits, with very much less risk and environmental impact.

What is the estimated cost for installing the infrastructure, construction of buildings, purchase and installation of equipment and excavation down to a point where gold can be extracted? A detailed economic report should include a timeline of expenditures and income to show the breakeven point.

The cost to first cleanup the Centennial Site was not included, but it should be completed to show the true economic picture. The mine intends to dump mine waste rock on this site.

The Remedial Action Plan for the Centennial Site will not be complete until sometime in 2023. Since the use of this site is a major part of the project plan, it seems wrong to move forward until this is finalized.

To see the CEA Webinar go to: https://www.minewatchnc.org and click on: “The Other Side of the Story”

You are encouraged to write your concerns to your supervisor and attend Planning Commission and Supervisors meetings. Look for public meeting dates, your participation is important.

bdofsupervisors@co.nevada.ca.us

BOS.PublicComment@co.nevada.ca.us

Ray Bryars, Nevada City.

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Richard Blair: Invest in fiber optics, not mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | August 5, 2021

Richard Blair

My wife and I have lived in the area for 20 years, raising a family and enjoying the beautiful natural setting. We received a marketing piece from Rise Gold and are so concerned for the probable negative impacts to our roads, water and lifestyle.

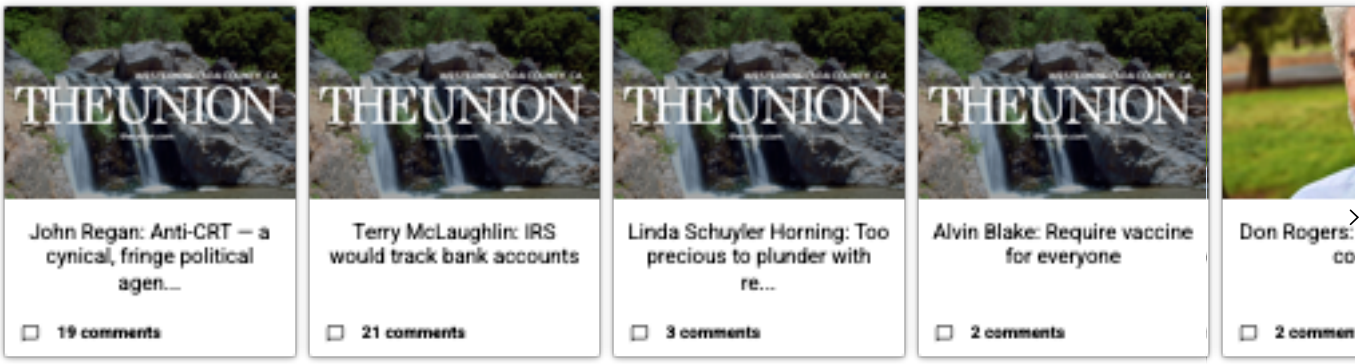
I wanted to give another perspective with respect to jobs. We moved here purposely from Sacramento looking for a place to raise our children. I needed to be within reasonable distance from an airport for my job with Pfizer Medical Affairs. Grass Valley fit the bill and we love it here.

Nevada City/Grass Valley is a perfect community to attract Bay Area/Sacramento (and beyond) workers who have flexibility to live where they want. This is now enhanced by the evolution of the COVID-19 effect of more workers now able to work remotely.

I plead the case that we embrace the idea of attracting remote workers through the beauty and lifestyle of the area as the selling point. Recently our neighborhood got very fast fiber optic internet, which makes remote work much more realistic.

Invest in making this a great choice as work for so many changes. Many people with good six-figure incomes live and thrive in Nevada County, and many more would come as remote work flourishes and Nevada County is not destroyed by inappropriate industrial projects that do not belong right in the middle of our community.

Trending Articles



Think bigger than jobs at the expense our incredibly beautiful attractive community. We can have it all without the destruction proposed by Rise Gold.

Richard Blair

Grass Valley

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Richard Drace: Rise Gold proposal is risky, rude and just plain wrong

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 23, 2021

Richard Drace | Other Voices

The many contributors who have expressed their significant concerns about the Rise Gold proposal deserve our thanks. Perhaps it's time for a bit of summary of a few salient points. Taken together, their arguments present a compelling case for denying the project application.

Water, water, (not) everywhere: Scientists say they've been wrong about climate change; it's happening more quickly and more severely than they predicted. We're in a climate-change-influenced megadrought. Yet pumping out a million gallons a day or more for 80 years is no problem because a computer model, quite possibly is as much a parody of objectivity as the recent Rise satisfaction survey, says it will be OK?

Job applicant: If you were an employer and you looked at Ben Mossman's resumé and his references for his company, would you hire him? Past performance may be no guarantee of future results, but it sure is a strong indicator when it comes to a sketchy company CEO's track record.

Show me the money: "Undercapitalized" is an understatement. The Rise Gold Corp. says they will raise the money from investors optimistic about the project's success. And if things go poorly and the stock value plummets, where's the financial capacity to deal with consequences?

Organizational capacity: Project proponents must present reliable evidence that they have the wherewithal to fulfill expectations. Rise Gold simply asserts without evidence that they will be able to fulfill their huge claims.

Trending Articles



Fail safe? Too many projects have been approved assuming the proposed mitigations will perform as assured. Yet we don't inhabit a world where pipelines don't leak, levees don't fail, dams aren't breached, tailings don't leach, and water isn't polluted. That everything will work — for 80 years — just fine. Even if everything performed as planned, the negative impacts are substantial. If things don't work as asserted, the consequences would be dire.

Trickle down: If the project proceeds, minor benefits would trickle down to our community, while major profits gusher up to out-of-the-area investors. If any part of the "fail" in fail safe happens, a setback will ooze up to Rise Gold, while long-term consequences will inundate our community.

Won't you (not) be my neighbor? Although the project site is zoned for such activities, the removal of tailings will cause impacts well beyond the immediate vicinity. To propose running trucks 24/7 indicates a crass indifference to all those neighbors who will be denied peaceful enjoyment of their properties and almost certain severe depreciation of their property values. Although not technically

meeting the legal definition of a “taking” — a devaluation of value due to a change in property status — in reality the outcome would almost certainly be exactly that.

Mining legacy: Yes, mining is central to our community’s historical identity. We now have a clear choice — which parts of that legacy do we want to perpetuate? The noise and vibration of stamp mills running 24 hours a day? Tailings leaching to this day at Empire Mine? Waterways and farmland devastated from hydraulic mining runoff? Or shall we proudly choose to carry on the legacy of the Sawyer Decision of 1884: The first in our state’s history to grant environmental relief from the effects of unrestrained mineral extraction practices?

Richard Drace lives in Grass Valley.

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Robert Hubbard: How to keep mine compliant?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | May 27, 2021

Robert Hubbard | Other Voices

There are a number of problems associated with the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Among these are noise pollution, air pollution, traffic congestion, contamination of our streams, and loss of our wells.

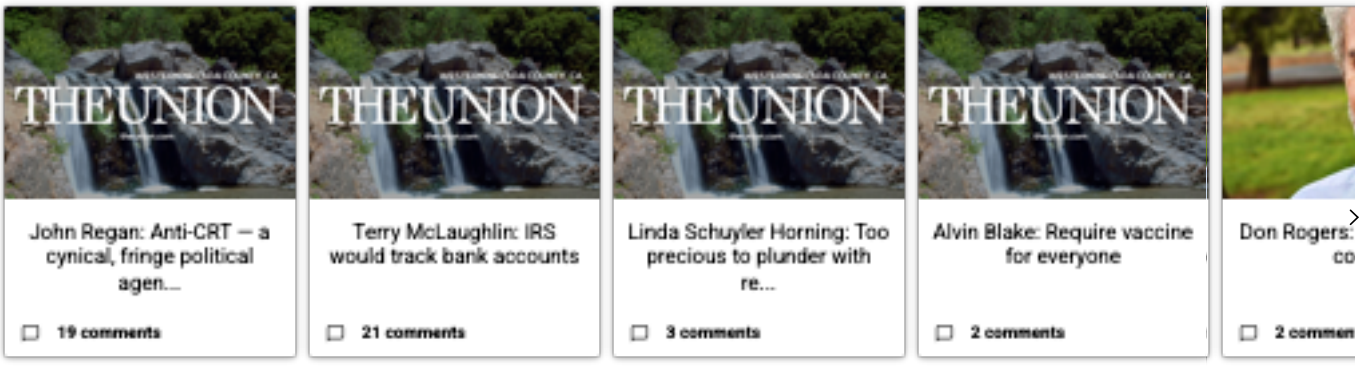
Rise Gold denies that some of these exist, and says that it can mitigate the effect of others, to keep them within statutory limits.

When mining was the major activity in Grass Valley and the surrounds, miners dug holes, dumped the resulting piles of rock wherever it was convenient, used mercury, cyanide and other toxic elements to extract the gold and left the toxic remains scattered over the landscape.

Today, as the society has become more aware of the dangers of these toxins, strict laws controlling their use and disposal have been enacted. The same is true of other activities occurring in mining, as well as in other businesses: noise, traffic, other toxins in air and water, and the like. Limits have been set, and penalties for infringing on those limits have been established.

Corporate behavior, however, is much like human behavior, and much as some individuals find it more convenient to dump their trash on the roadside, many profit driven corporations have little incentive to go the extra mile to ensure that their impact on their surroundings is minimal or non-existent.

Trending Articles



The number of corporations that go out of their way to improve the community in which they exist is a rare topic for a newspaper article. Unfortunately, the number of articles written about the environmental and human damage done by industries associated with mining, logging, and oil and gas extraction are too numerous to catalog.

The laws governing these activities are on the books. Unfortunately, enforcement of those laws is by complaint in Nevada County. Who, then will complain about violations more subtle than traffic and noise, things like water and air pollution?

Rise Gold is asking the county for a permit to operate a gold mine in the center of a residential community for 80 years. Should that permit be granted, there are no constraints to the mine then being sold to the highest bidder.

In order to prevent a catastrophic result, Rise Gold should be required to address how, specifically, it will deal with each issue which arises in the Environmental Impact Report. It should be required to address how it will respond to each possibility should things not go as planned, and it should be required to post bond against the failure to meet the obligations it has assumed, and against cleanup after the end of 80 years or if the project fails at some future point.

Accidents will happen, especially over a period of 80 years. The county needs to set limits on what level of compliance is acceptable and needs to establish a penalty structure which ensures that paying repeated penalties for violating the same regulation does not become simply a cost of doing business.

The county must also require Rise Gold to establish the means and the funding for an independent agency to monitor each of the mitigation topics under consideration. The county has neither the manpower nor the resources to do this, but it is the only way in which the owners of the mine, whoever they may be in the future, can be kept in compliance with the terms of the permit for the next 80 years.

Robert Hubbard lives in Grass Valley.

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Robert Erickson: Close the mine permanently

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | April 27, 2021

Robert Erickson

I have been following the repeated efforts over the past several years, perhaps decades, to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine.

It seems to me that the governmental decision makers, be they city or county, need to make a final decision that will put the current applicant, and any subsequent ones, on notice that this will not be allowed.

Sure, we have a long history as a gold mining region. This history has left behind substantial unremediated costs in addition to enriching a number of owners.

Restoration of the mine to production likely would generate vast additional negative impacts to our environment, residents and property owners while providing minimal benefit to the community.

Profits would largely accrue to stock holders resident elsewhere. I assert that it is fundamentally unfair to allow applicants to proceed on the belief that their proposals have a chance of approval. The gate should be closed permanently by ordinance.

Robert Erickson

Grass Valley

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Robin Hart: The real Nevada County gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 18, 2021

Robin Hart | Other Voices

I have been a resident of Nevada County for more than 20 years. My husband and I moved here for the small-town charm, robust arts scene, natural beauty (as the gateway to the Sierra), as well as a good place to retire someday.

When we recently sold our home in Alta Sierra after 20 years, we decided we loved this area so much that we stayed and moved closer to town to spend our retirement years. Now Rise Gold has plans to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine and spoil all of this.

After the mines closed in the 1950s, Grass Valley and Nevada City reinvented themselves as tourist and retirement destinations. Thousands of people come every year for our fair, many concerts, festivals and street fairs like Cornish and Victorian Christmas and destination weddings. People enjoy our historic downtowns in both places. They also come to play in our forests and lakes.

When we moved up to Nevada County, Grass Valley and Nevada City areas were in the top cities to retire to. That is all in jeopardy now if the mine reopening is approved.

Who will want to come and visit us if all they are treated to when they get into town is the constant noisy parade of large commercial trucks hauling loads from the mine, not to mention the dust and debris that we can expect over the towns, the constant explosions underground that who knows if we'll hear or feel, and the potential degradation of our waterways?

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Who will want to live here if our towns become an industrial wasteland? The short-term financial gains from the mine reopening may be the long-term devastation of our local economy and the real estate market here. It's hard enough with the threats of drought and fire to have this added to the mix too.

Our real estate boom may become a real estate bust if people sell off to move to a better place without these issues and people shun our area as an undesirable place to live. How will the county operate if the property tax revenues plummet from devaluation? Think of all our local businesses that have struggled through the pandemic only to have this happen to them.

I love our towns and don't want to see this miserable future for us for the next 80 years that would affect our children's children. I hope the county supervisors will see what the real Nevada County gold is, and that is our beautiful part of western Nevada County. iI is not the mine.

If you are concerned about this possible future for our towns, please write or call your county supervisor to let them know you oppose the reopening of the mine.

Robin Hart lives in Grass Valley.

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Rondal Snodgrass: At the least, make mine put up hefty bond

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 21h ago

Rondal Snodgrass | Other Voices

I have studied with much interest and concern about the application of Rise Gold to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. The potential environmental impacts are serious, as reported in the draft environmental impact erport.

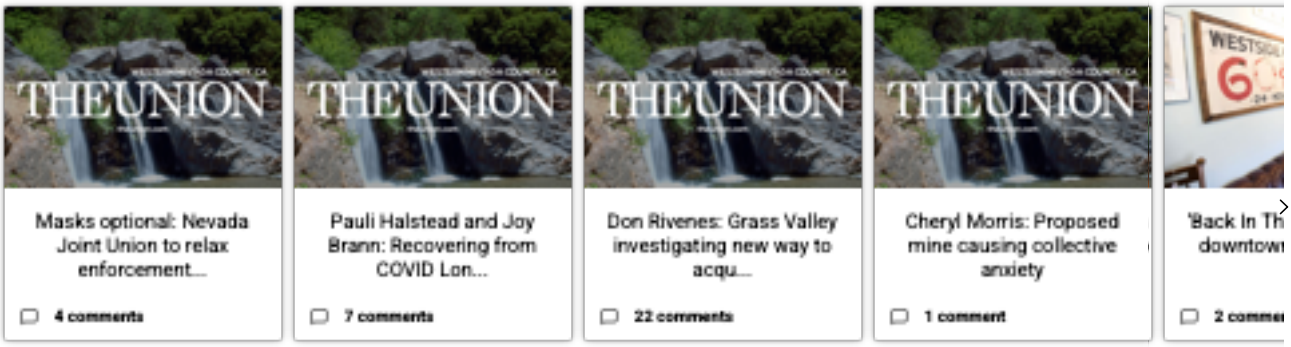
In their application, Rise Gold is proposing extensive mining operations that could greatly alter the peaceful climate of Grass Valley, disrupt normal commerce, and re-create the very dangerous industry of underground mining.

When considering the viability of such a corporate development proposal, it calls upon good business practices to ask for the credentials of the applicant, require proof of economic viability, a business history, and the resume of the representative leadership.

I have learned that Rise Gold is a speculative company. They have no business history. The present stockholders are gold investors throughout the United States., Canada, off shore, and Wall Street.

It is a company formed without the capital needed for the project, but raised money through loans and stock sales to get the land, pay for environmental impact report consultants, and hire a public relations firm.

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Some commentators on gold-driven companies say they mine stock value, and hope for gold. They are creating profits by manipulating value as they use government processes and public relations.

The permit, if ever granted, would multiply stock values. That permit could then be sold.

A glaring and shocking fact that I uncovered is that the Rise Gold's present CEO has previously been embroiled in a failed mine, financed in this same way, up in British Columbia. The corporation he managed, called Banks Island Gold Ltd., declared bankruptcy when the government ordered the mine closure.

The mine's safety engineer became a whistle blower, sending photos of damage to government officials, bringing in helicopters and regulators. At that time there were 35 charges of failed compliance regarding environmental and safety standards.

Court cases continue with fines and appeals of this CEO's role in the mine failure.

The mine is located on Banks Island, off shore from Prince Rupert, and is within territory of the Indian Gitxala Nation. They are outraged with the damage, possible destruction of traditional bird, fish and animal habitat, and the mess that must be cleaned up.

The costs of remuneration are hundreds of thousands of dollars, with the public and the government of British Columbia stuck with most of the cost. Banks Island Mine Ltd. did not post adequate bonds to cover such potential damages.

A sad personal story is that the employees of Banks Island Mine Ltd. did not receive their severance benefits. Also there are pages after pages of unsecured creditors that were not paid.

Nevada County must look at the Rise Gold application with extreme caution. I read from newspaper accounts and Rise Gold's press releases that the application is costing a huge amount of money. There are hundreds of hours of county and related agencies staff time, and for the volunteers on the planning commission, and much angst, concern and interest of the general public.

It's very interesting that even Rise Gold itself cautions investors and states on its website: "No current mineral resources or mineral reserves have been defined ... The company has not completed a feasibility study to establish mineral reserves and therefore has not demonstrated economic viability for the Idaho-Maryland Mine."

And also, very concerning is this from the Securities and Exchange Commissions reports about Gold Rise's publicity: " ... such press releases that contain forward looking statements within the meaning of applicable securities laws ... Words such as plan, expect, intend, believe, anticipate, and estimate that certain events or condition may or will occur, accordingly readers should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements and information contained in this release."

Rise Gold stated the estimated cost of the project would be $100 million for full development. They have requested an 80-year permit, which is extreme, into the next century! That's four generations into the future.

To ensure the viability of the applicant, the county should require Rise Gold to post performance and environmental safety bonds to continue being a permit applicant. I suggest 7%, or $7 million.

We need to look at this with eyes wide open. Without such safety, we could end up like other towns, and rural areas that were left holding the bag by gold mines for failed promises and non-redeemable environmental damages.

Good insurance covering loss and liability is a common practice and should be required to help safeguard our county's economic, environmental and civic vitality.

Rondal Snodgrass has been a conservation land consultant in California for over 30 years and holds a degree in economics from the University of Oregon. He lives in Nevada City.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-rondal-snodgrass-disturbing-the-peace/article_6beaf810-907a-11ee-80cc-57c007e728b7.html

Ideas & Opinions — Rondal Snodgrass: Disturbing the peace

Rondal Snodgrass | Other Voices
Dec 2, 2023

A person can be charged with disturbing the peace for a number of disruptive activities including loud and unreasonable noise violations. (CA Penal Code Section 415)

The reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine would disturb the peace of our communities.

Decades have passed since any noisy industrial activity has filled our roads with large trucks crowding the roadways. Traffic flows now operate in a continued pattern of safe and secure travel. Our roads have settled into a rural, community rhythm.

A thriving reputation of relaxed living, cultural diversity, with quiet nights, and many arts and entertainment venues attract admiring visitors. The holiday lights, the seasonal colors, the proximity of the Yuba River, the miles of hiking trails, multiple restaurants, small businesses and shops welcome

people to our towns.

Best of all, those of us fortunate to live here are able to enjoy those same amenities, just as those vacationing visitors do. We go for walks, enjoy the historic feel of the buildings, enjoy all the congeniality and trust shared in our lifestyle, and the quiet, especially the quiet, peaceful days and nights.

For the past few years, a monster has been at the city limits, a foreign corporation, anxious to upset the apple cart with promises of dollars and jobs. And doing this even while they admit their proposed operation would be noisy and disturbing with continued blasting and explosions for many years. The Canadian corporation named Rise Grass Valley was aptly named, because their plans have caused a huge uprising in our community.

Thousands of people petitioned the Board of Supervisors to dismiss this heinous, misleading corporate attack on our community. Officialdom acted responsibly, with the Planning Commission recommending denial of the requested use permit, and refusing to certify the Environmental Impact Report. Before the Supervisors could meet to accept the Planning Commission report, a bit of skullduggery, underhanded and unscrupulous behavior, and legalistic trickery entered the process. A petition for vested rights was filed to challenge all the years of hard work, exhaustive review, and honest listening by the Supervisors, Planning Commission, and County staff.

Now we the people of Nevada County must rise up ourselves and stand up for our democratic government. We need to be at the Rood Center by 9am on December 13. Our presence will make a convincing statement, while informed citizens representing our concerns will offer testimony debunking the petition. Our quiet presence, showing solidarity and support from our

communities, is a way to give the Supervisors even more reason to deny the illegitimate vested rights petition.

Rondal Snodgrass, Conservation Land Consultant

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Steve Mendoza: Mining had its heyday

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | September 14, 2021

Steve Mendoza

First off, I have nothing against mining. It is vitally important to our lifestyle, and we would still be in the dark ages without it. Rise Gold is in the mining business to make money, and there's nothing wrong with that. They just picked the wrong site for their venture.

We all know that mining has a rich history in Grass Valley, and at one time it was the bedrock of the local economy (pun intended).

Over 50 years ago, decisions were made to close the mines. These were conscious, thoughtful decisions. Since then, our landscape has drastically changed to rural-residential, with tourism at the core of our economy. To believe that you can now reopen a hard rock mine just a couple of miles from downtown Grass Valley, and in the heart of rural-residential neighborhoods without any negative impact or consequences is rationalization at its best.

We locals, and tourists who visit Nevada County, should visit Empire Mine State Park, the Northstar Mining Museum and Malakoff Diggins to get a taste of what mining was really like. In this way, we can celebrate our mining history without having to relive it daily for the next 50 years.

Steve Mendoza

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Steve Temple: Hard pass on mine adventure

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 13, 2021

Steve Temple | Other Voices

I wish to voice my vigorous opposition to the propaganda campaign that Rise Gold is mounting to sway public opinion and our Nevada County Board of Supervisors in favor of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

In the context of previous behavior and legal misadventures of CEO Ben Mossman, this maneuver is at best suspicious and at worst a scam. You and we must examine every claim and promise in detail, and obtain legally binding commitments in lieu of empty promises.

The overall community impact of extractive and exploitive ventures like gold mines, coal and copper and aluminum and silver mines, oil wells and pipelines, methane extraction, etc., are numerous and convincing.

One has only to look at the Gold Rush-era photos of our beautiful region at the Empire Mine State Park Museum to appreciate the overpowering greed that devastated this area environmentally, the exploitation of Asian immigrants, and inhumane treatment of mules, extermination and bounty-hunting of our Nisenan citizen-neighbors (and on and on) to be skeptical of modern technology founded on similar motives.

Western Nevada County was quite a violent place during the Gold Rush. And an 1850s comparison of living conditions for Empire Mine owners versus the mine workers does not need to be re-enacted today, albeit in a different form.

Trending Articles



The technology may be improved, but the psychological community mindset has not changed much and is antithetical to the open and inclusive, tourist-friendly environment that enticed so many western Nevada County residents like my wife and I to relocate here upon retirement.

Literally all of the costs and risks that many residents and editors are writing about in The Union (noise, traffic, water, wells, fire, road maintenance, worker health-care needs, etc.) threaten the most basic attractions that Grass Valley and Nevada City offer to people like my wife and I.

One has only to read historical accounts of the greed and violence that accompanied Gold Rush life here to be wary of a return to an extractive and exploitive community mentality.

And we must look at the devastation (environmental and emotional) that oil fields, mines and pipelines have left in their wake to lend sufficient skepticism to the wisdom of exposing our very special community to the ravages of another extraction-based economic adventure (and that is really what we are all being subjected to ... an adventure).

In this era of pandemic and wildfires and drought challenges, please work together to give us increased community unity and cohesiveness to support one another, rather than the divisiveness that this Rise Gold proposal brings to you and us.

At the very least, I implore you to scrutinize every Rise Gold detail with the skepticism that the CEO's history demands. Thank you for putting our community needs first.

Steve Temple is a retired UC Davis plant scientist. He lives in Grass Valley.

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Susan Graf: Real insight into mine hazards

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 21h ago

Susan Graf

Ray Bryars' guest column in the Feb.16 edition of The Union sums up what we've all been concerned about regarding the opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, but have not investigated.

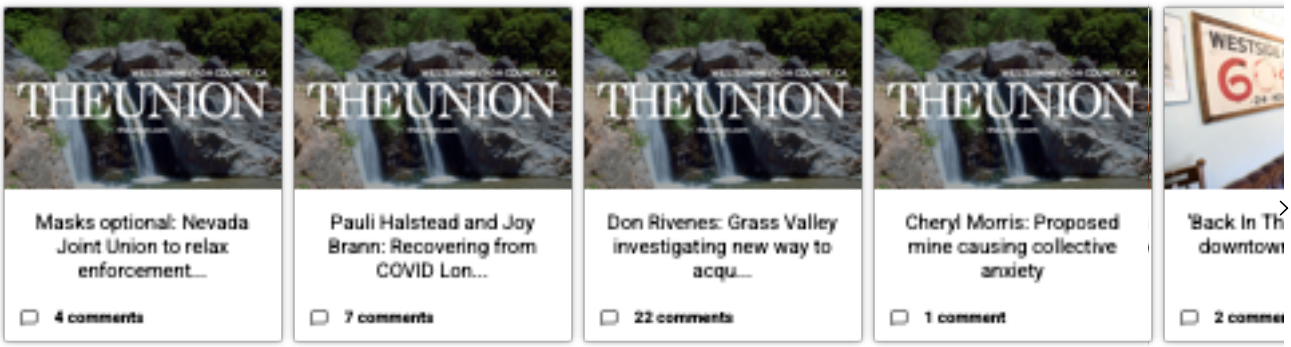
I object to the mine reopening, but have the usual non-information about noise, traffic, etc., impacts.

Mr. Bryars has researched the histories of significant mine explosions around the world, so he has real insight into one huge reason why we should deny this project.

Susan Graf

Nevada City

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Terry McLaughlin: Still not convinced mine should reopen

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 5h ago

Terry McLaughlin | Columnist

Almost a year ago in this column I waded into the discussion about the potential reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine by Rise Gold Corp. At the time, I was skeptical about Rise Gold's claims and have since closely followed the news articles, research and progress of this proposal.

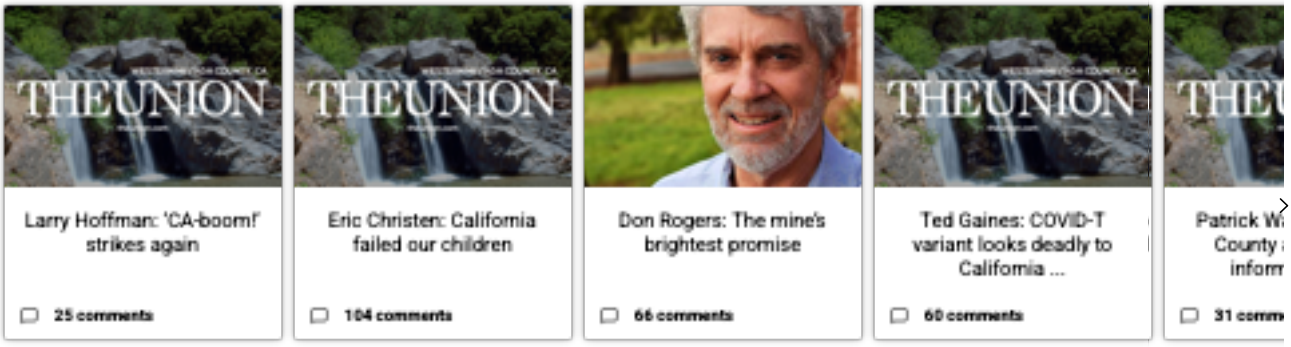
To date, nothing has been presented sufficient to change my belief that the negative aspects of this project overwhelm any good that may come to our community.

Specific environmental issues have been discussed in depth in this newspaper, including the potential dewatering of wells situated near the mine, air quality, vibrations from blasting and other mine operations, noise and decibel levels, gravel-hauling trucks making up to 100 round trips per day for seven days a week on Brunswick and Whispering Pines, as well as trucks on our roads transporting fuel oil, diesel fuel, explosives, and other flammable supplies.

Carefully researched information on those environmental issues has been presented by multiple residents in our community with far more experience and knowledge than myself.

The draft environmental impact report concludes that every one of the impacts is between neutral or negative, with many significantly negative. None are neutral positive. Absent any positive impact, there must be a significant economic or quality of life benefit to offset the negative environmental aspects to justify this project.

Trending Articles



To gain more insight into the actual logistics of a project of this scope, I have been communicating with a local friend who has decades of experience as a project manager on multi-million dollar development projects in the United States and around the world. He has served as a consultant on the preparation of a number of environmental impact reports and economic evaluations and has been engaged by multiple governments on projects where response to an environmental review was required.

I found his reflections on the current proposal to reopen the Idaho Maryland mine to be very valuable, as they were based upon years in the field dealing with exactly these types of scenarios.

Whether the draft report understates the negative environmental impacts of this project or not, the report requires monitoring and mitigation, and currently there are no teeth included.

In similar projects my friend has been involved in worth hundreds of millions of dollars, the approval by the city, state or county requires payment to the public entity for the continuous monitoring of the environmental conditions.

If the Board of Supervisors were to approve this project, it should minimally require a specific performance bond to fund any mitigation that may be needed to correct deficiencies for the life of the project, which is currently proposed to be 80 years. The county would then have the legal authority to tap into the bond to mitigate problems should Rise Gold not do so in a timely manner, or if they should file bankruptcy, as they have done in the past.

My friend's recommendation for a project of this scope, based upon his experience, was that the mitigation bond should be $100 million, which could potentially be decreased by mutual agreement after several years of successful operation.

He observed that Nevada County has no ability with current staff or budget to adequately monitor environmental performance, as well as to review and authenticate the reports required to be filed by the operator. Estimates for continuing monitoring of this project could require one and one-half full-time employees, at a cost of approximately $180,000 per year. The operator should be charged a fee each year to cover the cost of year-round monitoring and evaluation, and if the fee is not paid, the funds could be drawn from the performance bond.

My friend also challenged the employment projections made by Rise Gold. Rise Gold's latest glossy mailer claims that "Our project will create over 600 jobs and $50 million in new local spending annually …. Reopening the mine means over 300 new employees in safe and satisfying careers with an average expected annual earnings of more than $122,000, including benefits. The mine will also spur an additional 300 jobs through related new business in the area."

This will simply not occur, as a large proportion of the two-week-on, two-week-off employment will be out-of-area workers who will not relocate to the county, and their spending patterns will be only a fraction of those represented.

My friend has just completed five years of work in the oil fracking fields of North Dakota, where $80,000,000 of county funds were spent to mitigate the impact of thousands of transient workers coming in to work two-week shifts of 12 hours on, 12 hours off.

Workers coming from out of Nevada County would have a negative impact on temporary low-cost housing — of which Nevada County already has a shortage — law enforcement, road maintenance, traffic improvements, public health, and other county costs, with no resulting increase in property taxes and very little impact on sales tax.

In contrast to Rise Gold's claim that "the Idaho Maryland Mine will strengthen and diversify the local economy and provide a brighter future for Nevada County families," it looks more like reopening the mine would only negatively impact the environment, increase the cost to the county for services, require constant monitoring, and produce only a fraction of the jobs promised for current unemployed workers.

I am not convinced that Rise Gold's claims would ever reflect reality for this community.

Terry McLaughlin, who lives in Grass Valley, writes a twice monthly column for The Union. Write to her at terrymclaughlin2016@gmail.com

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Thomas and Elizabeth Burchfield: Mine’s a bad idea

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 9, 2021

Thomas and Elizabeth Burchfield

The Rise Gold mining project is a bad idea by any measure. We’ve looked at Mr. Mossman’s claims for the project, but he and his Canadian company are making impossible promises that don’t add up, especially with history as a guide.

Remember that the nuclear power industry made similar extravagant claims for airtight safety and security, but we got Chernobyl and Fukushima regardless.

Sure, Rise Gold doesn’t rise to that scale, there’d be the chance of disaster enough with poisoning of precious — very precious — water supplies (during a megadrought), environmental damage, and lower property values.

Most of the money would go outside the county. The benefit to we who live here, natives and newcomers alike, would be less and the regrets many.

Thomas and Elizabeth Burchfield

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Tiberius Froloff: Nevada County is not for sale

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 2d ago

Tiberius Froloff

What's it worth living in this community? I fear that the Nevada County Board of Supervisors is now trying to put a price on it, spending your good money to speculate on how much Rise Gold Corp. would pay for the deaths that might cost this county for reopening a gold mine.

The supervisors could have saved a lot of public money, anguish, anxiety, confusion, and more pain if they just acted responsibly after the community came together overwhelmingly against the gold mine at the Planning Commission hearing.

It was an abuse of discretion for the supervisors to request another draft environmental impact report, as the weak one presented clearly showed there were far too many significant unavoidable impacts on the community.

It's simple; the gold mining industry is a water resource-sucking, dynamite blasting, hazardous chemical storage, toxin-processing, toxic waste-producing distributing, and storing business.

An economic study isn't going to cure the water theft, contamination, risk to life for humans and animals, pollution to the environment, and disruption to the quiet peace of a small town.

Trending Articles



Like Bernie, this community is "Not For Sale." So why is it taking these supervisors so long? Makes a body wonder.

Tiberius Froloff

Grass Valley

Editor's note: The legal process includes draft environmental impact reports being subject to public comment and reworked based on those comments, eventually leading to a final report.

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Tom Behlmer: Look at traffic around the mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | January 27, 2022

Tom Behlmer

This is in reply to Don Rogers' column, "Who owns the science?" The mine would generate 13,220 vehicle trips either in or out per month, which is based on numbers found on pages 883-884 of the Draft Environmental Impact Report.

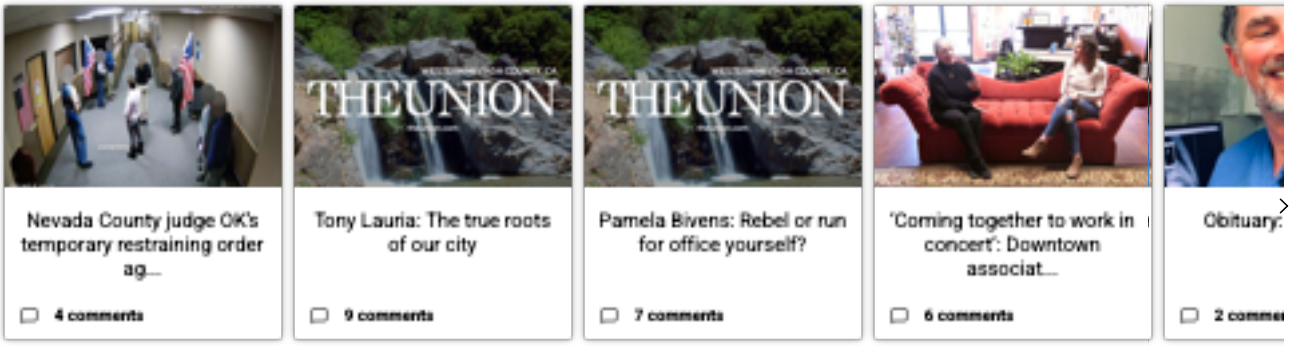
Ask yourself: Would you want that in your neighborhood? The area has many feeder roads into busier roads like Highway 174 or Bennett Road. Drivers have to cross traffic to get to their lane like a version of the video game Frogger.

Plus, there are roads in the area with semi-blind turns on two-lane roads. What could go wrong? In September there was a fatal head-on accident on Brunswick that sent two others to the hospital.

Your caricature of those opposed to the mine is upsetting. We are not anti- science, and should not be described as such.

Maybe the proper perspective is not houses should not have been built around a mine that has been closed for 70 years, but Rise Gold should not have bought land in a residential area to open a mine that would require zone permitting changes.

Trending Articles



Tom Behlmer

Grass Valley

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Tom Behlmer: Nevada County Board of Supervisors, require this before approving Rise Gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 24, 2020

Other Voices
Tom Behlmer

If Rise Gold is serious about being a good neighbor, they should use electric trucks instead of diesel for the 50 to 100 round trips each day, seven days a week. Electric trucks are made by Volvo, Daimler, BYD and Nikola. This would reduce noise, soot and pollution.

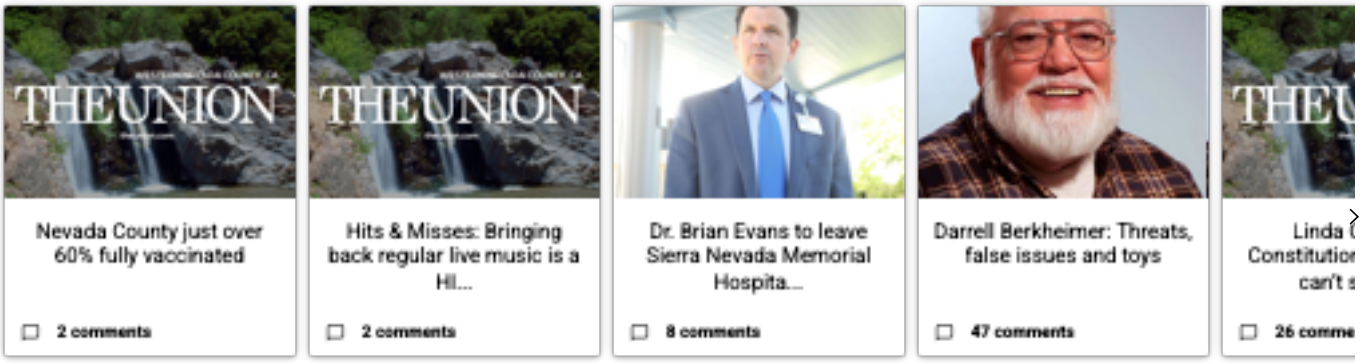
Second, for those whose wells are dewatered, require Rise to reimburse the homeowner for water until the homeowner's well can be safely restored and to secure this obligation with a bond. The hydrology report says only a few wells are at risk. Then why is Rise unwilling to reimburse for water to all affected home owners? These two mentioned items should be a requirement imposed on Rise by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors before considering a permit.

It's understood that the need for and difficulty to attract investment capital to the county to ensure its continuing vitality, but be careful for what we wish for when there is an existing housing shortage. Rental housing in the area is in short supply. What will happen if there is a large influx of people seeking housing? Will this push up rents throughout the area worsening the affordability problem making it difficult for workers already here to afford to stay? According to one local property manager, they have a wait list of 50 for when any of the 450 units they manage become available.

Could this negatively affect the labor pool and businesses that rely on local workers? Just asking. The house purchase market is not as constricted. There are several housing projects in the works, but weren't they supposed to help the existing residents with affordable housing? Adding more housing quickly could be difficult considering how long it has taken for the Loma Rica Ranch and Dorsey development to move forward. These developments might absorb people who are now able to work from home and want to relocate from the expensive Bay Area.

One of the arguments for the mine is job creation. According to company documents, 312 jobs will be created. In table 3-7 of the project description, 212 jobs will be in the mine and 36 will be management or technical. How many currently live here have either the technical skills or desire to work underground? That leaves 64 above ground non-management jobs. To put the job creation in perspective, together Kane's and Maria's restaurants combined employed 96 people pre-COVID-19. The mine will not be a major provider of jobs for people living here. Yes, mining jobs do provide a higher wage than restaurants.

Trending Articles



Noise from construction is allowed to exceed normal levels according to existing county rules. The Rise Gold construction of above ground buildings is proposed to be 18 months.

If Rise fails to receive a permit, the land could be sold and used by a company with a smaller footprint whose workforce could be more home grown instead of from outside the area. It is zoned light industrial and Rise wants it rezoned as light industrial – mineral extraction. On page five, table two of Rise's Project Overview, the surrounding area is described as being open space and low density.

An ore truck would be leaving or returning every nine minutes at best or four minutes at worst depending on the pace of the mine. Plus, there would be supply trucks and 300 workers commuting to the site; all this congregating on a low density rural residential area.

This won't be "a whisper" that Don Rogers refers to, but more of a semi steady din 16 hours per day, seven days a week. Rise's stated hours of operation, not conjecture. It is not so much the intensity of the noise, but frequency.

In the air quality and noise reports that have been submitted, they often use the phrase does, "not reach significant threshold," however cumulatively they become an 80-year nuisance, even the silica dust, which according to Rise's report on page 41, does elevate the risk of cancer by a very, very small amount.

Let's hope the mitigation efforts, promised by the company in its reports, for pollution, dust etc., are strictly followed.

Tom Behlmer lives in Grass Valley.

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Tom Behlmer: The mine — community vs. corporate interests

Opinion FOLLOW OPINION | January 22, 2021

Tom Behlmer | Other Voices

Every once in a while, I run into someone in person or online who seems to be in favor of reopening the Idaho Maryland Mine. Their reasons for doing so simply tell me they really haven't thought this thing through yet.

The most common pro-mine argument seems to be based on some type of misguided nostalgia: "This town started with mining," they say. At the time, the town thought of it as prosperity, but today, we know that we know that hard rock mining is the single largest source of toxic waste in the U.S. We used to have above ground atomic bomb tests north of Las Vegas and we used to dump toxic DDT barrels off the Southern California coast that later leaked.

The second argument, "it will create jobs," seems reasonable at first, but a closer look opens up a long list of questions.

Rise Gold states that 300 jobs will be created by opening the mine. Has this number been verified? I believe it has not. Could it be an empty promise? It would not be the first time a company has promised one thing and under delivered. Jobs for whom? Ask yourself does the local area have people with mining skills or willing to be trained to work deep under ground? Will workers from outside the area be brought in to fill these jobs? If so, where will they live when we have a very tight rental and real estate market? Will they drive up rents, pushing out local essential workers? Will this affect small businesses?

With workers more able to work from home due to COVID-19, the area may see an influx of workers from urban areas boosting the local economy and lessening the need for an industrial facility. If the county wants to attract jobs, how about finding a buyer or occupant for the empty Grass Valley Group complex off of Providence Mine Road by offering tax abatement for a period?

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And that leads to the third argument: "You shouldn't have bought property next to a mine," which assumes that through some personal failing, only a few people are affected. Seriously? It was closed for almost 70 years. The property Rise wants to develop has been zoned for light industrial use — not mining — for a long time now. If we flip this around, then Rise Gold should not have bought the property with the intention to open a mine in a residential neighborhood.

The reality is that the impact from the mine is likely to affect more than the homes in the immediate area. Don't think that since you live a distance away from the mine, there is no need to be concerned.

When industrial mining was done here, there were not the following issues for the community:

— Awareness of the toxicity of dust containing arsenic and silica. The dust is generated by loading, transporting and off loading of ore. The discarded ore will eventually reach a height of 70 feet and would be located off of Centennial Street in Grass Valley. I would not want to be downwind of the discard pile. Also the issue of added pollution from diesel exhaust from trucks running 14 hours per day, seven days a week.

— Potential devaluation of property values. Lower property values leads to less property tax for the county and lower Realtor commissions, which largely gets fed back into the local community.

— Potential liability to the county if there is an environmental "mishap." We have had two sinkholes in Grass Valley or Nevada City in the past five years. Will emptying the mine shafts of water and using explosives for blasting risk more sinkholes? There are 367 miles of tunnel under the old Empire Mine.

The CEO of Rise has a checkered history at best of leaving behind messes from not adhering to regulations. Please see the commentary in The Union from Dec. 7, 2020: "Why we don't trust Rise Gold."

If just three of the five Nevada County supervisors approve the permit, which would grant an 80-year operating period, the project is likely to go forward. The issue should be decided by a countywide vote. I think it would be an extreme example of government abuse of power to have it decided by three people. What's next?

This is a battle of a community against corporate interests. Your help is badly needed.

If you oppose the mine or wish to prevent government overreach, please contact your local county supervisor. If unsure who it is please refer to this https://www.mynevadacounty.com/2175/Supervisorial-Districts.

Tom Behlmer lives in Grass Valley.

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Tony Lauria: What's not in the mine report

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

Tony Lauria | Other Voices

The unseen impact of the proposed mine is the stress, time and money spent by the community to stop this egregious attack on our water, air, quality of life, and threat to devalue our homes and property. In other words, we are being put through the wringer.

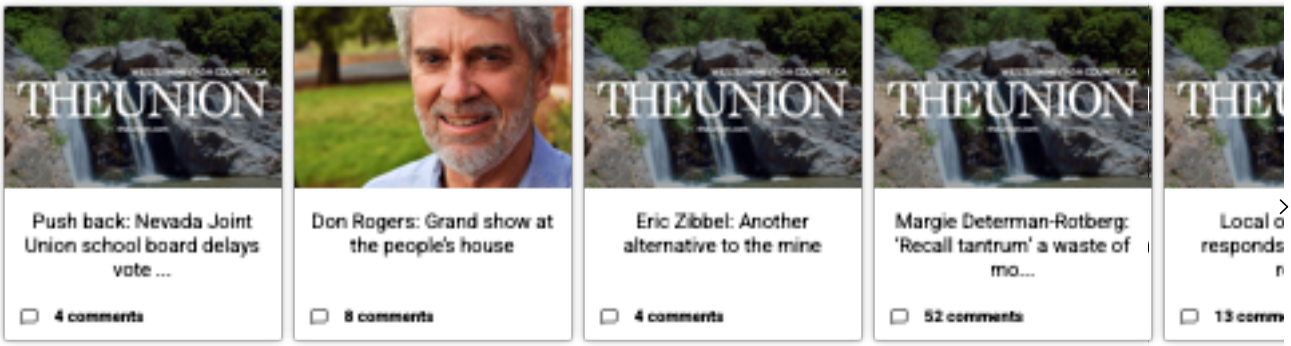
We have all been forced to endure this abusive assault to win a permit that would let nothing stand in the way of grabbing the gold, literally, under our feet.

We are all contributing our gold to stop it. We are hiring attorneys. We are paying for posters and fliers. We are spending evenings and weekends in meetings. We each devote endless hours writing commentaries, reading the documents and formulating plans and actions that will bring a halt to this atrocity. And sometimes, we stand dumbfounded in the face of such greed and disrespect.

There are no words strong enough to describe how wrong this is for a company to invade our residential community and risk our health and well being for their own profit.

It is utter disregard to the human decency of common consideration and respect for the people who live here. Their claims of low impact are continually spewed to the media, which further associates them with the unsavory, sly tactics of an organization that's only focus is on what they can take from us in the name of profit.

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History has proven the detrimental effects of deep bedrock gold mining. We have dozens of contaminated sites from the 1800s, still toxic to this day. Any company that would deny those facts, is a company that should be denied permission to mine where people live.

If you value the current way of life in our fine towns, please speak up. Read the draft environmental impact report and make your comment to the county, that this should never happen in our residential community. Go to http://www.minewatchnc.org for more informatioin, sign the petition, and to join the efforts to stop this unacceptable proposal.

Tony Lauria lives in Grass Valley.

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Tony Lauria: Reopening a mine may spell disaster for our community

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 18, 2021

Tony Lauria | Other Voices

Analyzing this proposal at the basic level of common sense, I see no gray areas for dispute. The risks of permitting a heavy industrial mining operation, under residential property, outweigh any rights to financial profit.

When you truly consider what this proposal is all about, it is money. It's not about the health, safety and welfare of the thousands of residents in the area.

It's about taking. Taking away our clean, proficient wells. Taking away our clean air. Taking our energy resources. Taking away our quiet natural environment. Taking away our life's investment in our homes and properties. Taking away the beauty of our natural habitat.

Proponents of this proposal have an interest in making money for themselves. What is unspoken, but true, is that this money will be made off the backs of the citizens who live here. We have seen it before. It is written in history, all around us. If there's any doubt, take a look at this documentary of the most recent gold mining travesty inflicted on our county: https://vimeo.com/120747168.

Anyone in a position of power and charged with upholding the best interests of the residents of this community must stop this egregious attack on our town. I don't believe any of the multitude of impacts can ever be mitigated to less than significant. They will devastate our community. There are no studies or reports that can 100% guarantee a safe outcome for any one of these impacts.

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The choice is between right and wrong. Choose money and profits for a foreign company, with a CEO in legal trouble elsewhere, and risk turning this area into a toxic, dry industrial wasteland, or choose the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Nevada County. To learn more, visit https://www.minewatchnc.org.

Tony Lauria lives in Grass Valley.

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SECTION TITLE

I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

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Dennis W. Westcot: Modern dredging in Nevada City, Montana

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | December 23, 2021

Dennis W. Westcot

Michael Ireland wrote a letter to the editor back on Sept. 17 regarding the proposed mine. He concluded with, “Have there been other communities that have allowed mining in similar situations like ours? And, if so, what has been their experience?”

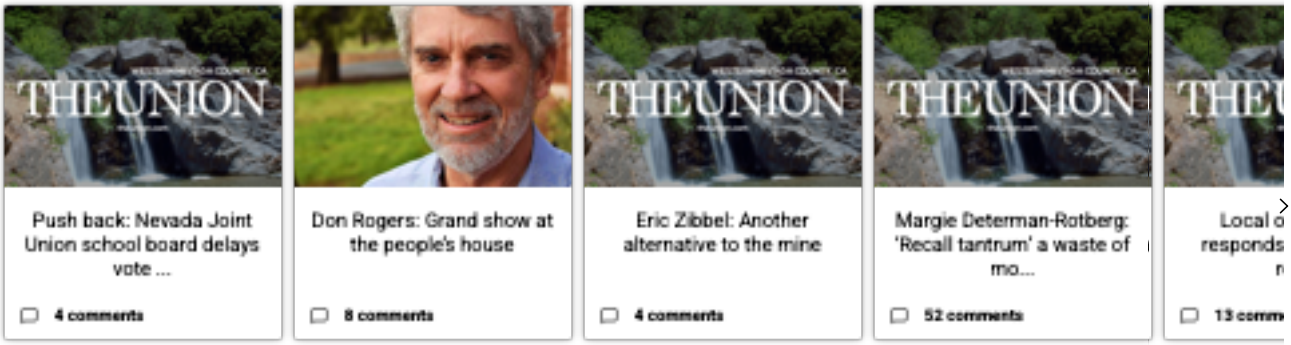
The answer is yes. One example is Nevada City, Montana, coincidentally. They had mines similar to ours in the Gold Rush and the town declined after that period.

But people began to move back until the new modern dredging operations arrived and everyone has moved away again. The important part is what happened recently when the dredgers came through and are still working the area today. Not pretty.

Dennis W. Westcot

Nevada City

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Diane Walker: Proposed mining profoundly impacts lives of nearby residents

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | August 25, 2020

Rise Gold Corporation from Canada is working on approval to open the Idaho-Maryland mine in the Brunswick-East Bennett-Greenhorn vicinity. My property, as well as the property owned many others, will be affected. If the Canadians get their way, we're screwed.

1. No more water in our wells, as 1,224,000 gallons of ground water will be pumped through the mine daily.

2. No more forest around us, as it will be affected by the millions of gallons of groundwater to be taken daily.

3. No more gardens or growing what we eat.

4. No more fresh air, only contaminants. A ton of nitrate fuel oil and 257 detonators daily to blast through rock, asbestos in the dust, heavy CO2 emissions, as well as lead and arsenic.

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5. No more quiet. Plans call for operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 80 years.

6. No more dark and starry nights, as exterior work lighting on site would include multiple 20-foot high lights burning nightly.

7. No more value to our beloved properties, as many of us can't afford to make a getaway.

8. No more peace of mind or good health in this wonderful place we live.

Thank you, Rise Gold Corporation — NOT!

Diane Walker

Grass Valley

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Heidi Zimmerman: Exploratory drilling a mining nightmare in Grass Valley

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 22, 2019

Heidi Zimmerman
Other Voices

Are you, the inhabitants of the Grass Valley region, aware there is exploratory drilling for gold occurring right now and has been for the last year?

The 90-acre parcel (was five different owners) is the Idaho Maryland gold mine and was the second largest mine in the country back in the '50s. Unbeknownst to many around here, this land was sold to Rise Gold Corp., a Canadian company who amassed $2.5 to $3 million from Canadians in hopes of striking gold with this company. We have a Canadian company drilling to search for gold in our backyard — directly next to residential properties! How can this be allowed to happen in this day and age?

They have been drilling 24/7 through all holidays, weekends and evenings — nonstop — looking for gold. They are using hundreds of gallons of drilling fluid, compounds and lubricants, which are injected into the wells. How will this impact our ground water and adjacent perennial streams? Needless to say this has been an extremely disruptive issue to those living within proximity to this atrocity along Brunswick and East Bennett roads and surrounding areas. Do you realize there is zoned residential land, which borders this heavy industrial zoned land that Rise Gold is working on? This is heavy industrial activity running 24/7.

The sound is very loud and carries a high Din (vibration) nonstop. There is light pollution as well, every single night.

Reported violations and complaints made with Nevada County include:

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Violations of 100' riparian setback.

Violation of comprehensive management plan.

Violation of timber harvest regulations.

Multiple violations of storm water management practices.

Constant loud vibration drilling sound.

Light pollution: bright floodlights running all night long.

Reports of strong solvent smells and dust. Soil contamination: What chemicals are leaking out of containers onto our soil?

Sound testing was done for noise level violations at the more remote previous site, but no adequate sound testing has been completed at the current location next to residential inhabitants.

Given this poor record Rise Gold has already created, we should be alarmed and concerned about how much damage they might be doing to the ground water, the creek and the surrounding wildlife.

They are penetrating multiple shafts through impermeable rock layers that underlay local shallow aquifers. How will this impact local residential water wells? What is done with the thousands of gallons of drilling slurry discharge? There are no restoration or reclamation plans in place. There is no bonding, licensing or insurance required either.

I personally have spoken to Supervisor Dan Miller twice and he said that considering California's environmental regulations that it would be nearly impossible to let drilling for gold happen in this day and age. Why then is Rise Gold exploratory drilling at all? Why are they operating on a very old code more than 20 years since it's been updated? Why is heavy industrial zoning butting up to residential living?

We as a community have a responsibility to ensure we manage and care for our beautiful surroundings for our children and their children. It's up to us, the inhabitants of Grass Valley to create the change that we wish for. Perhaps it is time for a revamp or redraw of where the industrial zoning can be allocated. And perhaps it's time to close the door on mining for gold in this county forever! There already exists a bad track record for gold mining in this county, including on the San Juan Ridge where 13 wells went dry because a drill pierced through the aquifer. Residents could actually hear their water being sucked out of their wells. And many of you know about the mine proposal 10 years ago, one that was successfully shut down thanks to many concerned residents and activists.

There are two penal codes already written (372 and 373) to support our right to quiet enjoyment where we reside. We pay taxes for this right of quiet enjoyment. This is why most of us live here. We need Rise Gold Corp. to cease and desist immediately. We need to change or redraw the zoning. And we need to have the codes updated to better reflect what we as a community support and want in this county in this day and age.

I call any and all of you to action to save our precious community from gold mining. This operation needs to be shut down now. We the people must demand this from our county.

Here's how you can get involved: Contact your elected representatives. Join or support local groups that advocate for protecting our environment such as Community Environmental Advocates or Wolf Creek Community Alliance. Submit comments to the local media. Put your voice and energy into action.

Heidi Zimmerman lives in Grass Valley.

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Heidi Zimmerman: More joy, less mining

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 16, 2021

Heidi Zimmerman | Other Voices

I live on East Bennett across the street from the second exploratory drilling site that Rise Gold ran. It was directly across from my bedroom. They drilled for about nine months, 24 hours a day and exceeded allowable decibel ranges on properties that share a property line with different zonings. As in this case, residential next to light industrial, which gold mining 24 hours a day is hardly light industrial.

I briefly want to say how incredibly intrusive that drilling was. It was quite maddening 24 hours a day. The vibration and loud drilling only stopped briefly when they changed their drills. We never heard the birds sing! The vibration in the ground was measurable by a human.

I am expressing this because it's important to understand that entire communities that currently pay a good tax base to the county would be devastated. I fear our town will decline on many levels, especially our basic quality of life, including air, water and sound pollution.

It is so quaint and beautiful here. Isn't this why we choose to live here? Let us look at the bigger picture of this issue. This would be a complete devastation to Nevada County, specifically Grass Valley and Nevada City. The outcome is very bleak if this town and county choose to give a permit to Rise Gold.

Please review their mission statement. It says nothing about mining. I believe if this permit is awarded to Rise Gold, it could then be sold to a mining company that we have never dealt with, which could be even more tragic.

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Each of you on the board and any decision makers have the opportunity to create a legacy for this town, your families and peers in the community. At this pivotal time, we ask you to look deep into your hearts and feel what the right choice is in regard to this issue of reopening a gold mine in Nevada County in this day and age of 2021!

It is time to look forward and plan a future for Nevada County with new programs that reduce, reuse, recycle, repurpose and also continue to grow food and support our community with renewable energies. We can be a leader in this state and country, preserving what we have here.

Let us be the model for others to follow in walking forward in a new way of living that is sustainable and reliable. Live in a way that is in harmony with Mother Nature. We have the perfect climate to do so.

In addition, this said property would be a fantastic community gathering place. With bike/running trails, kids' playground, the senior

wood program, an outdoor venue for events, a dog play area and a farmers market.

Let's get creative and really plan the future for both of these towns. It's exciting to look to the new and be a leader in moving forward. We live here because it brings us joy and isn't that what all of us want in this life? More joy!

Heidi Zimmerman lives in Grass Valley.

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Jane Pelton: When will they ever learn?

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | September 19, 2018

Yet another Canadian junior mining company wants to re-open the old Idaho-Maryland mine in Grass Valley.

Rise Gold has begun exploratory drilling, and at this early stage they have already been called to account for violating the 100-foot setback from South Fork Wolf Creek and failing to abide by the County's erosion control requirements.

Rise Gold disregards the fact that hard-rock gold mining in a populated region that is surrounded on all sides by homes, businesses, and schools, is in no way compatible with the community that Grass Valley has become.

Our community dodged a bullet when the last foreign mining junior, Emgold, pulled up stakes and blew town. Setting aside for the moment the environmental destruction that inevitably comes with mining, the risks to private wells, the decline in value for properties located near the mine, and the probable contamination of Wolf Creek, our City and County representatives should be wiser now to the fact that temporary jobs in a dirty boom/bust industry like gold mining are poor substitutes for cleaner industries with staying power and the ability to contribute to long term economic resiliency for Grass Valley.

Jane Pelton

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---john-palmer-an-open-letter-to-the-nevada-county-planning-commission/article_ad881442-ee04-11ed-9880-53dd0294b7ef.html

Ideas & Opinions – John Palmer: An open letter to the Nevada County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors

John Palmer
May 9, 2023

I live in Nevada City, in District One. I am against the reopening of the mine. I could explain about the environmental damage it would cause, or the fact that Rise Gold and its management have a dubious record as mine operators, but I'll leave that to others. What I will say is that though this area was once the biggest gold mining area in the history of the world, it no longer is. What it is now is a quiet community in the Sierra Foothills where citizens and tourists alike can marvel daily at the beauty and serenity around them. My wife and I came here sixteen years ago because of its quiet allure, and so have many others. Its a place where people can live and work in close proximity to nature at its best; unsullied by the noise and pollution of industry. It's a community where people can retire to; where people can work remotely, where life can be enjoyed. As I said, this is no longer a mining area and it is not an industrial area. And there is no reason to turn it into one. We do not need noise and pollution and dust and traffic congestion. Any gold thats left in that mine should stay there, along with the polluted water and gravel. I beg you, do not allow the Idaho/Maryland mine to be reopened. Do not destroy our beautiful community.

John Palmer, Nevada City

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John Palmer: Grandpa's mistake

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 2h ago

John Palmer

Imagine you're on the Nevada County Board of Supervisors and you vote to allow Rise Gold to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Years pass. You're an old man in a nursing home now. A pall of dust and smoke hangs over the area from the ongoing mining operation.

The constant thumping of the rock crusher can be heard and felt 24 hours a day. Wolf Creek is essentially dead from the effects of millions of gallons of mine water. Wells in the area have gone dry. Roads are pot-holed and congested from all the mine trucks and equipment. Brunswick Basin is a ghost town.

Mill Street is deserted. Residents have either fled the area or are hunkered down to avoid the disaster the mine has wrought.

Your granddaughter comes to visit you. She's in high school now. She says, "Grandpa, we learned about the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine in history class today. We learned that you voted in favor. Grandpa, why were you so stupid?"

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John Palmer

Nevada City

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John Vaughan: Mr. Rogers' neighborhood

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 23h ago

John Vaughan

While Mr. Rogers does not like Rise Gold's advertising, he seems to believe that the science presented in the draft environmental impact report proves that reopening the Idaho Maryland Mine is as clear as Rise Gold's advertising claims.

Mr. Rogers seems to support reopening the mine because the science claims it's OK. Let's take one example from the draft report: The "significant and unavoidable" scientific conclusions that traffic at "SR174/Brunswick" and "Brunswick Road/Sutton Way" cannot be mitigated.

Average injury accidents/year for the past three years in Nevada County was 405 (CHP Data), including 13 fatalities. With "significant and unavoidable" traffic issues, it is statistically likely that more accidents will occur at these intersections. Is one more fatality acceptable? How about just one more injury accident?

Maybe in Mr. Rogers' neighborhood there are no accidents or fatalities attributable to "significant and unavoidable" traffic issues. Maybe in Mr. Rogers' neighborhood only one well goes dry from dewatering the mine. Maybe only a few families' property values go down.

The negative impacts from the Rise Gold mine may be acceptable in Mr. Rogers' neighborhood, but they are not acceptable in ours and should not be in yours.

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John Vaughan

Grass Valley

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Kathy Doty: Let's see all the facts on impact of gold mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | August 25, 2020

My family lives off of Greenhorn Road in four different homes and land parcels. All of us have had vibrations from the equipment at the East Bennett Rise Gold operations during its exploration drilling. This vibration drove us crazy.

Our neighbor's well already has poor water flow (no doubt due to a poor water table on top of the ridge) and no doubt could be impacted bye voted in. We all pray it is not! We are very much against the greed of a gold mining company coming in to exploit our town for their gain. To say it will provide jobs, I beg to differ as the consequences far outweigh the few who will benefit. The potential loss of our ground water, our wells, the constant traffic of heavy trucks continually traveling our roads, the damage and pollution created by this venture will no doubt have a very serious impact on our town.

I sincerely hope the people of our beautiful town will have the opportunity to see all the facts before we end up allowing the polluting of our local wells, water, air quality and roadways for the future due to the greed of Rise Gold, a Canadian company.

Kathy Doty

Grass Valley

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Marcus Krause: Devastating effects of mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 2h ago

Marcus Krause

There's not enough money for the size of the bond that Rise Gold would need to post. This mine isn't in the middle of nowhere, where the concern would be a watershed, a stream, or a mouse habitat. It's in the middle of several thousand people.

Within a mile of the mine are our most fragile citizens. They're in our hospital and half a dozen assisted living, senior care, and skilled nursing facilities. They, along with their neighbors in many apartments and houses, would be subjected constantly to a barrage of noise, dust, vibration, explosive vibrations, and the anxiety of waiting for the truly catastrophic event to occur.

While waiting, the 100 trucks a day would destroy some of our streets, the vibrations would crack and destroy our foundations, and the dirt and dust would sift everywhere. Our houses, clothes, and cars would never be clean.

And, when that accident did occur, whether just a few wells destroyed or as bad as the Port of Beirut, the damage to our community would be permanent.

I don't know where our Nevada County supervisors live, but my guess is that it's not within a mile of the mine, so their "yes" vote wouldn't affect them personally.

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Marcus Krause

Smartsville

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Mark Wilson: Ready for industrial town?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 9, 2021

Mark Wilson | Other Voices

As we consider whether our elected officials should allow Rise Gold to reopen and operate the Idaho-Maryland Mine, we need to go into the decision with eyes wide open.

The facility is projected to operate for 80 years, which means that kids and grandkids who are still a twinkle in the eye could be born and die before the mining operations end. So we owe it to them to think this through.

Let's be frank, gold mining is a major industrial operation. Its scope and impact is unlike any other business we have in the area, so we have nothing to compare it to, except rose-colored visions of the past.

The mine closed in 1957, so most people who've lived here all their lives don't know what it means to live in an industrial town. Although I raised my family here, I was born and raised around Detroit and worked in an auto factory there, so I'll offer another perspective.

First, prepare to give up the quiet. Heavy industry yields to nothing, because time is money, and money is everything. Enjoy those quiet mornings on the porch before work, drinking coffee, reading The Union, and listening to birds sing? Forget it. Diesel trucks will be loading rock and hauling it away.

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Think of the brief noise when Waste Management picks up trash in your neighborhood and extend it for the full day, every day. Although I live miles from the freeway, I hear the traffic from there just fine, so I'm sure I'll hear the noise from tons of rock dumped into metal truck beds all day long, and so will you.

And those kids I mentioned earlier? They'll never know what it's like to live in a place where you can hear the wind whisper in the trees and the morning bird songs uninterrupted. But hey, there's money to be made.

Then there's the dust and the smoke. Every industrial facility releases its own unique mix of particulates into the air, and this one will be no exception. Dust from crushed rock and diesel soot don't respect property boundaries, so we'll all share in the bounty.

The health effects from this stuff are numerous, but beyond that, once it lands, it tends to coat everything, making a whole town just a little more grimy, even inside buildings. If you've visited the owner's cottage at the Empire Mine and seen those heavy curtains they used at the front entrance to try to keep the dust and noise out, you'll get the idea. But I'm sure those future kids will have fun drawing

things in the dust on the back windows of everyone's cars.

And of course, there are the unavoidable toxins and emissions that come from industrial operations onto the land and into our air and streams.

If you think California's environmental laws are going to protect us from bad operational decisions (like those Rise Gold's CEO is defending himself from in a Canadian court), think again. There are thousands of families all over California with industrial facilities within spitting distance — sometimes literally — of their homes.

Their kids carry around inhalers because the emissions from the facilities have given them lifelong asthma. Do our environmental laws keep that from happening? Nope. When their parents complain, are pollution controls added? Rarely. Are the facilities shut down? No. They just roll on.

Why? Because corporations don't play by the same rules as the rest of us. If you or I burn toxic trash or make noise all day or dump our garbage on someone else's property, someone calls the police and they force us to stop or arrest us.

When a corporation does it, it's called doing business. They pay a fine — a built-in cost of doing business — or if they're sued, they hire a pack of lawyers and drag it out in court for years or decades while continuing to make noise and pollute.

And by the time the whole thing is settled, those little kids we were concerned about in the first place are adolescents who weren't able to play in the polluted river or are having trouble breathing. And when Rise Gold decides to change its operational plan to increase its profit at our expense, they won't be consulting local citizens or elected officials for our permission.

If you like living in an industrial town, the world's full of them — take your pick. But what we have here is rare. And once it's gone, it's gone forever.

Mark Wilson lives in Nevada City.

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Pamela Biery: Mine a direct affront

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | April 21, 2021

Pamela Biery

The proposed Rise Gold Mine is a bad idea. Grass Valley is seeing a growing residential community, tourism and the promise of ongoing income from these new residents, sustainable tourism, and hopefully, its first licensed cannabis dispensary.

The proposed Rise Gold Mine will ruin much good that has been put in place during the last 70 years of evolution and progress away from mining.

Please stand up for the citizens and residents of Nevada County and put Nevada County solidly among those who understand the preservation of water and air quality as an essential part of responsible stewardship for existing and future generations.

Western Nevada County is increasingly recognized as a tremendous recreational resource, with thousands of visitors coming to enjoy nature here — from the Yuba River to Scotts Flat Lake and the Hoot Trail.

The Rise Gold Mine looks like a deterrent to anyone seeking to enjoy outdoor recreation in western Nevada County, likely translating to an overall loss of community income and declined property values.

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The Rise Gold Mine a direct affront to residents who probably will lose water, property value, and the peace of their daily lives. The entire town and county may suffer from noise, air, and water pollution — not to mention negative infrastructure impacts and related costs.

The existing retired mine sites in Malakoff and Idaho-Maryland are used as educational resources demonstrating ecological disasters. Empire Mine basically went bankrupt and turned the property over to the state of California, which is still working to clean this site up. Have we learned anything?

Please remember your constituents, their children, and grandchildren and vote no on the resumption of mining in the core of our community.

Pamela Biery

Grass Valley

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Ralph Silberstein: Rise Gold proposes massive mine waste piles in Grass Valley

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | April 24, 2020

Other Voices
Ralph Silberstein

Once again Grass Valley has to deal with a Canadian junior mining company trying to open the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Rise Gold Company's application to re-open the mine is not yet deemed complete by Nevada County Planning Department, but a review of currently available documents provides a glimpse into the nature of the project and the many ways it would impact our community. Here's just one.

Mining will take place 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the New Brunswick site at the corner of East Bennett and Brunswick roads. About 1,500 tons of waste rock and tailings will be removed from the mine daily. Of this, 500 tons per day will be mixed with cement to form a paste backfill and re-deposited into the mine. The remaining 1,000 tons per day will be loaded and trucked over to the 56-acre former mine site along Idaho-Maryland Road (between DeMartini RV Sales and Centennial Drive).

This means that waste rock and tailings from the mine will be transported by trucks making up to 100 round trips per day, 16 hours per day, seven days per week. There are a lot of residences in that area. To get to the Centennial Drive site, the heavily laden gravel trucks will turn left onto Brunswick Road, pass through the East Bennett Road intersection and turn onto Whispering Pines Lane to reach Centennial Drive. Then, using bulldozers, graders, and rolling compactors, a mountain of gravel will be formed covering 44 acres up to 70 feet high. A subsequent second mountain of tailings is also planned for on the southern portion of the New Brunswick site along Brunswick Road. These operations will run for at least 11 years.

Grass Valley has designated the Idaho-Maryland Road site as Business Park and Urban Medium Density Residential, but Rise Gold intends to get this changed to Industrial. Given the housing shortage, and considering the anticipated development of hundreds of homes at Loma Rica Ranch just beyond this site, one might ask why the City of Grass Valley doesn't just summarily tell the mine to go away now and save a whole lot of trouble. It would be incredibly bad judgment to put a "reverse" gravel quarry at this location just while Loma Rica will be trying to sell homes.

Just think, if the proposed Dorsey Marketplace is approved, the 172 units of high-end apartments will be built directly above and looking down on this dusty noisy gravel operation as well.

What makes sense is to stick with the Grass Valley General Plan, not allow a rezone.

We need to promote a walkable housing and business park community at this close-to-downtown location. It is one of the few places left in our city where this kind of infill development can take place. It would be a bad idea to go with mine waste mountains instead.

For more information, visit cea-nc.org.

Ralph Silberstein lives in Grass Valley.

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Ray Bryars: Keep the mine out of the community

Opinion FOLLOW OPINION | December 11, 2020

Ray Bryars | Other Voices

The last few Nevada County supervisors meetings have seen an outpouring of concern about the possibility of Ben Mossman, CEO of Rise Gold, re-opening the Idaho Maryland Mine. It is apparent that Nevada County has moved a long way since the last ounce of gold was removed from local mines. The community no longer wants to be impacted by risky mining projects that have a history of leaving behind toxic legacies.

Those who personally attended, called in or emailed comments, spoke about their concerns with noise, dewatering wells, traffic, air quality impacts due to toxic asbestos dust and the abysmal environmental track record of Ben Mossman ,CEO of Rise Gold. There was noticeable emotion in the voices of several callers who lived close to the proposed mine. The possibility of living next to an operating mine or of having to sell their home, which would mean potentially losing significant equity in a home that they'd chosen as a safe place to enjoy their retirement years, was not something they had envisioned when they moved here.

One caller who was in tears said that a mine would ruin her quality of life and felt that it was a travesty that a penny mining stock company could have got to this point. There was strong concern about exposure to asbestos dust and the possibility of ammonium nitrate being stored under her house. She voiced the concern that Ben Mossman's company had run amok in Canada and that a mine should not be approved in an area that was zoned as light industrial.

A resident who lives close to the proposed mine implored the supervisors to consider that Ben Mossman's history. He felt that the mine was too important an issue with too many negative side effects. He also pointed out that CEO Ben Mossman had a new trial set for 2021 in Canada, where he had left behind environmental cleanup estimated to cost $1.6 million.

One caller who lived on East Bennet Street noted that they can already hear Waste Management trucks from inside their house. He was extremely concerned about the 100 trips per day that opening the mine would generate.

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14 comments



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35 comments


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28 comments



Our View: Updating the history books
23 comments


Susan Bewle Build Bacl
21 comme

Another resident on East Bennet Street noted that during the previous 24/7 exploratory drilling, she couldn't hear the birds in the area around her house and that a mine would ruin everything.

It is clear that there is strong community resistance to any kind of mining so close to a residential area, senior centers, the hospital and downtown Grass Valley. Other comments expressed the desire to keep any mine out of the community.

It is clear that residents do not want to go through this stress every few years. They want our elected officials to protect the citizens by putting a stop to any chance of ever opening a mine so close to Grass Valley.

We need to explore what could be done to protect our community from continuously having to play whack a mole with a never-ending stream of penny stock mining companies. We should be able to develop this area so that it is an economic benefit to the community.

For the benefit of the residents of Grass Valley, I respectfully request that our supervisors put in place a team of community leaders who would be tasked with investigating opportunities to clean up the toxic legacy, identify options for low impact economic development, while ensuring that we will never have to live in fear of another penny stock mining company disrupting the lives of so many Grass Valley residents.

Ray Bryars lives in Nevada City

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Susan Brandt Blachley: Is this the neighbor we want?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | February 9, 2021

Susan Brandt Blachley | Other Voices

In The Union on Dec. 24, 2020, there was a full-page Christmas letter advertisement by Rise Gold's Ben Mossman. He assured readers his gold mine won't have any ill effect on Grass Valley. He invited readers to send him a letter, providing his email. So while I am against the plan to restart the old Idaho Maryland Mine, since he listed his email address and invited our letters, I decided to send Mr. Mossman an email.

My letter's focus was to suggest another way to develop that property, something other than a gold mine. The alternative idea would be more beneficial to the community. What if he took all the money he would use to restart the gold mine and think of something that would be beneficial to the community — what could that be? In my mind, I imagined a marketplace, a park, a school?

I didn't suggest these things in the letter, but thought I could appeal to Mr. Mossman's creative side to see if he had another way for him to have a business in Grass Valley but one that wouldn't create so much neighborhood strife and potential environmental damage.

What if he took all the money he would use on drills, trucks, explosives and gasoline and instead enhanced the beauty of the area with — how about a Mossman Park? It could be a beautiful tribute to the old mine but with an Earth-friendly park that teaches about local flora and fauna while honoring the area's mining history. How about a farmers market, a playground? Mr. Mossman, you could be a hero.

You could take that money instead and do something good for the community rather than risk damaging the air, land, roads, water, property values and increasing noise and truck traffic. In my view, these threats to the peace and beauty of Grass Valley far outweigh the jobs they say they will create — the one benefit they say will exist for the community.

Trending Articles


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It's now a month since I was invited to write my email to Rise Gold, and I still have not received a reply. Not even an acknowledgement of my letter. I did copy the Nevada County Board of Supervisors and was very glad to get their acknowledgement.

As a resident of Grass Valley, is this the kind of business we want here? One that pretends to care but doesn't really? If this is any indication of what we can expect from Rise Gold, I sincerely hope our community thinks long and hard if this is the kind of neighbor we want.

Susan Brandt Blachley lives in Grass Valley.

THE UNION

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Tony Lauria: The true roots of our city

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

Tony Lauria | Other Voices

Once in a while I will see a comment from someone who does not seem to grasp the reality of what gold mining truly meant in Nevada County. The phrase reads something like: "This town was built on gold mining."

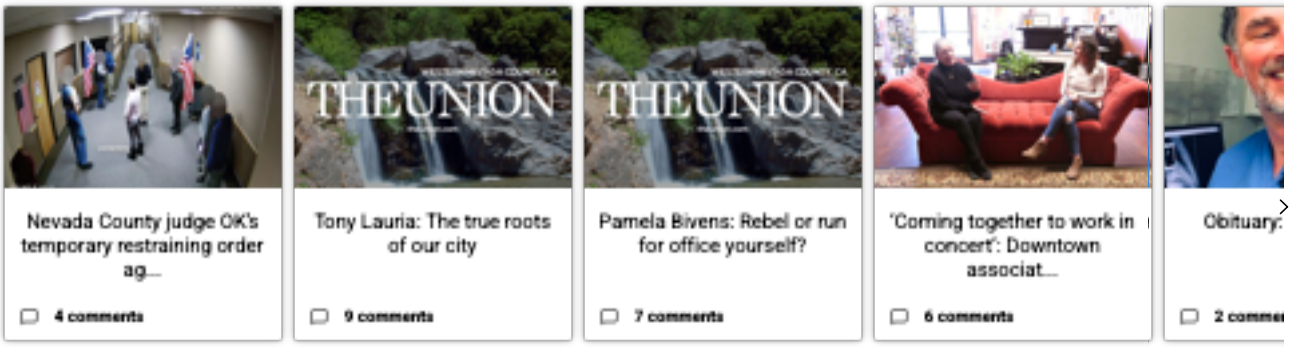
Let's stop right there and consider what was really going on during the Gold Rush days. From my perspective, there was no "building" of a beautiful town that people would love to inhabit.

There was the pursuit of gold at the expense of the environment and healthy living conditions. Just look at the scarred hillsides and contaminated mining sites still cordoned off with caution tape, a century later.

The intention was not to build a beautiful destination for family, and positive growth. It was to take as much from the land as possible, at any cost.

The constructed buildings, roads and clear cuts, weren't intended for the community. They were 100% for the support of this rape of the land. The result was that gold mining failed this town when the mines ran out, contamination was assessed, and all the sites were abandoned.

Trending Articles



We must also not forget how the native Nisenan people were annihilated in the process for living in areas deemed advantageous to the gold diggers.

I'm happy to say that these indiscriminate comments of a town built on gold mining are few and far between because the vast majority of our population understand this heavy industrial, toxic industry should never be allowed to devalue our community again.

This unconscious greed for gold requires no regard to the unforgiving impacts it leaves in the wake of the destructive operations to get it out of the ground, literally, under our homes.

In a nutshell, mining devastates communities, water and the environment, and should never be considered an option where people live nearby or downstream.

In actuality, this town was rescued from the devastation caused by gold mining. This town was built on the tech industry, starting with the Grass Valley Group. It was built on tourism, education, quality of life retirement opportunity, the arts, music and theater, health care, the restaurants, the Briarpatch Co-op, the attraction to nature and outdoor activities, housing construction, bicycle races, the county fair, athletics, garden tours, small and cottage industry businesses, book stores, and agriculture.

I'm sure you can add a few of your own to that list, but suffice to say, gold mining did nothing beneficial for our community, nor the environment we cherish.

Let's keep focused on attributes we value in our remarkable county: clean air, abundant clean water, pristine nature, quiet and quality of life, environmentally sustainable business. A place anyone would choose to raise their family in conscious cooperation with nature,

health and well being as a prime directive.

Sign the petition at http://www.minewatchnc.org. Write/email the Nevada County Board of Supervisors with your comment on the 83 severe impacts listed in the draft environmental impact report. Comment period is open until March 4.

Tony Lauria lives in Grass Valley.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-tony-lauria-time-to-stand-up-for-our-clean-air-water-and-quality/article_dbfaedf2-bbce-11ee-befd-8b205bee6886.html

Ideas & Opinions — Tony Lauria: Time to stand up for our clean air, water and quality of life, one more time

Tony Lauria | Other Voices
Jan 26, 2024

I doubt there's anyone locally who hasn't heard about this Mine issue, which has the potential to negatively upend many lives. But just in case, here's a reminder and a call to show up at the Rood Center Feb 15 to help shut the door on this bad idea. This will be the County's final public hearing, where hopefully, they will continue as in previous meetings, to unanimously deny and push away this dangerous proposal. Failure to do so would cause significant suffering for thousands of people living in the miles wide area of an abandoned mine, that was shut down in 1956.

What is left to say about this egregious attempt to bring back a devastating era of mining and change a highly populated residential area into a heavy industrial wasteland? Dozens of experts, environmentalists and residents, along with the legacy of the many remaining contaminated mines, has provided us with all we need to know about this horrible plan.

Gold mining is among the top most destructive and contaminating industries in the world. This county has dozens of these toxic mine sites, that still remain off limits due to the heavy metals and poisons left over from a century ago.

Re-opening any of these mines would be devastating for our community that has grown exponentially in the past 70 years. Lost clean air, lost ground water, lost energy resources, lost residents, lost county tax revenue, lost tourism, lost businesses and lost quality of life. Peace and quiet gone. Wildlife and habitat, gone. Thousands of homeowners would lose massive value in their properties, and those that were among the unfortunate numbers to lose their only source of clean well water, would experience total devaluation.

In my opinion, this proposal is not prioritizing jobs or benefit for the county. It's about profit in the pockets of a foreign company. Were they serious about preserving the health and well being of the community, they would not have submitted an 80 year proposal, with more than 80 significant environmental impacts that need to be mitigated.

I also believe the prediction of potential jobs is inaccurate and unproven. Most of those would likely go to people outside of this area. It is doubtful expert workers and engineers in the mining industry reside in this county anymore. It's been 70 years since the Idaho Maryland Mine was closed. Even if every projected job of this project were to be filled, it still only represents a small fraction, less than 1%, of the amount of people currently employed in the county. A number hardly worth risking the mountain of associated mining impacts.

The fate of our beloved Nevada County hangs in the balance, and we, the community, are the guardians of its future. Our elected officials have unanimously voted against it, twice. The upcoming meeting on Feb 15 is not just another gathering; it is our collective stand against the encroachment of a destructive force. Let's show up, be counted, and be the united front that preserves our clean air, water, and the cherished quality of life we hold dear.

Together, we can safeguard the very essence of our community.

Details available: https://nevadacountyca.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=7149

Tony Lauria

Grass Valley

THE UNION

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Winslow Rogers: Would you want to live here?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | September 4, 2020

Other Voices
Winslow Rogers

Nevada County is a precious place to live, beloved by its residents. We choose to live here for its natural beauty, its wonderful people, and its vibrant arts and cultural community.

At the same time, we know that we live in a fragile ecosystem, with constant threats to our air and water quality, and to our lives and property with the increasing likelihood of wildfire. Our air quality has gotten worse over the last few years, making us even farther from meeting the county General Plan's goal to "attain, maintain, and ensure high air quality."

Local government and other agencies are strapped for funds and barely able to provide the services we need from them. We have a large elderly population with their special needs, especially for medical care. Unemployment and homelessness are facts of life in our community. Many city and county roads are substandard. The ultimate damage to the local economy from COVID-19 can't yet be determined.

How does a proposal for a gold mine in our community look in this context? Here are some observations I have drawn from the mine proposal and from recently-filed comments by other citizens. I will confine myself to (1) air and water pollution, (2) roads and noise pollution, and (3) tourism and the arts.

> "People who have the choice might not stay in Nevada County.

The county's General Plan is a covenant that we have made with one another, a framework for what our community is and should be. Minor changes in the plan have been approved for construction projects in the past. However, to rezone a Light Industrial zone bordering a Residential zone to a large Mineral Extraction zone would be a grotesque violation of that trust. It would directly violate the General Plan's commitment to improving air quality. That's not who we are, friends.

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There would be inevitable damage to our air and water quality from a mine, especially in the Brunswick Basin area. The level of damage can't be quantified in advance, given the limitations of current testing methods. We would only learn the actual damage after a mine were operational, and perhaps only long after that. Since our air quality is in decline, any project that guaranteed an increase in water and air pollution should be dismissed out of hand .

I have mentioned our substandard city and county roads. The proposed plan for transporting heavy materials to and from the mine

site daily in large trucks shows no concern for the impact of heavy trucks on the roads, their noise, and the transportation needs of ordinary citizens. Fair compensation and regular payments for road maintenance would have to be built into any agreement. But what would compensate us for this damage to our quality of life? This is to say nothing about the noise from the mine itself, not just the trucks that supply it.

One example: tanker trucks would daily transport large supplies of heavy diesel fuel from Colfax to the mine site, and return. Over Highway 174? Really? Has anyone involved in the proposal actually driven the hairpin turns from the Placer County side of Wolf Creek up the hill to Colfax? How would you like to maneuver the turns with a large truck bearing down on you? How about after dark? Placer County and Caltrans would need to approve this proposed use of the highway. Widening the road to make it safe for large trucks would destroy the beauty of the highway, and would send the message that a lovely corner of our community had been destroyed to serve a rapacious commercial interest.

People who have the choice might not stay in Nevada County. Property values throughout the county might fall, not just those adjacent to the mine site.

Would the regular influx of new residents and tourists into our county continue? They support our tourism industry, restaurants, and other local businesses. I believe that the music and arts organizations that enrich the community might be hidden casualties of a mine.

Would you want to live here?

Winslow Rogers lives in Grass Valley.

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SECTION TITLE

I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

Businesses urge County Supervisors to reject Mine proposal

BY CEA FOUNDATION AUGUST 18, 2022 THE IDAHO-MARYLAND MINE

Contacts:
Traci Sheehan
Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
traci@cea-nc.org

Businesses urge County Supervisors to reject Mine proposal
150 local business leaders sign on to letter

Grass Valley, CA – 150 business leaders from Nevada County submitted a letter to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. The letter includes businesses located in downtown Grass Valley and from diverse sectors in the County including tourism, agriculture, and real estate. In addition, nearly 100 business owners also signed a petition to the Board of Supervisors, for a total of 250 businesses opposed to re-opening the mine.

The long-shuttered Idaho Maryland Mine is proposed to be re-opened by Rise Gold Corp – a company headquartered in Canada. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released in January. In response, many hundreds of comments were submitted by citizens to the County expressing serious concerns about the risks of the mine and the inadequacy of the report. The County Board of Supervisors could consider this issue as early as 2023 after a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is issued.

The letter states:

"Mining is our past, not our future. During the past 50 years, Nevada County has worked diligently to attract people and investments that contribute to and renew its economic vitality through promising and sustainable enterprises which align with the aspirations of its residents. That is what continues to make this County an attractive place to live, to make a living, and to start new business ventures."
Residents and businesses have expressed concerns about the potential economic impacts of the mine, including impact on tourism, property values, and tax revenue, and high-tech companies.

Many businesses offered quotes expressing their opposition to the Mine. "This mine is on track to have a potentially significant impact on our regional flora and fauna, water quality, and even local culture," stated Fable Coffee. "Rise Gold's ethical practices are questionable; we simply do not know enough to say this is safe – but we know enough to say that this community is not ready to open

Privacy - Terms

Idaho-Maryland Mine. There are better, more innovative, and more regionally respectful ways to enhance our economy."

Nevada County's agricultural sector is growing. With over 350 farms, tourists flock to farmers markets, and local farm-to-fork restaurants to experience fresh food grown by local farmers and prepared by local chefs.

"Grass Valley and Nevada County are known for our local farms and businesses," said Mike Pasner, Owner of Indian Springs Organic Farms. "We need to invest in our already existing sustainable businesses."

Nevada County was once the epicenter for gold mining. The big mines shut down in the 1950s, and mining is now less than ½% of the local economy. The County, particularly Grass Valley, is now considered a scenic and cultural destination.

Residents contend that the few jobs that might be gained are offset by big risks to tourism, high-tech businesses, private wells, and 10's of millions lost in property values.

"Real estate values and the quality of life in Nevada County will suffer permanent and irreparable harm if the mine is allowed to operate," stated Charles Brock, Real Estate Broker. "I have read the Draft EIR for this proposed project, and there are many unanswered and unmitigable issues which, in my opinion, will destroy the fabric of life as we know it in Nevada County."

The letter outlined key economic points and concerns, including:

The County could do better by continuing to invest in existing industries and new enterprises that address current priorities in the Sierra, like watershed and forest management.

Other industries can produce far better economic growth numbers than mining, including eight industries Nevada County already has today.

An economic study commissioned by the City of Grass Valley during Emgold's attempt to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Mine in 2008 concluded that Nevada County would be better off economically if it pursued other opportunities than mining.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released in January and while it is not required to include an analysis of the economic impacts, Nevada County has commissioned an independent economic impact report. The letter also urged the County to include consideration of a non-Mine alternative in their Economic Study. Because the DEIR will most likely have to be recirculated, the study is expected to be released after potential changes in the project description have been assessed.

The public can view pictures of several businesses opposed to the Mine on the website www.MineWatchNC.org or on the MineWatchNC Instagram account at minewatchnc

For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: www.MineWatchNC.org

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About CEA Foundation: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. CEA Foundation is the sponsor of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine.

MineWatchAdmin Jul 12, 2022

PRESS RELEASE: COMMUNITY SUBMITS PETITION SIGNATURES OPPOSING GOLD MINE

Over 5,500 signatures From Nevada County residents and others were collected online and in person by an army of volunteers... showing extensive opposition to the mine.

For Immediate Release: July 12, 2022

Contacts:
Traci Sheehan
Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
traci@cea-nc.org

Grass Valley, CA – July 12, 2022 – Today, MineWatch Nevada County, a coalition effort spearheaded by the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation), announced that it has joined together with businesses, homeowners, conservationists, and others to obtain over 5,500 petition signatures and 1500 comments to showcase the community's opposition to reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Signatures were collected in person and online through grassroots efforts such as information tables in front of local businesses and sharing via website and social media. The petitions were presented to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors during their regular board meeting on Tuesday.

RISE Gold Corp., a company headquartered in Canada, has proposed re-opening the mine in Grass Valley – an urbanized historic mining town. The long-shuttered mine sits just outside of the downtown, and a residential neighborhood has developed around the abandoned site.

"Despite Rise Gold's claims to the contrary, these petitions add to the growing mountain of evidence that the people of Nevada County are overwhelming rejecting the mine", stated Ralph Silberstein, CEA Foundation Board President. "Over a hundred volunteers helped collect these signatures. Many told me their job was easier than expected because it was extremely rare to meet anyone in favor of the mine."

Further evidence of anti-mine activism abounds. "No-mine" opinion pieces in the local Union newspaper outnumber "pro-mine" pieces 160 to 8. MineWatch social media groups are over 2,500 members strong. And almost 500 people attended the planning commission meeting in March to review comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the mine – at 9am on a Thursday morning. Of the 101 who took tickets to speak, only one spoke in support of the mine.

Over 1500 of the people who signed online also wrote personalized messages to Nevada County Supervisors. The full collection was delivered today along with the petition signatures. Here are just a few samples.

"As a physician and Nevada County resident for 10 years, I am opposed to this mine [and] I urge you to oppose the mine. Please don't vote to destroy the peace, quiet, and beauty of our delightful town. This is the best place I have ever lived and worked. If this mine opens, I will move, and you'll have one less doctor here."

"A hundred years ago a mine was appropriate. Now we are dependent on tourism and attracting people to a clean and quiet place. The mine site is surrounded by 1-5 acre parcels, [with hundreds of them] on a well. Approval of a mine in this situation opens the county up to a financial disaster."

"As a water policy specialist, I know the impacts of mining and the value of water in this climate change vulnerable region. Water is more precious than gold, and with its terrible track record Rise Gold should not be allowed to come anywhere near our watersheds which could easily be further degraded and depleted by this mine."

"As a renter, property owner, and leader of a soil health/agriculture non-profit, all in Nevada County, I strongly object to the proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. I'm very concerned about the impacts on water quality and underground water sources, including the impacts that polluted wells would have on our surrounding farms and food supply. I urge the Board of Supervisors to protect our community, our environment, and our economy and reject the proposed mine."

Of the over 5500 people who signed the petition, over 85% were Nevada County residents. Another 5% were from neighboring counties such as Placer, Yuba, and Sacramento. 6% were tourists or visitors.

For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: www.MineWatchNC.org

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www.cea-nc.org/

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-community-environmental-advocates-foundation---mine-opponents-urge-county-lets-finish-this/article_f539c2ca-95f9-11ee-9f7b-f7db2a735f62.html

FEATURED

Ideas & Opinions — Community Environmental Advocates Foundation - Mine opponents urge County: “Let's finish this”

Community Environmental Advocates Foundation | Other Voices
Dec 9, 2023

The collective voice of Nevada County residents resounded as a community coalition delivered a powerful statement to the Board of Supervisors at their meeting on Tuesday. Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) presented a letter signed by over 1,100 residents urging the Board of Supervisors to say NO to Rise Gold’s Petition for vested rights at the upcoming hearing on December 13th and schedule a final vote on the Idaho-Maryland Mine project as quickly as possible.

In May 2023, the County Planning Commission unanimously recommended rejection of the environmental impact report and use permit for the project. Facing a likely NO vote from the Board of Supervisors, Rise Gold tried an alternative approach that delayed the final vote, claiming they have a “vested right” to reopen the mine without a use permit.

A vested right is a right to continue a business use that existed at the time a zoning regulation changed. But vested rights are not permanent. The Idaho-Maryland Mine shut down in 1956, sold off its assets, and tunnels were allowed to flood. To claim vested rights, the burden of proof is on the

applicant to establish that mining continued without significant changes for the following 67 years.

A staff report issued by the County last week concluded that Rise did not provide that proof, saying “1) Mining operations were abandoned at the Subject Property commencing as early as 1956;” and “2) Neither the Petitioner nor any other party has a vested right to mine at the Subject Property.”

“Let’s finish this!” said Grass CEA Foundation volunteer, Christy Hubbard. “Our community’s future depends on a definitive rejection of mining in residential areas. It is with a sense of urgency and unity that we implore the Board to reject this ridiculous vested rights claim and proceed with a final vote.”

“It’s obvious that Rise is trying to pull a fast one on our community.” wrote one community member as part of the letter. “Please put these shenanigans to bed. Vote No ASAP and get this over with.”

The presentation of the community group letter to the Board came on the heels of an advertisement Rise Gold ran in the local newspaper asserting the company’s readiness to pursue legal recourse should their vested rights claim not be approved.

Grass Valley Homeowner John Vaughan took issue with the ad. “The community and County shouldn’t be held hostage by legal threats”, he said.

CEA Foundation is urging community members to attend the hearing on December 13 to show their opposition. The County has announced that the hearing will be strictly focused on the Vested Rights Petition. Hubbard

provided this guidance. “If history isn’t your thing, it’s OK to take a pass on public comment this time. Your attendance is what really matters.”

If the Board denies the Petition, the County will resume processing Rise’s application to open the Idaho-Maryland Mine and schedule a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors early in 2024 for the final vote on the Environmental Impact Report and Use Permit.

To learn more about the public hearing on December 13, go to www.minewatchnc.org/post/attend-the-county-s-vested-rights-hearing. For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit www.MineWatchNC.org.

Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. www.cea-nc.org. CEA Foundation is the leader of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine. www.MineWatchNC.org.

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Christy Hubbard: Rise Gold resorts to stuffing the ballot box

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

Christy Hubbard | Other Voices

Let's face it, we're all growing deeply weary of Rise Gold's misrepresentations when it comes to talking about the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Last year, there was the widely criticized, heavily manipulated survey that concluded the majority of residents support the mine.

Early this year, their glossy mailer proclaimed that the mine was going to be "green" while happily ignoring the huge energy use and greenhouse gas emissions they'll be generating.

Even more alarming were their assertions that "The county has determined" that the project is safe ... trying to fool people into believing that a draft environmental report was the final word on the subject.

Recently, they hit a new low with their press release claiming the majority of the comments on the environmental report "supported" the mine.

Trending Articles



Come again? Are they serious? I distinctly remember sitting in the Planning Commission meeting and being told that this was not the forum for "for" or "against" comments, but that we should focus our comments on the adequacy of the draft report itself.

But no. Rise Gold needed a press sound byte so badly, they decided to submit 1,600 reply cards and form letters that simply declared support for the mine. This is akin to stuffing a ballot box because people on the other side of the fight weren't even using the environmental report comments to cast votes.

As it turns out, over 500 of them were duplicates, making the real count more like 1,100.

Then adding insult to injury, some of the listings seemed to be spoofed because they included several names of known MineWatch activists who oppose the mine and deny ever authorizing Rise to share their names.

What was the rest of the community doing in the meantime? Wait for it ... They were playing by the rules. Several nonprofits and impacted agencies like NID and the city of Grass Valley submitted comments to the Ccunty, as did many hundreds of individual citizens, creating a total of over a thousand legitimate comments.

Now comes the part where Rise Gold uses simple math to create the illusion of a "win." They divided their 1,600 into the total of some 2,850 comments to create a talking point with a claim that 59% are in favor of the mine. Pretty slick, huh?

OK. Perhaps they can fool their investors. But they are not fooling us. The fact is that far more people in this county oppose this mine than support it.

CEA Foundation/ MineWatch volunteers made that abundantly clear at the Nevada County Board of Supervisors meeting on July 12.

CEA Foundation President Ralph Silberstein,delivered over 5,500 petition signatures which, included 1,500 unique and personalized

comments to the supervisors, all expressing opposition to the mine.

These petitions were gathered in person and online. The paper petitions were collected with the help of over 100 trusted volunteers who reported that encounters with actual mine supporters were very rare. The online petitions used a well-known security tool called reCAPTCHA to reduce the risk of compromise by automated bots.

The original count had been well over 6,500, but volunteers took the time to remove duplicates so the county could receive an honest count of voices against the mine; 4,714 of the signatures were from Nevada County residents, with the remainder from nearby counties, visitors, and others.

But that's not the only proof.

- This community delivered a powerful presence when the planning commission meeting hosted the comment meeting for the environmental report in March. Almost 500 people were in attendance. Of the 101 who took tickets to speak, only one spoke in support of the mine.

- Of the 168 opinion pieces that have been published in The Union newspaper about the mine, only eight of them were pro-mine. That's 95% opposed.

- MineWatch social media groups are over 2,500 members strong.

- "No Mine" signs abound on residents' lawns, with nary a pro-mine sign to be found.

Let's put this debate to bed, shall we? Despite Rise Gold's claims to the contrary, the people of Nevada County are overwhelmingly rejecting the proposed repopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

If you are as outraged by Rise Gold's behavior in this as I am, please send a letter to your supervisor. Mining is a toxic, risky business that relies on companies to self-report most compliance measures. Ethics matter.

Learn how at http://www.MineWatchNC.org/take-action.

Christy Hubbard is a Grass Valley homeowner, a volunteer with Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, and a leader in the MineWatch campaign.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-christy-hubbard-silent-majority-speaks-up-in-advance-of-mine-s-vested-rights/article_36b99332-9916-11ee-aec9-9f52139699b4.html

FEATURED

Ideas & Opinions — Christy Hubbard: Silent majority speaks up in advance of mine's vested rights hearing

Christy Hubbard | Other Voices
Dec 13, 2023

I am incredibly proud of our community...again! In just a few short weeks, over 1,100 people signed a group letter saying, "Let's Finish This!" to our Nevada County Supervisors. The full text of that letter is included below. It was read by CEA Foundation/MineWatch volunteers as a public comment to the Supervisors at their regular meeting on December 5th.

The letter objects to the delay in the final decision about the fate of the Idaho-Maryland Mine caused by Rise Gold's ridiculous petition for "vested rights". Think of it as claiming a "grandfathered" right to mine which, if granted, means Rise could completely bypass the County's use permit process.

The group letter is just one more example of this community's overwhelming opposition to the mine. Almost 1,000 mine opponents attended last May's Planning Commission hearing. So many made public comments that the hearing didn't finish until the end of the second day. And even then, not all that wanted to speak were able to.

This Wednesday, Dec. 13th, the County will be holding the next big public hearing about the mine at 9am. But it's a "special" topic: Rise's Vested Rights

Petition. The County will be restricting public comment – asking community members to "only" comment on historical aspects of the petition. Since that's a pretty narrow focus and few in our community consider themselves legal or historical experts on the topic, that means we'll likely see less speakers at this hearing vs. the last.

Still, the letter confirms that opposition to the mine remains very strong. Think of them as representing the "silent majority". Here is the full text.

"Dear Nevada County Supervisors,

Let's finish this!

Rise Gold seems committed to using every imaginable manipulation to have their way with the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Don't let them get away with it!

As soon as their outrageous petition for vested rights has been exposed for the farce that it is, please move quickly to schedule your final vote on the project so we can all embrace what we've so painfully learned in the past 3 years. Mining has no place in this County's residential communities. The risks just aren't worth it.

Consider that:

- Last May, our planning commissioners unanimously recommended rejection of this project and its EIR.

- In June, Rise submitted a meritless complaint letter designed to threaten and intimidate the County.

- Rise's early September petition for vested rights is little more than a desperate attempt to side-step the County's potential rejection. Their assertion that mining has been "continuous" since regulations changed in 1954 is laughable.

- Awarding vested rights would significantly impair the County's authority over the project, effectively bypassing most controls included in the EIR and Use Permit process.

- The recent replacement of Ben Mossman as CEO after he was found guilty of environmental charges in Canada doesn't make any of the severe problems with this project go away.

This community deserves a clear, unambiguous decision about the mine. Please don't let Rise Gold's endless supply of legal maneuvering cause further delays. I urge you to reject the vested rights petition and support the recommendations of your planning commission as soon as possible. The future of our community's health and quality of life is in your hands."

When delivered to the Board of Supervisors last week, this letter included almost 350 personalized comments as well.

I urge everyone to attend this week's public hearing on the mine, even if you don't feel inclined to give public comment. Your attendance really matters! Wednesday, December 13th at 9am. Rood Center, Nevada City. Learn more at www.minewatchnc.org/post/attend-the-county-s-vested-rights-hearing.

Christy Hubbard, Grass Valley Homeowner, Volunteer with CEA Foundation/MineWatch and The Wells Coalition

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David Heinen: The mine — risk and reward

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | March 3, 2022

David Heinen | Other Voices

Don Rogers suggests ("Rise's messaging less than golden," Feb. 18) that every assault brought by Rise Gold on our county (water quality, noise, air pollution) will be OK because scientific standards will be used to define "acceptable" levels of disturbance.

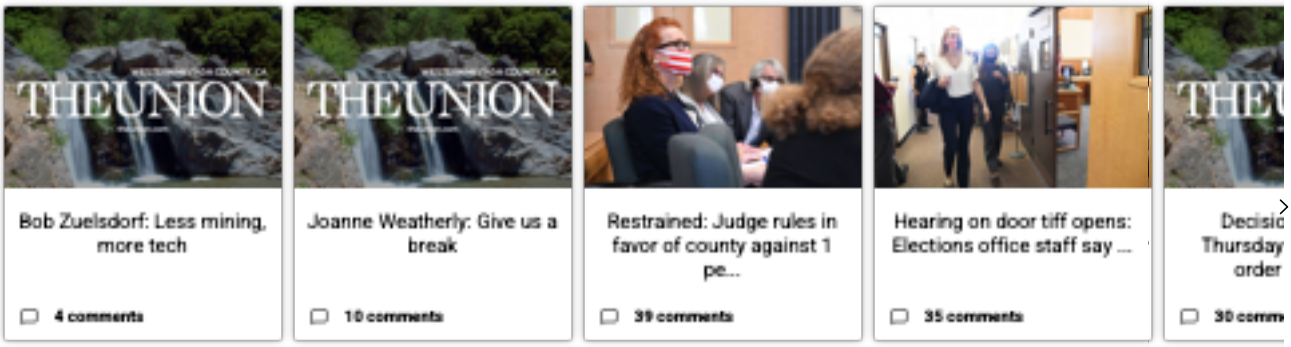
Here is where I depart from his confidence: Measurements are made by science, but standards "acceptable levels of disturbance" are political judgments, and represent what official bureaucracies consider to be a 'reasonable' middle ground. For those on the other side of that comfort line, life can be hell.

Risk of adverse effects: noise, pollution, water:

Science can measure audible intensity — "noise" — with great accuracy, but bureaucrats set standards for what is acceptable. Here's the rub: Humans vary widely in their tolerance for ambient noise, especially when it is constant and out of their control.

This is where science leaves the debate and politics enters by making a determination of what is OK. Auditory limits are set by a committee that decides how much volume you must tolerate from your neighbor's party music, or the "take off" noise inevitable for those living under an airport.

Trending Articles



What this means is that some people will be fine with the volume, and others will be driven crazy by the same noise. A constant rumbling deep within the earth may be barely noticeable to some, especially if they live far away from the site, but can be devastating to others, especially if the noise is constant.

Auditory measures were made during a brief test of the ambient noise from Rise Gold blasting. The official auditory acceptable standards were met, yet a neighbor's letter to the union stated that she had to move to the back of her house in order to sleep.

Rise's media person revealed that the treated water resulting from their operations would be potable (drinkable by accepted scientific standards) yet might taste funky, and be cloudy. Another scientific measurement judged acceptable by bureaucrats. The measure is scientifically accurate. The judgment of its acceptability is arbitrary and political.

And what's in it for the unfortunate folks who will be bothered by this noise, this bad air, this possibly funky cloudy water? We need airports, and must manage annoying noise while balancing air traffic safety, but we don't need this mine adventure, so why accept any level of downside at all?

Risk of Rise Gold being untrustworthy: Deception. I do agree with Don's assessment of deception spewing from Rise — postcards broadcast to the community, pre-made out as supportive of the mine, and the phony survey which presented loaded questions like this: "If there were no problems, and a huge tax windfall for the county, and hundreds of well paying jobs made available, would you support the mine?"

Please.

Also, Rise Gold has demonstrated a willingness to be deceptive about the jobs they will provide (average salary $92,000 and 300-plus jobs) a statement derived from taking their full employment allocation and divided by the proposed 300-plus jobs, coming up with an average salary of $92,000.

Why don't we get a breakdown of job classification, required experience, and salary? Who would believe that a trainee would be sent underground to learn the mining ropes at a salary of $92,000? Obviously, the big bucks will go out of town, county, state, and probably country, to highly trained engineers.

History: These Rise people have dumped on British Columbia. Banks Island Gold Ltd., which Mossman managed, went bankrupt because of 35 charges of failed compliance, and court cases continue to this day (Rondal Snodgrass O.V.2-22-22).

If we commit to this massive, invasive industrial operation in our small community, what guarantees do we have that Rise will not cut and run when things get tough, as they did in British Colombia?

Do we really expect that the officials in our small county will have the resources to restore the damage done to wells, aquifer, roads, and air quality if Rise fails to perform all the mitigation they have promised?

Currently, we are unable to completely restore environmental damage from mining done in the 19th century! At this point, it is reported that Rise has $400,000 in the bank.

Balance: I assert that there will be, for some at least, real downsides despite scientific "limits" from noise, pollution, diminished water quality and disruption, and on the other hand there is no guarantee of significant jobs, taxes, or successful mitigation in perpetuity.

In other words, guaranteed risks and no clear local reward. Bad deal.

David Heinen lives in North San Juan.

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Deni Silberstein: Community turns out in opposition to mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 9h ago

Deni Silberstein

In an effort to meet the response deadline to the 1,000-page, embarrassingly inadequate draft environmental impact report on the Idaho-Maryland Mine, dozens of local people — organized under the leadership of CEA — have been voluntarily working many long and grueling hours combing through the report's tediously complex studies to determine the proposed mine's impact on our community, and noting the many fallacies of Rise Gold's claims of "little to no impact."

Seeing almost 500 similarly concerned people taking the time to appear at the Rood Center on March 24 to publicly show and speak their own opposition to this brash, ill-conceived mine project has encouraged those volunteers who are still engaged in writing the official, legally-based (because it might end up in court) responses to the draft report, to plow through to the deadline's end. Thank you, community!

Deni Silberstein

Grass Valley

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Marc Cuniberti: Inflation and energy price

8

3

https://www.theunion.com/opinion/columns/guarionex-and-sharon-delgado-we-never-supported-rise-gold-why-do-they-list-us-as/article_8df1cb30-31ed-59af-a1f3-469a737cbbb5.html

Guarionex and Sharon Delgado: We never supported Rise Gold; why do they list us as so?

By navigaimport
Jul 19, 2022

Earth Justice Ministries is a local interfaith nonprofit organization that we founded with other clergy and laity almost 30 years ago. We have made clear our unwavering opposition to the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, as individuals and as an organization.

We have circulated petitions, written op-eds, spoken at public forums, sent letters to public officials, and submitted comments on the draft environmental impact report to the Board of Supervisors on the dangers we see posed by the mine. We know that many other community members have done the same.

With all the public opposition to the mine, when we read Rise Gold's recent press release stating that most of draft impact report comments sent to the Board of Supervisors showed support for the mine (1,600 out of 2,850), something seemed very wrong. It just didn't add up.

For one thing, that's not the point of the draft environmental impact report. Rise Gold is misusing the process as a public relations campaign.

The point is not to count how many people support or oppose the mine, but to comment on impacts of the project.

Rise Gold is treating the comments like a poll or survey by tallying up pre-written, postage-paid postcards and electronic form letters supporting the mine.

They did not even check for duplications. It was the hard-working MineWatch volunteers who looked closely at the names and discovered that over 500 were duplicates. Also, the names of several so-called mine "supporters" were actually MineWatch volunteers, like us!

How could that be?

We were shocked to discover that our names were listed as having emailed comments to the Board of Supervisors in support of the reopening of the mine, not just once, but three times!

When we saw the actual emails that had been falsely submitted in our names, all three were identical. Each email was just one sentence that said, "I support the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine," with our names pasted electronically on all three.

Strangely, although our actual email address was listed, the only return email address we could identify was Sharon and Guari Delgado <myvoice@oneclickpolitics.com>.

The same thing happened to Holly Rose, who had five emails sent in her name, identical to the ones sent in our names, also from this third party.

We know that this also happened to other people, and that these false emails were part of what Rise Gold claimed were legitimate comments on the report.

Without Minewatch oversight, we wouldn't have known.

Jarryd Gonzales, the spokesperson for Rise Gold, did not explain this behavior but rather made the vague claim that “an email was sent to the county whenever someone visited the (Rise Gold) project website and completed a support form.”

Neither of us ever completed such a form, and we can’t imagine other Minewatch volunteers doing so either.

Gonzales also claimed that “there are more duplicates on the side of CEA (Community Environmental Advocates) or Minewatch.”

This is false. Minewatch did not send out pre-written cards or form letters for volunteers to submit to indicate their side by stating their opposition to the mine, but rather encouraged volunteers to follow the draft environmental impact report process by studying the impacts of the mine and making their own comments.

In other words, the Minewatch Coalition followed the rules of the draft environmental impact report process.

Now, appropriately, Minewatch is making public the names of people who have taken a stand in opposition to the mine by submitting petitions to the Board of Supervisors. On Tuesday, July 12, the Minewatch Coalition turned in petitions that included 5,550 names (with no duplications) of people who oppose the reopening of the mine.

Volunteers did the hard work of not only circulating petitions, but also removing duplications. From where we stand, we see these petitions as an honest measure of where most Nevada County residents stand on the mine.

Guarionex and Sharon Delgado live in Nevada City.

Learn more about your privacy options

THE UNION

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Holly Rose: Where did they get my name as a 'supporter'?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

Holly Rose | Other Voices

Alan Riquelmy has a clever headline for his July 12 article: "Panning for support for the mine; Rise Gold and advocates spar over level of opposition to plans to reopen Idaho-Maryland."

But there are errors and omissions.

"Other mine opponents claimed their email addresses had been used to submit comments in favor of the mine."

"'Not just once,' said Sharon Delgado, 'but three times.'"

I'm not "claiming" they used my information. They did. I presented five actual emails to each supervisor at the meeting. I believe they were also provided to Alan prior to the meeting.

Trending Articles



There are many people that Rise is claiming supports them, not just Sharon Delgado and myself, that are documented signers of the no mine petitions. MineWatch has the exact number — nine, I believe they said, each probably having more than one entry. I would think mine supporters would want to follow up that they don't have fraudulent support letters/comments. They can check with MineWatchNC.

Jarryd Gonzales, spokesman for the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, said duplicate comments exist on both sides of the mine issue.

Those numbers were taken from the county," he added, noting that 56% of the comments favored the mine. "What you'll find is there are more duplicates on the side of CEA or MineWatch."

Concerning opponents' emails being used in support of the mine, Gonzales said an email was sent to the county whenever someone visited the project website and completed a support form.

Documentation shows Rise's numbers should be the only ones in question. I guarantee I never completed a support form and Rise's numbers still include their duplicates and fictitious emails, not MineWatch's. With everything presented at the meeting, how did Alan get it so backwards?

MineWatch has meticulously gone through and deleted all duplicates so their numbers are accurate.

That was stated at the meeting and specifically told to Alan, I believe.

Rise's July 29 press release says it has 59% support. The article states Mr. Gonzales is now claiming 56%. Is Rise actually changing their numbers or was that a typo?

I was relieved to let the Board of Supervisors know what Rise is up to and was told The Union reporter was going to cover it.

People need to know that our email information and addresses are being fraudulently used in Rise's numbers and we have no idea how many are fake.

They somehow have my residence address, which I don't give out, except for voter registration. It's not rocket science to figure out

that support numbers Rise claims are incorrect.

Holly Rose lives in Grass Valley.

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Jim Bair: Clear and independent voices against Rise Gold's mining plans

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 2h ago

Jim Bair | Other Voices

In a column by The Union's publisher (Jan. 21), Rise Gold opponents were compared to anti-vaxxers — both groups are probably insulted.

Is Don Rogers implying that we are a small group spouting "baloney" by "scientific" standards? Quite the opposite.

Members of our groups include scientists, engineers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and many other caring residents. Of course, Don says he didn't mean those who carefully read Rise Gold's project documents such as the draft environmental impact report. He meant those "unhinged from the science."

The Union publisher disparages the importance of local groups opposing the mine. Is it because of a financial comparison to Rise Gold Inc. (RYES), which continues to add investment capital to its war chest via a securities sale worth $2.2 million?

We don't have that budget, especially for full-page ads in The Union or very expensive mailers. But we are composed of numerous organizations, mostly nonprofit, over 3,000 individuals, and local business owners who have stated their opposition in writing.

Trending Articles



One organization is the Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains in Grass Valley. We voted unanimously to oppose the mine and form the Stop the Mine Task Force. We embrace faith and science. We are not political or interested in profit. We observe that the mine proposal is a violation of our moral and our ethical values, which include "do no harm."

Rise Gold's supposedly "scientific" findings are convoluted, deceptive, and serve one goal: profit. Science is not an algorithm where information gets plugged in and out comes truth.

Values must be applied. Consider that science mastered nuclear fission, but values led to the bomb. So, while Rise Gold has produced an overwhelming amount of data they declare to be "scientific analysis," in the end their misuse of science violates our values.

The inaccurate conclusions demand this project be stopped because it will harm people ("Why Don't We Trust Rise Gold," The Union, Dec. 7, 2020, and others).

There have been over 110 letters/articles published in The Union describing the unacceptable harms and dangers of the proposed mine.

Any one of the articles causes many of us ask, "Why would the county even consider Rise Gold's proposal?"

Rise Gold claims that they can "mitigate negative impacts" ranging from loss of water to cancer-causing pollution, but the draft environmental impact report details do not support their conclusions.

One of the most dangerous impacts is air pollution, which can hurt people miles from mining activity. Our investigation reveals that the respiratory damage from airborne toxins such as asbestos can increase mortality in Nevada County. Outdoor airborne asbestos fibers are extremely small, lethal, and cause lung cancer.

Air pollution alone is sufficient reason to reject the mine proposal (Dr. Jeff Kane's "Enjoy breathing? Consider the proposed mine," The Union, Feb. 14). Rise Gold claims that airborne pollutants including massive increases in diesel exhaust are significant but acceptable. They are not: Just one additional death from lung cancer is totally unacceptable.

Rise Gold's marketing also makes false and deceptive claims. For example, in a recent full-page ad in this newspaper (Jan. 7), they claimed "no significant impacts," a blatant disregard for the report! Even county publications state that there are three draft environmental impact report areas of significant and unavoidable negative impacts that cannot be feasibly mitigated.

More disturbing is the unscientific and self-serving "survey" funded by Rise Gold. A number of those called who responded with, "I'm against the mine," had the call canceled. Several letters in The Union call out this egregious marketing ploy, including Daniel Desmond's "Mine survey flawed," Oct. 20, 2021, and Darrell Berkheimer's "Mine snow job fails," July 9, 2021.

We understand that "scientific" data can be interpreted in different ways. But the self-serving bias in Rise Gold's claims is being called out in our comments and letters.

Join with us in commenting on the draft report before April 4. The county has done an excellent job making all the documentation available on http://www.mynevadacounty.com. Don't be intimidated by these documents. A bit of study can cut through the jargon and catch the inadequacies. This a crucial step to making your voice clear and independent.

Jim Bair is the leader of Stop the Mine Task Force of The Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains in Grass Valley, a representative of The Elders Action Network of Northern California, a former Grass Valley planning commissioner, and a scientist at Stanford, USAF Labs, and Bell-Northern Labs. He lives in Grass Valley.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/march-against-the-mine-in-the-constitution-day-parade/article_ab47f99c-5414-11ee-a55f-2f4f289c76e4.html

FEATURED

March against the mine in the Constitution Day parade

Marianne Boll-See
Sep 16, 2023

1 of 2



Two mules will lead the Nevada County MineWatch parade participants in Sunday's Constitution Day parade schedule In past years 50 to 100 people carried signs that read, "Stop the mine," or in this animal's case, "Mules against the mir owner of the mules, Luisa Suta and her partner, Richard Lowry, took the mules out for a test run this week.

Staff Writer

Members of the public who oppose the efforts of Rise Gold Corporation and their efforts to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine site located in Nevada City are invited to march together in the Constitution Day Parade on Sunday, September 17.

Supporters of the MineWatch group will gather at 1:30 p.m. above the Y at the top of East Broad Street in Nevada City for the downhill march that should take about a half hour, according to Traci Sheehan, a member of MineWatch.

The parade begins at 2 p.m.

Signs and American flags will be available for participants to hold and approximately 50 to 100 participants are currently scheduled to join the MineWatch group, according to Sheehan.

"We marched last year and also in the Mardi Gras parade in February and the response was amazing," Sheehan said. "People cheer and clap for us all the way through the parade."

Sheehan emphasized that this promises to be a fun, community event.

Two mules with their owner Louisa Suta will be leading the MineWatch group with signs that read, "Mules against the mine" displayed.

In past years, Suta has had to plug the ears of the mules so that they are not

startled by the cheers and energy of the crowd.

“We will also have a banjo player and flags attached to all of our signs,” Sheehan said.

The parade starts with a reenactment of the signing of the U.S. Constitution.

“This year’s parade theme is ‘Soundtrack of America,’ and will feature numerous marching bands and live music, along with floats, military groups, fire trucks, youth groups, and the perennial favorite — the Famous Marching Presidents of Nevada City, a humorous but reverent depiction of each U.S. president and first lady,” a release for the event said.

Interested participants are asked to notify the MineWatch group by emailing traci@cea-nc.org. MineWatch organizers would like to track how many people participate and identify a few “helpers.”

There will be a free shuttle to the parade. The shuttle runs Sunday from noon to 6 p.m.

Park for free at the Nevada County Government Center just off Highway 49 at 950 Maidu Avenue and take the shuttle into town for free.

More info about the weekend events can be found at Constitution Day 2023 — Nevada City Chamber of Commerce.

MineWatch Meeting rescheduled

Given the County’s schedule changes, MineWatch decided to move the community meeting, also called a campaign meeting, originally scheduled for

September 12 to September 26 instead.

This will be an in-person community meeting from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Nevada County Associations of Realtors' Esterly Hall located at 336 Crown Point Circle in Grass Valley.

On the agenda is a status report regarding the vested rights and Rise Gold Corporation's other legal actions explained by MineWatch's legal team, Sheehan.

Background information offering reasons why the proposal from Rise Gold can't be fixed will be addressed.

"Come learn about vested rights and what can be done between now and December," Sheehan said.

The Board of Supervisors hearing originally set for October 2 and 3 has been canceled, according to an August 23 press release from Nevada County.

Instead, the County Board of Supervisors will meet in late October to decide on the vested rights issue.

If vested rights are denied, the County plans to reschedule the long-awaited final vote on the normal use permit process in December.

If you can't make it to the meeting in person, consider joining by Zoom. Please register in advance to get a personalized link.

Coincidently, Benjamin Mossman sentencing date for his guilty verdict in Canadian court is currently set for the same day, September 26.

To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-save-the-dates-february-15-16-2024-stop-the-mine-final-hearing/article_f0bbeb82-bc6a-11ee-89e6-bff30bc3d474.html

Ideas & Opinions — Save the dates! February 15 & 16, 2024: Stop the Mine Final Hearing

Martha Turner | Letter to the Editor
Jan 27, 2024

Save the dates! February 15 & 16, 2024: Stop the Mine Final Hearing

Hi Friends,

The final decision regarding the use permit application to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine will be voted on by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors at a special hearing, scheduled on February 15 and 16, 2024. This is the most important and final step in the decision process and we must continue to show the strength of our opposition! Please plan to come to the government center in Nevada City and make your voice heard.

You are receiving this email because you have been a supporter of UUCM's Stop the Mine task force during the past two years. Even though the Task Force was not renewed for 2024, there is still work to be done, under the skillful guidance of MineWatch/CEA.

Consider Speaking Up

We would love for you to speak at the hearing! If you made a comment last May, consider refreshing and re-presenting your comment so the supervisors

have your concerns foremost in their minds. If you have a new three-minute comment you would like to have on record, please write it up and speak out! If you would be willing to read a comment, prepared by astute writers from MineWatch, please contact the MineWatch coordinator for commenting, Greg Thrush at gregory.m.thrush@gmail.com

There have been TWO important victories in 2023:

· In May 2023, County Planning Commissioners recommended a unanimous NO vote on both a use permit for the project and the Final Environmental Impact Report.

· In December 2023, County Supervisors stood firm and unanimously rejected a separate petition submitted by Rise Gold claiming a "vested right" to mine the property without the need for a use permit.

Let’s join together, one more time, and be loud and clear that we DO NOT want this mine to be reopened! Go to http://www.minewatchnc.org for LOTS more information on why the reopening of this mine must be prevented.

Blessings on the work we all do!

Martha Turner

THE UNION

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Martha Turner: United we stand!

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | March 22, 2022

Martha Turner

I consider why I've been spending so much of my time and energy this past year working in opposition to the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. I do so because it's abundantly clear that if this heavy industrial industry were to open, so close to our town, life as we know it will be forever damaged.

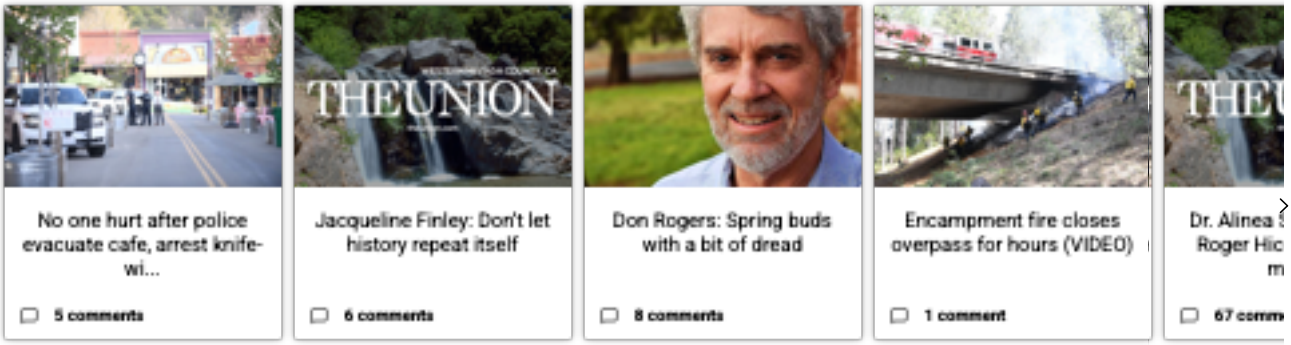
Every day The Union publishes informative articles written by thoughtful and intelligent people in our community and the science is clear! It is also clear that this is a non-partisan issue, for it will impact every one of us who live here and breathe the air. It will have an impact on not only our lives now but the lives of our children, our grandchildren and on generations to come.

Grass Valley is my hometown and I love the quality of life we have. This is why I work hard to prevent this mine from ever reopening.

Please write a letter to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, not just your own but all of the supervisors. Demand that they not allow this mine to reopen. Remember that just three individual supervisors have the power to prevent or allow the mine to open. Encourage them to be remembered for opposing Rise Gold and standing up for the people.

Please come to the special Planning Commission meeting at 9:30 a.m. on March 24 in the supervisors' chambers at the Rood Center in Nevada City. Let's show them what we believe!

Trending Articles



Martha Turner

Grass Valley

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https://www.theunion.com/news/ideas-opinions-minewatch-coalition-delivers-final-comments-to-nevada-county-board-of-supervisors-25-groups/article_ae43821e-da44-11ed-aa48-a30c4f409cbb.html

Ideas & Opinions — MineWatch Coalition delivers final comments to Nevada County Board of Supervisors: 25 groups call for denial of the Idaho-Maryland Mine

MineWatch
Apr 14, 2023

MineWatch, a coalition of 25 organizations led by the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, submitted its culminating letter to the Nevada County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors today. The coalition formed in 2020 and includes local, state, and national organizations that oppose the re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine located in Grass Valley, CA.

The long-shuttered Idaho-Maryland Mine, a mass of underground tunnels and mine waste tailings from the 1800s gold rush era, is proposed to be re-opened by Canadian-based Rise Gold Corp. A Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) was released in December 2022. In response, many hundreds of comments were submitted by citizens to the County expressing serious concerns about the risks of the mine and the inadequacy of the report. The County Planning Commission is set to consider the issue at a public hearing on May 10, 2023.

The coalition is calling for the Nevada County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to avoid prolonging the battle over the mine. Asking the

County to deny approval of the mine and not certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the letter states; “We believe that continuing to process the EIR will just cost the County staff and the community a loss of time and energy.”

They conclude that the “…reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine is not supported by a majority of Nevada County constituents. Nevada County is no longer a resource extraction county. We have shifted onto a new 21st century green economy. And our residents support this shift. Are a few jobs and uncertain tax revenue worth the risk?”

CEA Foundation President Ralph Silberstein commented on the letter saying: “MineWatch has worked on the mine project diligently over the last three years to produce an accurate and detailed analysis for the community and the County. Coalition members span a wide range of organizations and expertise, and our analysis has led us all to the same conclusions. We are very concerned that the Final EIR has completely failed to adequately assess and mitigate the impacts of the proposed mine, and we view it as a significant threat to our community.”

The letter specifically states: “The FEIR lists several significant and unavoidable environmental impacts that endanger this community’s health and quality of life. These include aesthetics, traffic, and noise. There are also serious deficiencies in the FEIR that underestimate numerous other significant and unavoidable environmental impacts which our organizations and the community have identified throughout this process.” The letter goes on to outline these concluded deficiencies in detail, including: inadequate analysis of potential impacts to groundwater and residential wells; inadequate testing and provision for storage and removal of hazardous mine waste rock;

limited analysis of asbestos risk; lack of assurance that the Centennial waste disposal site can be used; and underestimation of the impact of greenhouse gas emissions.

“We are deeply concerned that, should the Idaho-Maryland Mine reopen, mining operations would pollute our waterways, dewater groundwater, dry up private wells already impacted by drought, and degrade wildlife habitat,” stated Aaron Zettler-Mann, Interim Executive Director of the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), a MineWatch Coalition member. “The Final EIR fails to adequately address environmental concerns raised during the EIR review period, only listing aesthetics, traffic, and noise as significant and unavoidable environmental impacts. Denying approval of the mine and not certifying the FEIR is the only way to protect our air, water, and quality of life.”

“Given the Nisenan’s devastating experience with the mining industry and the lasting environmental destruction that can be seen from space, the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe and its supporting non-profit CHIRP, believe the mine (the ‘mul mul mul’) is not in the best interest of the land, the people and the animals of today,” stated Shelly Covert, spokesperson for the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, which is also part of the MineWatch Coalition. “As a community, we need only look to the vast evidence around us to see the environmental and humanitarian lessons left by the gold rush that should have been learned the first time around.”

The MineWatch coalition notes that the County is under no obligation to approve the project, noting that it is inconsistent with the Nevada County and Grass Valley General Plans; that there is no economic justification for the Mine; that there will be severe and unavoidable environmental impacts; and

that the community overwhelmingly does not want the Mine to reopen.

The MineWatch coalition letter concludes: “Our community is clearly at risk from the reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine. It threatens to change the character of the community we love.”

The Nevada County Planning Commission is charged with making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. That recommendation is two-fold; first, to recommend whether the analysis in the FEIR is adequate and complete, and second, whether the Board of Supervisors should adopt the project. More information on the project can be found on the County project webpage.

Concerned citizens are encouraged to attend the County’s public hearing on May 10 to voice their opposition. A copy of the Coalition’s letter is available at www.minewatchnc.org/post/coalition-final-letter.

Editor’s Note: A copy of the letter is also available with this story at TheUnion.com.

IMMine FEIR CoalitionComments April5-2023 Final by The Union on Scribd

About CEA Foundation: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. www.cea-nc.org CEA Foundation is the leader of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine. www.MineWatchNC.org

https://www.theunion.com/news/local/ideas-opinions---nevada-county-association-of-realtors-encourage-the-public-to-become-educated/article_fc0999fe-eebf-11ed-965c-c336ab1ffb16.html

Ideas & Opinions – Nevada County Association of REALTORS encourage the public to become educated and engage in the proposed mine re-opening

Nevada County Association of REALTORS
May 10, 2023

The debate regarding the re-opening of the Idaho Maryland Mine by Rise Grass Valley has been the topic of multiple member forums at the Nevada County Association of REALTORS (NCAR). The potential impacts on property rights and on our community are many and fall in both directions. It has the been the position of the Association to first and foremost educate local REALTORS regarding the proposed mine re-opening and associated impact reports so that REALTORS can offer proper disclosures and have engaged conversations with buyers and sellers of properties in the vicinity of the mine property and within the Nevada County region.

With education in mind, NCAR has provided links to its members of both the Draft and Final EIR's (Environmental and Economic Impact Reports) along with other data site sources for their review and to share with their clients, families and Nevada County residents. Members have been notified of the upcoming Planning Commission Public Hearing Wednesday, May 10 to discuss the impacts associated with the proposed mine re-opening.

With the Planning Commission meeting to review the EIRs looming in the

near future, and ultimately the Board of Supervisors making a final decision on whether to approve or deny the project, NCAR invites the Public to GET ENGAGED, READ REPORTS, ASK QUESTIONS and contact your County Supervisor and Planning Commission members with your impressions and opinions. We encourage you to write letters to the Planning Commission prior to or speak at the hearing on May 10th and let your individual voices be heard on the issue.

The EIR report can be found Here: https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/3655/Idaho-Maryland-Mine-Final-EIR

The Economic Impact Report can be found here: https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/3646/Economic-Impact-Report-of-the-Proposed-I

The dates of the Planning Commission Meetings are May 10th & 11th as needed. Local REALTORS hope that the public takes this opportunity to weigh in on the sited impacts of the proposed re-opening of Idaho-Maryland Mine in a constructive, respectful manner.

The Nevada County Association of REALTORS is a private trade organization located in Grass Valley, CA. Our mission is to promote professionalism, advocate on behalf of property rights and position our members for success. For more information, please contact our offices at (530) 272-2627.

SECTION TITLE

I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

THE UNION

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Alden Holsopple: Values are upside down

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | September 10, 2020

I would like to address our elected leaders who are making decisions on reopening the Empire mine. I grew up in the region of southwest Pennsylvania. If you ever had to tote water for domestic use you will understand well and spring water carry a high premium. Deep mining, strip mining, and fracking change the water table. If you still have rather after extraction it is laden with sulphur and iron. That region's landscape remains scarred to this day. Just ask someone from that Pennsylvania how they feel about losing their wells and springs, or about the mountains of rock dump where nothing grows, or the abandon mines that seep sulphur into the rivers and streams rendering them void of life. What are the redeeming social values in mining this yellow metal "gold"? You can't eat it, drink it, or make love to it. So the gold and its value is shipped out of our community to absentee owners, in exchange we get a hand full of jobs and a compromised environment? Our values are upside down.

Alden Holsopple

Grass Valley

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Bob Clark: Mine a Pandora's box

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | April 23, 2021

Bob Clark | Other Voices

I thought the role of county supervisors was to work for the benefits of residents. As I get older I find that I have misunderstood a lot of things. Despite a higher than average IQ, a degree from a major university, and almost 50 years of successful business experience, I am surprised when I find something I have been pretty confident about ends up not being true.

So is the case with the county's consideration of an application by Rise Gold to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine.

Since I live around the corner from the Brunswick mine site and will be impacted by a reopening, I have tried to educate myself about the possible reopening. One of the first things I did was to contact Matt Kelly in the county's planning department and ask him for a copy of the county's economic impact analysis. (Many of you have found Matt to be a good, responsive resource as I have.) Matt told me that such a study was not required, does not exist, and that none is planned.

Wow.

I'm assuming Rise Gold has considered the costs and benefits to them. For some reason, however, the county hasn't concluded they should do the same for us.

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Susan Bewle Build Bac
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Knowing that the three most important factors in real estate values are location, location, and location, I wondered what the impact might be on my home value if all of a sudden it was close to an operating mine. Knowing that our local real estate agents do all of the Grass Valley real estate transactions and that they are the foremost experts on Grass Valley real estate, I called the person who does the largest volume of transactions and has for years.

When I asked for their professional assessment of what would happen if the mine reopened, they didn't hesitate.

"Your home value and that of all your neighbors will drop by $50,000 to $100,00."

Still in a bit of shock, I called another high volume agent, and another, and another, and another, and another .... They all 100% agreed: Property values would decline. I went online to see if I could find any fact-based study of what actually happened in another case where a mine was opened in a residential area.

After much searching, I found a study done by two PhDs at the University of Minnesota. I called them and they sent me a copy of their study. What they found, based on actual property sales over a nine-year period, was that properties within a one-mile radius of the mine site dropped 20%. But wait, they found that values dropped for up to a 7-mile radius, though less so, as the property was further

from the mine site.

That's all of Grass Valley. Did the county supervisors just not know? I had to tell them, so I did. Just properties within one mile of the Brunswick site could drop tens of millions of dollars. So what did they say?

"That's just speculation."

Speculation? This is what our local experts are telling us. Does it matter whether it drops 20%, or 10%, or 5%? Shouldn't any decline be mitigated, or at least considered? Are my neighbors and I just supposed to swallow hard? Are you?

You may not live next to the mine site, but you're crazy if you think it won't impact you.

I know the county is doing an Environmental Impact Report. I also know the Rise-paid "outside experts" will conclude that everything can be mitigated, leaving us to battle them issue by issue. I was told by the county's legal counsel that the supervisors couldn't intervene, as "they have to be the unbiased judge and jury." Doesn't serving the best interests of residents apply at all?

Shouldn't the economic impact of any project be required whether there is any required procedure to do so or not? Every business does one. Would Supervisor Dan Miller start building a new store without considering the costs and benefit? I don't think Dan is that stupid. Don't most of us consider the cost and impact of a major purchase like buying a car? Of course we do, we're not that stupid or irresponsible.

What is the role of our county supervisors if not to look out for our best interests? Failure for them to do so only leaves three explanations to me: personal interest, total disregard of their duties, or just plain stupid. Take your choice. Any of them makes them unfit to serve the office we have elected them to serve, and we need to get rid of them.

If we all just sit and let it happen, it will. If it does, I guess I'll have to tell my family that good old Dad didn't understand that people don't really care about their pocketbooks and by the way, your inheritance will be $100,000 or more less than expected.

Are we all that stupid?

Bob Clark lives in Grass Valley.

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Deni Silberstein: CEA favors Centennial cleanup, done right

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 9h ago

Deni Silberstein | Other Voices

In a recent Other Voices column, Christian Stewart expressed his opinions about Community Environmental Advocates' response to Rise Gold's Centennial cleanup project. CEA spends untold numbers of volunteer hours combing through hundreds of pages of technical documents, teasing out the facts — not the opinions — of what Rise's plan for the reopening of the mine will look like, and discerning what will be its impact on our community.

Here are a few examples of Stewart's opinions, and the corresponding facts:

1. "Rise has proposed to pay for cleanup" of the Centennial site. FACT: The Centennial site will be used as a dumping ground for Rise Gold's mine waste. But since that site is polluted from previous mining dumps, Rise must clean it up before they will be allowed to dump their own mine waste onto it. Cleaning it up is a state mandate; it's not something Rise "proposed" to do out of the goodness of their heart.

2. "No mining is proposed at all for Centennial." FACT: It's disingenuous to say that "no mining is proposed" for the Centennial site — for up to five years, that site will be used, exclusively, for the dumping of Rise's mine waste until this waste is a 70-foot high pile of rocks. At the end of this time, commercial development may occur atop this rock pile.

3. "CEA has come out against the environmental cleanup process at Centennial." FACT: CEA is definitely not against the cleanup. CEA is definitely in favor of the cleanup. As mentioned in a previous comment, what CEA is against is the illegal use of the cleanup as a cover-up for the environmental damage that the dumping of Rise Gold's mine wastes will cause to the Centennial site. In other words, Rise is attempting to subsume mining activities under the masquerade of the cleanup project in order to avoid having to conform to the California Environmental Quality Act. This is illegal, and lawyers have submitted a 25-page document outlining the many laws that Rise will be violating if it proceeds with the cleanup as proposed. Does this mean that Rise either needs to take the time to write a legal cleanup proposal that eliminates the site as a dumping ground for mine waste, or else take the time to include the Centennial dumping site as a component of the mine's general, CEQA required, environmental impact report? Yes. Doing things correctly often takes more time than not.

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4. Stewart says that CEA claims the Centennial site is a "protected natural resource critical to a functioning watershed." FACT: This is true. The site is "protected" in that it is an area deserving of a fair analysis under CEQA. To disagree with this truth shows either a lack of understanding about the importance and necessity of healthy watersheds, an indifference to them, or both.

5. Stewart claims that a campaign is under way to "save the historic tailings pond." FACT: CEA is not involved in a "campaign" to "save

the historic tailings pond" except to the extent explained in No. 3 above. It is worth mentioning, however, that these tailings ponds, which killed and polluted the entire area for the decades that followed, are slowly beginning to recover. And since these damaged wetlands are all that previous mining activity has left us, it would be beneficial to the watershed to minimize additional man-made damage to them, and let them get on with their recovery.

6. The mine is the "biggest economic development project this county has seen in decades." FACT: This is an overly-simplified understanding of what is needed for a healthy, foothill economy. CEA recommends reading a summary of the economic study done for the 2008 mine proposal (www.cea-nc.org/the-idaho-maryland-mine/impacts-to-jobs-and-housing-from-the-proposed-idaho-maryland-mine/), which indicates that a mine may not be the best business for the local economy, then waiting to see what the newly agreed upon economic study will reveal.

7. CEA is trying to kill the cleanup process of a "blighted site in the heart of our community." FACT: See No. 3 above. In addition, CEA completely agrees that this "blighted site" is in the heart of our community, which is why CEA is working hard to prevent another mine from continuing this blighting of our community's heart.

8. "CEA are NIMBYs enabled by CEQA." FACT: When it comes to Canadian mining companies ripping up the heart of Grass Valley, then, yep — we're NIMBYs! And thank goodness for CEQA!

Deni Silberstein lives in Grass Valley.

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Conversation

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ALL COMMENTS 1 newest

GM **George Mendoza** 5 HRS AGO

CEA is the same people who sued against Dorsey Market and got thrown out of court. No thanks. Troublemakers who cost our county jobs, time and money. Go away forever.

REPLY 0 2

ACTIVE CONVERSATIONS


Darrell Berkheimer: Threats, false issues and toys
13


'Taking care of people': Ed Thomas dies at 82
1

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George Olive: Echoes of Siskon Mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | February 22, 2022

George Olive

Arrived to Nevada County since 1995? Raise your antennae for historical reverberations from that decade's version of gold fever — the Siskon Mine on San Juan Ridge.

Rise Gold is just the latest Canadian extractor hoping we forget prior mine reopenings, this time the Idaho-Maryland Mine. To our mailboxes came "The Science is Clear," and to our inboxes a Feb. 10 press release claiming "NID ... approved the Water Supply Assessment," both of which ooze misinformation.

Whose science? And which NID meeting did Rise God attend? Rise Gold's "science" cannot predict the impacts of pumping Idaho-Maryland's shafts. And NID did not simply "approve" that assessment, but wisely added protective conditions to their resolution.

The history of unpredictable mine reopenings is painfully clear: In 1995, Siskon punctured a vertical fault that flooded Spring Creek and the South Yuba with millions of gallons of tainted water. Twelve local wells went dry, including Grizzly Hill School's.

Assurances — the "science" — from Siskon Corp. that had won over our Planning Commission proved to be disastrous for San Juan Ridge, folks.

Trending Articles



The history is clear: Mine reopenings are unpredictable. Read "A Brief History of the San Juan Ridge Mine."

George Olive

Nevada City

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Janet Weaver: Don’t repeat errors of the past with mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Janet Weaver

As Nevada County reviews the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, I reflect on the fact that it was 25 years ago, this month, that approximately 20,000 cubic yards of tailings broke loose from a 60-foot-high old log containment dam and arsenic tailings floated from the Lava Cap Mine down three miles into the Little Clipper Creek and into Lost Lake.

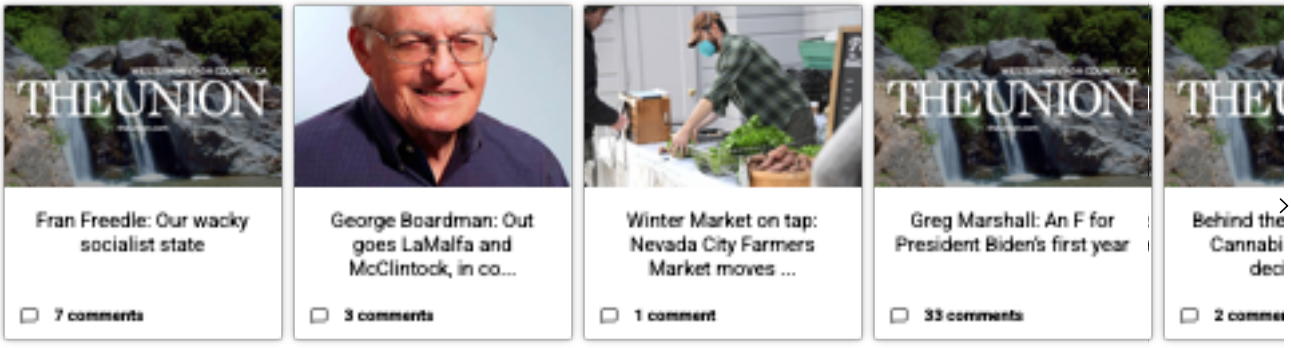
During the years that followed, the properties around the Little Clipper have been deemed an EPA Superfund site. They installed a containment system over the remaining arsenic-contaminated tailings, installed drainage channels, replaced the dam, decontaminated mine buildings and excavated contaminated soil from along the creek. EPA constructed an 8-inch pipeline to run approximately 1.5 miles with service lines to connect residences in the area to clean water.

Since this area was declared an EPA Superfund site, the homeowners have had their wells tested several times a year, including this past summer. All this work at taxpayers’ cost.

Please, let’s not repeat the errors of the past by creating new errors in the future. I am a property owner within this EPA Superfund site, and unfortunately, it will always be declared as such.

Janet Weaver

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Josie Crawford: Forever issues plague mines

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 13, 2021

Josie Crawford
Other Voices

Merry Byles Daley used to walk her students from Hennessey School to Memorial Park to play and learn in the creek. That is, until the day the classroom tadpoles died from the creek water she added to their aquarium. The creek was Magenta Drain, named for the color of its water when it came out of the ground. It was the color of acid mine drainage and came from Empire Mine.

Arsenic, manganese and iron were in Magenta Drain. These heavy metals contaminate our soil and water. If the Idaho-Maryland Mine reopens, these are the same metals we will need to deal with during their operation and forevermore.

Gold often occurs with rocks that contain sulfides. When sulfides contact water and air, they form sulfuric acid which leaches heavy metals from the rocks. When the mines closed, miles of tunnels filled with rainwater and began draining into the creeks. Acid mine drainage is considered the most serious threat to streams because of its toxicity. And it is forever.

There are a lot of songs and stories that tell us just how long forever is.

Here are the short forever stories of acid mine drainage from North Star, Empire and Idaho-Maryland mines, and the struggle to get accountability.

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Newmont Mining Corp. owned North Star and Empire Mines when they closed in 1956. Heavy metals contaminated Magenta Drain and Little Wolf Creek. Agencies were aware of the high level of metals since 1981 yet did little until 2011, when a treatment plant was built at Empire Mine State Historic Park . Thirty years!

It is a similar story with North Star Mine. Three mine features were discharging effluent directly into Wolf Creek. Then, in 2000, the Drew Tunnel was accidentally punctured during a construction project and effluent flowed into the Grass Valley wastewater treatment plant, overwhelming it during storms, resulting in numerous sewage spills with heavy metals into Wolf Creek. Our beautiful creek. This went on for 14-plus years! Yes, I am shouting.

These mines closed in 1956 because the price of gold fell, and costs increased. This will happen again. Mines close when they are not profitable, no matter the owner. A small corporation may go bankrupt and leave cleanup to the taxpayers. What would a large corporation do?

Newmont Mining Corp., the largest gold mining company in the world, did not go bankrupt. They kept their mineral rights and some property here. Newmont has deep roots here. North Star was its first gold mine.

Yet when effluent from those mines — with arsenic, manganese, iron, zinc, lead, and copper — spilled into Magenta Drain in Memorial Park, where you and your children might have played, and Wolf Creek, where some of us fish and swim, and the wastewater treatment plan, where your poop and metals were spilled into Wolf Creek because of Newmont effluent, did Newmont rush to clean it up for the people of Grass Valley? No, they did not.

It took years of costly litigation, a grand jury investigation and some expensive treatment plants to begin to resolve these messes.

In 2014, a chilling grand jury report addressing the problems of Lava Cap Mine, North Star Mine and Empire Mine found that for over 30 years, federal, state and local governmental agencies failed to coordinate, communicate, accept responsibility or properly enforce cleanup and abatement orders and legal settlements. And that the health and welfare of residents and their water quality may be compromised.

In 2011, Newmont and the state park built the Empire Mine treatment plant. Newmont built the North Star Passive Treatment Project in 2015.

Rise Gold is planning a more active, higher maintenance chemical treatment plant for dewatering the tunnels. The problem is that these problems will never go away. Spills happen — to creeks and people.

This water will need to be treated forever. Mine tunnels will fill, rupture, leak and leach heavy metals forever. We can't predict when or where or if anyone will notice or take responsibility.

If the world's largest gold mining corporation, with strong ties to our community, is not moved to clean up its legacy problems, then who will?

If the agencies charged with regulating are continuously understaffed, who will enforce cleanups? Who will pay to treat these sites forever?

Like many fevers, gold fever can cloud the mind. In the quest for quick gain for ourselves or our community, we may forget the long-term costs of mining. They are many. Some are metals. They are forever.

My name is Josie and I speak for the creeks.

Josie Crawford is a biologist and the executive director of Wolf Creek Community Alliance. Thanks to Dale Peterson, she lives on Wolf Creek.

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Julie Becker: Clean up the Centennial site responsibly

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 6h ago

Julie Becker | Other Voices

In order for Rise Grass Valley (or Rise Gold) to reach the point of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine, they first have to clean up the Centennial dumping site — a site near Centennial Drive where toxic mine waste was deposited many decades ago.

In a recent Other Voices column, "Enviros would stymie cleanup," the author smears the intent of Community Environmental Advocates, claiming the group is railing against rehabbing the site in a responsible way — a claim that is way off base.

The Remedial Action Plan that Rise Gold presented to the Department of Toxic Substances Control is seriously flawed and unsuitable — calling for the destruction of healthy wetlands, riparian areas, and native plant communities that cover close to 70% of the whole site.

While Rise Gold will obviously need clean fill to cap the contaminated portion of the Centennial site, it seems counter-productive to dig up existing wetlands to use for this fill. The wetlands themselves are not contaminated — and they play an active role in the ecosystem. They filter water, reduce erosion and sequester greenhouse gases among other functions. They are a precious natural resource and they need to be protected, not used as a "cap" and destined to be buried under tons of rubble trucked from the mine site off Brunswick Road in the future.

In short, this is not an acceptable plan. It is not OK to backhoe, bulldoze and destroy acres of healthy property in order to cover up a section of toxic land and then proclaim the whole area environmentally sound.

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But there is a viable alternative, and that is to obtain clean fill from offsite — leaving the wetlands and riparian areas intact. This would be the most responsible approach and it could easily be done. This is the approach Community Environmental Advocates supports and promotes — an approach that considers the health of our ecosystem and the overall welfare of our community.

Julie Becker lives in Nevada City.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---patricia-sharp-save-our-town/article_ee44f180-b14b-11ed-b390-0b5968dc15ca.html

Ideas & Opinions - Patricia Sharp: Save our town

Patricia Sharp
Feb 22, 2023

I live in town in Grass Valley, not far from Empire Mine State Park. For the 20 years I've lived in this house, I've walked there four days a week. Anyone who uses the park is familiar with the Magenta Drain. It serves to filter out the heavy metals that accumulated in the mine water. An expenditure of over $2 million dollars created a natural filtration system that removes 60-70% of the metals out of the water.

The process to clean up that site has been a long and winding one. Newmont, the previous mine owners didn't want to pay for the underground cleanup. A lawsuit ensued in July of 2012; the State of California sued Newmont Mining to reimburse the State for the $36 million dollars it already spent remediating the toxic waste. The suit included all future responsibility for the cleanup. Newmont ended up settling with California State Parks for $15 million and the cost of ongoing and future costs for cleanup. The ordeal and expense of toxic mine waste cleanup even prompted talk from a couple of state legislators

to suggest selling the 850-acre State Historic Park.

The point I want to make is that industrial hardrock mining is a dirty, toxic business. So dirty and toxic that no one wants to foot the cleanup bill. It is most certainly not something that should be done in a populated area. There will be tons and tons of toxic soils trucked out, through town, spewing diesel exhaust, toxic dust floating around, impeding traffic, not to mention all the homes nearby that might lose their well water.

Right out front, the owners of Rise Gold are not trustworthy. Quoting from Bob and Christy Hubbard, in The Union Newspaper, Oct 17, 2022, “CEO Ben Mossman’s last venture before joining Rise Gold was a profound failure, and disregard for regulations and poor management practices appear to have played a significant role in that. His company, Banks Island Gold Ltd., owned the Yellow Giant Mine in British Columbia, Canada, which polluted tribal waters, went bankrupt and left Canadians with a mess to clean up”.

An industrial mining operation has no business being in the middle our beloved Grass Valley. The potential degradation to our town combined with the management record of Rise Gold should lead you, our Nevada County Supervisors, to vote NO on reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Let’s not foul our nest anymore.

Patricia Sharp

Grass Valley

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Paul Schwartz: History warns against reopening mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 17, 2021

Paul Schwartz | Other Voices

My first major decision as an adult was to leave my home town of Santa Barbara because the rents were very high and the wages low. I traveled to San Francisco in 1971 and the talk on the street was Nevada City bicycle races and the Yuba River were both amazing. I arrived in Nevada City and while enjoying a sandwich in the Rainbow Mountain Inn I was offered a job and a place to rent.

Over the next three-plus decades I married, raised a family, worked multiple jobs, bought a home, joined a food co-op, enjoyed the Yuba River and the bicycle races, got an education (commuted and long distance), participated in governing, and learned the beauty and the beast of our gold mining heritage.

That brings us to my opposition to the proposal by Rise Gold to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine.

It's easy to fall in love with the romantic story of the Gold Rush. The facts are that within one year of the discovery of gold big money moved in and industrialized the removal of millions of dollars of gold.

Once that occurred there was little concern for the individual miner, environment, or the impact of dangerous chemicals flushed down Wolf and Deer creeks into the Sacramento River and the San Francisco Bay. Arsenic, mercury, and other chemicals outlawed today were used to remove the gold. The waste was stored in chemical ponds. When the rains came the ponds were opened up to flood into the streams and rivers.

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Old-timers talked about Wolf and Deer creeks running white as milk on these occasions. When the mines closed in the 1950s, the remains of the waste ponds were pushed into the mine shafts and buried. We live today with this toxic legacy across much of our landscape.

If you see mine tailings, you are probably seeing legacy toxic waste. The Empire Mine State Park has begun to fence off these areas to keep tourists from picking through them for souvenirs.

We have learned from grand jury reports as recent as 2014 that the federal government, state, county and city regulators have failed to protect us from both the historical toxic legacy risks and current mining impacts.

I remember my kids playing in the stream that runs through Memorial Park and my wife picking watercress to add to our salad that night. That stream is now fenced off mainly due to the grand jury report calling it out.

The report called for Empire Mine and Newmont Mining to redirect the stream into safe holding ponds to limit the risk to the

community. Although the stream is still fenced as it runs through Memorial Park, state parks and Newmont Mining completed a project to divert runoff away from the targeted contaminated soils and ensure they did not enter the greater watershed leaving Empire Mine State Park.

The mitigations are intended to stabilize and hold legacy mining process toxins in place. This is a mitigation strategy widely used to lower the risk of the poisons leaching into the community watershed. Thank you, Nevada County Grand Jury, for bringing this to the attention of our city, county and state leadership.

Aside from the million gallons of water that will be pumped out of the mine daily, the continually testing and monitoring of water quality, the dust and particulate that will cloud the air from the 1,000-plus tons a day of mine waste crushed and moved by truck every day, the noise that continuous industrial activity will add to our local soundtrack, the questionable practices that Rise Gold management used on their last gold mine that they are litigating currently in the Canadian courts, or the potential impact on hundreds of residential wells within the mineral rights boundary of the Idaho Maryland Mine, I question the ability of agencies responsible for oversight to regulate and control what Rise Gold does.

Speak out, write letters, talk to family and friends, ask our local leadership why they are considering retreating into our past instead of looking to our future.

Paul Schwartz lives in Grass Valley.

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Theresa Huck: Is this pain our future?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | February 19, 2021

Theresa Huck | Other Voices

On Nov. 30, 2020, I saw my specialist at UC San Francisco. I was given a new and updated diagnosis: peripheral neuropathy caused by mercury poisoning.

This was not a hippie-laden self-diagnosis. This is a real diagnosis by the head of dermatology at UC San Francisco, and now UC Davis neurologists are my next stop to treat my verified diagnosis.

How did I get mercury poisoning? A tunnel of the Lost Lake leg of the Lava Cap Mine collapsed underground and disturbed heavy metals that had settled in the mine tailings, allowing them to move into the surrounding groundwater.

We rented this property and had no knowledge that our well/natural spring in Grass Valley, at You Bet Road and Lost Lake Road, was in the proximity of a federally designated Superfund site.

As a renter, I had received no notification that I was living in an officially designated toxic area. Landowners are notified, but renters are not, as it is not required by Nevada County, the state of California or the federal government.

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Nevada County Food and Toy Run will not continue
14 comments



School board to hear from group against Critical Race T...
35 comments


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28 comments



Our View: Updating the history books
23 comments


Susan Bewle Build Bac
21 comme

I drank the water from my well, I showered in it, cooked with it, and ingested it for over two and a half years. As a result my son and I both have brain damage caused by this poisoning. No, I could not smell it or taste it. I thought I was drinking the best water I could from a natural spring.

I am devastated. My doctor says that my quality of life living with this is equal to being in full renal failure, on daily dialysis. In order to function every day, I have to depress my nervous system with heavy medications and use ice packs all over my body, randomly moving them to different locations as the dying nerves send signals to my brain.

My doctor explained that peripheral neuropathy is the death of small nerves. As one bundle of nerves die, my body will find new nerve bundles to kill off.

There is no end to this, and there is no cure. There is no future for me that is not plagued with daily torture. This won't kill me in the end, but it is assured that I will be living with a personal hell caused by the legacy of mining in Nevada County.

Is gold truly worth this? Is it truly worth it for Nevada County residents who risk exposure to mercury, lead and arsenic for mines like the Idaho-Maryland to reopen? For investments?

Will it be in the air, with the many thousands of truck trips hauling mine tailings? Will it be in our groundwater as massive amounts of

water are flushed from the tunnels? How else could this affect us?

What will Rise Gold do at the Idaho-Maryland Mine to ensure this cannot happen to any Nevada County resident, now or in the future as a consequence of an accident, a spill, a mistake or a simple oversight? It hardly seems possible, given the history of mines here, that this couldn't happen!

Will companies like Rise Gold pony up and care for those, like my son and me, who find their lives irrevocably harmed by the mining legacy they aim to continue?

Will they plan ahead for Nevada County residents they may poison in the future?

Will Rise Gold shareholders really support this? I have been told that shareholders of Rise Gold believe that our residents support this mine. Where are those people?

It's plain a very large number of Nevada County residents, especially those who live on Banner Mountain, are not in support of reopening this mine!

Theresa Huck lives in Grass Valley.

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Tony Lauria: Mining history is rife with harmful effects

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 24h ago

Tony Lauria | Other Voices

No matter what your stance on the current controversial Rise Gold proposal, gold mining generally is known to be one of the most destructive industries in the world.

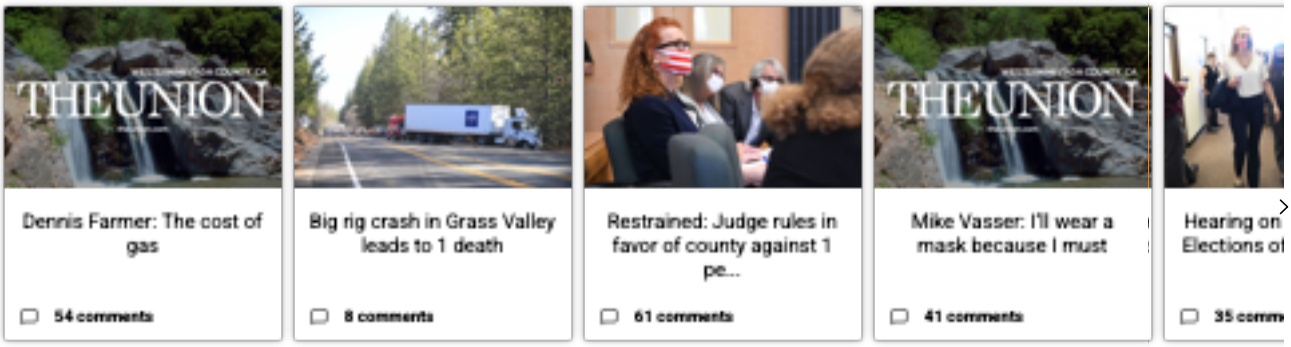
It can displace communities, contaminate drinking water, hurt workers and destroy pristine environments. It often pollutes water and land with arsenic, mercury, cyanide and other chemicals. It fills the air with tiny particles of silica and asbestos dust that drift far and wide with the wind. It exposes sulfides in rock which react with water and air to form sulfuric acid.

It's estimated that 40% of the headwaters of Western watersheds have been polluted by mining, and acid mine drainage is a major cause. Put bluntly, mining operations have always endangered the health of people and ecosystems.

Here's a noteworthy local example of mining impacts in residential areas; The Lava Cap Mine, just a few miles from Idaho-Maryland Mine: http://www.toxicsites.us/site.php?epa_id=CAD983618893

The real questionsare: Should the thousands of people living in our county be made to endure these risks for the profit of one company? Should this one company be allowed to take the chance of ruining the only source of clean water for hundreds of homes?

Trending Articles



Should this one company be allowed to endanger families with their storage and transport of high explosives over open roads?

Should this company be granted the freedom to contribute tons of carbon and contaminants into the air in the form of diesel exhaust and cancer causing dusts, as well as consume massive amounts of our county's energy and water resources?

No one bought their homes here with the disclosure that future drilling and blasting could be happening underground 24/7/365. No one was told the light industrially zoned former mine site could be rezoned to accommodate the heavy industry of mining.

No one dreamed that an industry rife with environmental destructive exploitation would be considered worth the risk a century later.

I don't believe these impacts can be mitigated to anywhere near "less than significant."

By now, everyone has received the mailer from Rise Gold as they continue the attempt to sell us on this proposal. Any claims that the draft environmental impact report supports this plan are far from accurate.

The fact is, D stands for Draft. This is not a final report. That is why there is a public comment period, whereby educated professionals can analyze what's in the draft. So far, critics find it to be sorely deficient in everything from the hydrology to air pollution, along with the many other impacts mentioned.

Nationally, I see articles saying the loss in value for homes within the mineral boundaries of an operational mine is 20%. This figure could descend to a 100% loss should wells be drained or destroyed. Many local real estate agents completely agree. Millions could be lost in home values. Millions more lost revenue to the county in taxes from those devaluations. How many underpaid, unskilled,

underground dangerous mining jobs are worth that cost?

I hope for a massive outcry condemning this high-risk proposal at the upcoming March 24 county meeting, along with a deluge of comments on the deficiencies in the draft report. It is definitely a fight to save our water, air and quality of life. Get help and info from http://www.minewatchnc.org.

Tony Lauria lives in Grass Valley.

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SECTION TITLE

I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---barbara-larsen-rise-folks-out-of-touch/article_d7e70db2-f046-11ed-8543-eb956ab68592.html

Ideas & Opinions - Barbara Larsen: Rise folks out of touch

Barbara Larsen
May 12, 2023

Today, May 10, I attended the Nevada County Planning Commissions forum regarding the Rise Gold mining venture. I have been a resident of Nevada County for 45 years and it was wonderful to see the 'village' in action.

Somewhat puzzling to me was the constant flow of Cadillac Black SUV's circling the parking lot of the Rood Center.

It came to my attention that the Rise Gold folks had breakfast at the Elk's Lodge in Nevada City and hired a shuttle company that seemed so out of place for our rural community.

Apparently, Rise Gold's Ben Mossman thought this would either impress or intimidate our community.

Folks in black suits got out of the SUV's and proceeded to the Board of Supervisors chambers.

What a metaphor? And, a bad one! These vehicles looked like row of hearses. Whose funeral where they going to?

So out of touch with our down to earth and environmental friendly

community.

I think you just shot yourself in the foot....metaphorically speaking.

Barbara Larsen, Nevada City

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Bob and Christy Hubbard: Why we don't trust Rise Gold

Opinion FOLLOW OPINION | December 7, 2020

Bob and Christy Hubbard
Other Voices

Rise Gold, a 14 year old mining company that has never opened a mine and never made a profit, wants to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Mine here in Grass Valley. They've already had some issues with compliance.

After purchasing the Mine in 2016, Rise ran afoul of local regulations while doing their initial explorations. Rules designed to protect sensitive habitat along South Fork Wolf Creek were broken — triggering citations, disturbing residents, and requiring county intervention to bring them into compliance.

But there's a history of violations that runs much deeper than that. CEO Ben Mossman's last venture before joining Rise Gold was a profound failure, and disregard for regulations and poor management practices appear to have played a significant role in that. His company, Banks Island Gold Ltd., owned the Yellow Giant Mine in British Columbia, Canada, which polluted tribal waters, went bankrupt and left Canadians with a mess to clean up.

According to an investigative report by the Vancouver Sun in July 2015, after the pollution spill was discovered, Banks Island ignored a stop work order from the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines to shut down its processing plant and underground operation. In an interview, Al Hoffman, the chief mines inspector, said, "Generally we don't have this level of confusion and level of non-compliance. It worries me, but we are dealing with it as strongly as I can within my statutory authority, and I am going to make sure they are compliant."

When investigating the spill, mine inspectors observed several violations of mining regulations 4 5 6. In addition to the spill, it revealed that Banks Island was not only continuing to process ore in its Yellow Giant facility, but that they had been processing ore from multiple exploration sites out of compliance with their mining permit since its issuance March 4, 2014. One report further stated: "One of the magazines was noted to be so full the door to it would not close without considerable effort. … This shall not be allowed to happen. The explosives therein are to be reduced and distributed to the other magazine."

In August 2015, a second spill resulted in another shutdown order.

In January 2016, Banks Island declared bankruptcy and walked away — leaving Canadians with only a $420,000 reclamation bond to pay for a cleanup estimated to cost $1.6 million.

But the story doesn't end there. Eventually, there were a total of 35 charges issued and in July 2016, Mossman and another Banks Island executive had 18 pollution charges filed against them personally. They were initially acquitted of the charges, though Mossman was fined $15,000, but the B.C. Supreme Court subsequently overturned that acquittal. Despite attempts by their lawyers to block a new trial, a Court of Appeals judge recently issued a decision to reject those appeals. The two are set to face a new trial soon.

The Banks Island disaster prompted an outcry. First by the Gitxaala Nation, who called Mossman's token fine a "slap in the face", given that it contaminated one of the most important food gathering areas in their traditional territory. And later, legislators and nonprofits called for reform of the B.C. environmental assessment process to close loopholes that allowed the mine to open and operate for 15 months without examination.

Adding insult to injury, one of the other injustices of Mossman's story is that 90 hard-working people lost their jobs when Banks Island went bankrupt. Rise Gold promises new jobs for Nevada County, but if that's their biggest selling point, their history alone should make us all want to scream and run away. This is not the type of company we want in our community. Truly. Rise and their CEO Ben Mossman shouldn't be trusted. Tell your Nevada County supervisor to "just say no!"

Sedar.com – Rise Gold Filings

Gold company has been ignoring province's mine shutdown order

BC Ministry of Energy and Mines Inspection Report – March 19, 2015

BC Ministry of Energy and Mines Inspection Report – July 9, 2015

BC Ministry of Energy and Mines Inspection Report – July 15, 2015

Court assesses $15,000 penalty in Banks Island Mine case

BC"s high court upholds new trial for two managers after spill at mine

Video: Banks Island Mine disaster – why it's time to reform B.C.'s environmental assessment process

More witnesses testify on Banks Island Environmental Mess

Rise Gold articles by timeline

Bob and Christy Hubbard are Grass Valley homeowners.

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Brad Peceimer: Rise Gold's claims lack credibility

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | December 27, 2021

Brad Peceimer

My thoughts are pretty simple — I believe that a company's or individual's past actions will dictate future results. Considering that this company, Rise Gold, has not lived up to its previous commitments on other ventures, this leads me to believe they will not honor any commitments that they make in the future to our community or city.

Until you can show me financially with guarantees, including making the personal assets of the senior management as part of your personal guarantee, I can't give you or your so-called report of a "vast acceptance" by the community any credibility. Sorry!

Brad Peceimer

Grass Valley

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Brandon Butrick: Rise Gold's track record

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | June 30, 2021

Brandon Butrick

While many people have quickly chosen sides in the debate over reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine, I decided to study both sides.

Jobs are nice, and the promise of ecologically sound mining practices sounds great, while it appears all sides agree that our water resources and environment must be protected.

What has made up my mind is looking into the track record of the principals involved in Rise Gold to consider how their promises will play out.

CEO Ben Mossman's conviction by a British Columbia court for the 2015 environmental damage at what is presumably his most recent gold mining venture says it all.

That company went bankrupt to avoid paying to clean up the mine waste it disposed of improperly, while Mr. Mossman continues his court battle on legal technicalities.

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28 comments



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With that outcome, Mr. Mossman's environmental credibility should be zero. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. Say no to the mine.

Brandon Butrick

Nevada City

Editor's note: The British Columbia Court of Appeal set aside lower court convictions and acquittals, and ordered a new trial concerning the spill at the now closed mine in Canada.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/ideas-opinions-concerned-citizens-roundtable-idaho-maryland-mine-propaganda-vs-the-truth/article_45bd7d46-d8a3-11ed-9004-7f13f1aba165.html

Ideas & Opinions — Concerned Citizens Roundtable: Idaho-Maryland Mine propaganda vs. the truth

By the Concerned Citizens Roundtable
Apr 12, 2023

Rise Grass Valley's advertising boasts the mine's "minimal environmental impacts." That's like saying the Donner Party suffered only ants at their picnic.

Intent exclusively on churning our county for profit, RGV issues propaganda that disintegrates in the light of truth. The proposal's Environmental Impact Report (EIR), however deficient in some areas, actually predicts devastating damage to our water, air, traffic, fire safety, health, and quality of life.

According to RGV, for example, "The dewatering of the existing mine and new mining have very limited effect on the water table."

"Limited effect" for people who don't live here, that is. No one can confidently say that the water table won't significantly drop. Mining history is full of operators' cheerful assurances, and equally full of exactly those disasters. The Siskon gold mine on San Juan Ridge is one example. In 1995 miners drilled into an unexpected fault. The subterranean water vanished, and wells as far as two miles away went dry. And south of here, in Jamestown, Tuolumne County taxpayers got stuck with a cleanup bill of $5 million when industrial gold

miners left town after fouling 180 private wells with heavy metals.

As for air quality, RGV promises “zero emission underground mining.” But at the surface, where most of us breathe, it’s a different story. The EIR states that mitigated (that is, best case scenario) air emissions will include 105 lbs of known poisons and carcinogens daily during the first year of operation. The Report says that amount isn’t significant, but fails to calculate that over the mine’s eighty-year operation it will emit 3,600 tons of these poisons, not including 200,000 annual minutes of diesel idling. The California Air Resources Board estimates that 70% of our risk of getting cancer from what we inhale comes from diesel exhaust. Children will be especially affected, as they’ll breathe these poisons their whole lives.

How about noise? Don’t worry, says RGV, it won’t be significant. A renowned acoustics consultant, Salter Associates, disagrees: “...nighttime industrial activities amongst a community that currently enjoys low ambient noise levels represents a significant risk for project noise to impact the community, annoy residents, and cause sleep disturbance.”

RGV is embarrassingly revealing in what its misleading ads fail to say.

RGV doesn’t mention, for example, that it will pump 3.6 million gallons of mine water daily into Wolf Creek for 6 months, then 1.2 million gallons daily until 2102.

It doesn’t mention blasting 1,900 lbs of explosives beneath Grass Valley every day. Salter Associates states, “...strongly perceptible and borderline unpleasant vibration on a regular basis for the rest of [residents’] lives should be considered a significant impact.”

RGV admits that its tailing-hauling trucks — 20-ton mammoths — will run every 20 minutes, 16 hours every day, but that's only one way; presumably they'll return, too.

It doesn't disclose that its emission of carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, will exceed 16 million lbs every year. A car would need to drive 1,600 years to emit that amount.

Nor do RGV ads mention asbestos, the vicious carcinogen assumed to lurk in the mine's rock. Shorter asbestos fibers, which are difficult to detect, carry a high risk of malignant mesothelioma. Since the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District isn't equipped to monitor shorter fibers, asbestos tests on tailings of 1,000 tons daily will necessarily be done elsewhere, a two-week turnaround. There's no plan for storing this material in the interim.

RGV fails to state that the mine would nullify Nevada County's Energy Action Plan, which calls for a reduction of roughly the same amount of electricity that the mine will use every year.

Astoundingly, RGV claims with a straight face that the project enjoys strong local support.

Quite the contrary. RGV's clumsily biased "surveys" grossly misrepresent results, even including as "supporters" residents who are publicly vocal opponents. At a 2022 Planning Commission meeting, 100 residents spoke knowledgeably and passionately against the proposal, with only a single speaker favoring it. And if the mine will truly deliver the prosperity RGV claims, why has not a single business entity declared support for it — not a Chamber of Commerce, not the Economic Resource Council, not the

Downtown Association, not the Board of Realtors.

The Environmental Impact Report should not be certified, as it ignores significant threats. But even in its inadequacy, it predicts devastation of our community.

We urge residents to attend the Nevada County Planning Commission hearings May 10 and 11, and oppose certifying the EIR. Sometime after that our five county supervisors will decide whether to permit the mine. We doubt any of our supervisors wholeheartedly support the proposal. If they oppose it, their hand will be strengthened by a massive attendance of citizens at both hearings.

Yasha Aginsky

Rob Agrimonti

Charlie Brock

Jeff Gold

Jeff Kane

Scott Kellermann

Brad Miller

Randall Newsome

Kathy Ogburn

Tim Ogburn

Rondal Snodgrass

Concerned Citizens Roundtable:

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Dan Desmond: Misleading ad on the mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | January 11, 2022

Dan Desmond

I was disappointed to see the full-page ad on Jan. 7 by Rise about the mine's draft environmental impact report.

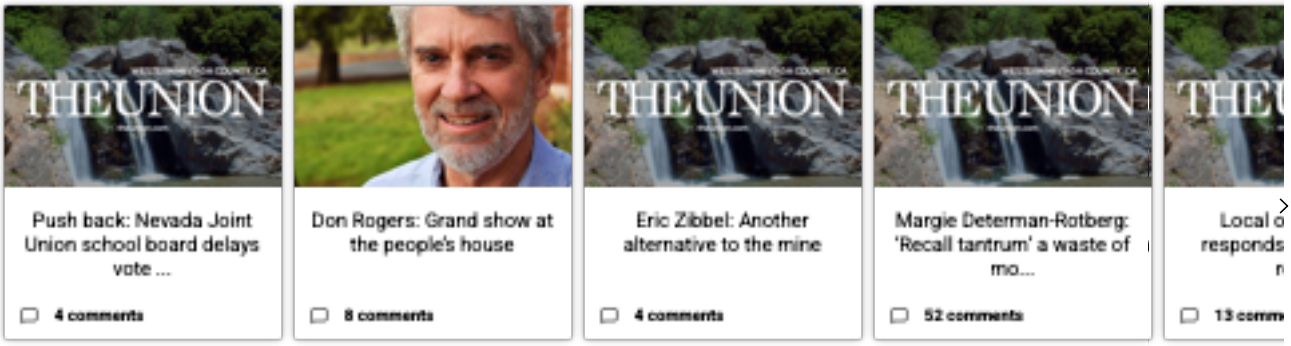
I believe Rise Corp. continues to mislead the community on the costs and benefits of a large industrial development in the heart of the Grass Valley community. There seems to be a growing recognition that the costs far outweigh any benefits and that there are many more community friendly and environmentally sensitive projects that could take place on the property.

Paul Schwartz's commentary (Jan. 8) offers a few ideas that make much more sense from a community and environmental perspective. I would hope that in the future The Union might consider rejecting ads that are intended to mislead the citizens of the community you represent.

Dan Desmond

Nevada City

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Daniel Desmond: Growing evidence that mine a bad idea

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | August 6, 2021

Daniel Desmond

Thanks for publishing Jeff Kane's piece about the mine survey conducted by a marketing firm for Rise Gold. The poll to me was another indictment of Rise Gold as a company that cannot be trusted.

I have personally discussed the survey with several academic researchers, and they all agree that representing this survey as an unbiased view of the community opinion is a sham.

There is growing evidence that the mine is a bad idea for many reasons, and I keep waiting for our elected representatives to take a position and exhibit the leadership we elected them to deliver. Thanks for delivering on your role of informing the community.

Daniel Desmond

Nevada City

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---deni-silberstein-viewer-beware
/article_82daef64-bf7c-11ed-8e5c-23f2fe1e6dd6.html

Ideas & Opinions – Deni Silberstein: Viewer beware

Deni Silberstein
Mar 11, 2023

Seriously? Does anyone really believe that the picture of the pristinely clean employee proudly displayed in Rise Gold's online ad is a true representation of a mine worker? Does anyone really believe that that picture honestly portrays a physical laborer – even one who operates a piece of machinery?

If you've ever been even remotely associated with labor at a construction site, then you know the truth: unless it is the first minute, of your first job at a brand-new-haven't-yet-broken-ground construction site, a worker never looks like that. And mining is construction. It involves working close to the dirt, close to soil-encrusted rock, close to oil-bearing and grease-demanding machines, close to fabric-snagging obstacles that don't care if you've just bought that new pair of jeans.

Not only do you not leave work looking like that pic, but you don't even ARRIVE at work looking like it – dirt, grease and grime leave stains; fabric rips. That picture is a deception. It's designed to make you think that an untruth, is true. That picture is symbolic of Rise Gold's ongoing efforts to hoodwink the citizens into believing that the mine is green, that it's non-polluting, almost dustless, almost noiseless, and will provide fast-food workers six-digit annual salaries.

That picture is trying to convince us that the Emperor is attired in regal and elegant clothes, when, in truth, he's stark naked...or, at best, dirty, stained, and dead tired.

For an honest view of Rise's intentions: https://www.minewatchnc.org

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Deni Silberstein

Grass Valley

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Denise Bellas: Concerns about the Rise Gold Corporation

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | May 15, 2020

Other Voices
Denise Bellas

As a local Grass Valley resident, I want to pose questions and voice my opinions in regards to the reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine by Rise Gold Corp. Mr. Benjamin Mossman, as CEO of Rise Gold Corp., is currently enticing investors with high expectations of gold returns, but seems to neglect an awful lot of information in their marketing campaign.

I understand that their primary goal is to acquire money to restart the Idaho Maryland Mine in our town. The CEO has been in the marketing phase of pushing that forward through his many videos and website articles. I understand that our community has many views on mining. Looking forward, it seems to be very questionable as to how this will impact our town. We all enjoy the history of mining, but I doubt that very few of us would appreciate an active mine in our backyard and mining debris running through the Nevada County tributaries.

As a homeowner who lives on Wolf Creek, I often see adults and kids fishing, swimming and enjoying the environment of the creek. With this in mind, I have to ask myself are the benefits of this mine worth the potential risk to Wolf Creek and our community?

We will be allowing Rise Gold to release water from the mine down and into Wolf Creek. This could impact our children and our community, also our property values. I was rather upset when I thought about this scenario. So, I googled Mr. Benjamin Mossman to get an idea of how ethical he has been in the past and looking for some signs of integrity. He markets the company and the project in such a glowing way. I believe, that the past often predicts the future.

I found information on one of Mr. Mossman recent past projects, Banks Island Gold Limited in Canada. As president and CEO, Mr. Mossman created a company that ended in bankruptcy, was charged with many environmental violations and had their $420,000 security bond confiscated by the Ministry of Energy and Mines to clean the polluted site. According to the Government of Canada's website, "on July 13, 2018, Mossman was found guilty of one violation of the Fisheries Act ($7,500) and one violation of the Provincial Environmental Management Act ($7,500)."

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I was so upset that we are even considering a company run by this person. I personally believe, based on his past actions, I do not trust that he is a person of integrity. I do not believe that he will act in an ethical way. I do not believe he will value the preservation of our community and our environment over maximizing profits.

Even in the best of circumstances, mining will impact our community. Whether through day-to-day operations or some unforeseen consequences. Because of this, I believe we as a community need to think long and hard before reopening the Idaho Maryland Mine. I have thought long and hard about this and I do not think this mine should ever be reopen.

And, certainly not by a company like Rise Gold. Are they just a song and dance management, with a shady past? Can we really trust this company? I fear not.

Denise Bellas lives in Grass Valley.

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Ideas & Opinions — Gail F. Schulz: I do not appreciate Mr. Mossman's attacks on our planning commission

Gail F. Schulz
Jun 7, 2023

As I read the recent article in The Union – an open letter from Ben Mossman, President of Rise Gold and it's local subsidiary (Pg. A1, The Union 06/06 "Rise Gold calls on Nevada County Board of Supervisors to repudiate recommendation to deny the IMM Project") - I was reminded of an old adage I learned in law school, 50 years ago. "If you don't have the facts, argue the law; if you don't have the law, argue the facts; and if you don't have either the law or the facts, attack the integrity of your opponent." I was also reminded of what I learned about constitutional law. Due process does not guarantee you what you want!

Mr. Mossman has piously wrapped himself in patriotism and the fact the owner of Rise is a Nevada Company. It is. It is also a subsidiary of a Canadian company, whose directors include venture capitalists and people involved in other international mining ventures, such as Japan Gold.

I do not appreciate Mr. Mossman's attacks on our Nevada County Planning Commission or the integrity of its hard-working members. We don't need you or your company in our community, Mr. Mossman.

Gail F. Schulz, Retired corporate attorney, Grass Valley

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Greg Martin: An open letter to Benjamin Mossman, CEO, president and director of Rise Gold Inc.

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | April 25, 2019

Greg Martin
Other Voices

Dear Mr. Mossman:

I read with great interest the front page April 5 article in The Union on Rise Gold's touting exploratory drilling progress towards the planned re-opening (again) of the Idaho Maryland Mine in Grass Valley.

The Grass Valley community has already been through this exercise years ago with Emgold Corporation's efforts to re-open the mine. Mr. Mossman would be well advised to consult with Emgold's former man-in-charge, David Wilkinson, to gauge community opposition to re-opening the mine.

Rise Gold's exploratory drilling operations continue to impact local residents' peace and quiet enjoyment of their family homes every day and every night. Ms. Zimmerman's plight is infuriating and untenable. But for the cost of retaining an attorney and preparing a motion for injunctive relief to protect her property rights, Rise Gold's 24-hour a day drilling noise is a legal assault that continues without pause. If Rise Gold truly sought to be "community friendly," it would agree to halt night-time drilling and drill only during daylight hours.

> "... if Rise Gold truly seeks to be "community friendly," a tremendous number of local residents would welcome a follow up article explaining Rise Gold's long-term plans ...

Unfortunately, this is just Rise Gold's beginning phase of another misguided greed-driven effort by a foreign corporation to operate a mine near the center of town. Residents overwhelmingly rejected Emgold's (another Canadian venture) effort many years ago. There is no reason Rise Gold should expect a different result today.

Trending Articles



Assuming Mr. Mossman, for sake of argument, that Rise Gold's positive exploratory drilling results lead to corporate plans to try again to re-open the mine, please answer the following production/extraction related questions:

Rise Gold has been drilling to depths exceeding 3,000 feet. Will Rise Gold use underground explosives, and how often, to break up the deposits for hauling and extraction? During Emgold's time, it was disclosed that shockwaves from the underground mine explosions

would present a problem for the nearby hospital's procedures and operations.

How many heavy transport trucks, on a daily basis, will be traversing Grass Valley streets to haul the rock ore out? What other mechanized ore handling, transport, storage and related process equipment will be utilized on-site? Does Rise Gold plan to de-water existing mine tunnels prior to removing the ore? What is Rise Gold's plan to provide for area residents whose wells go dry from the de-watering? What is Rise Gold's production plan for noise/vibration abatement, illumination controls, explosive storage and handling, and 24-hour a day rock hauling along residential streets? What mitigation controls will be employed to address truck traffic, entrained dust, surface runoff and other negative environmental impacts?

We do not understand how vertically suspended "plastic sheeting" (April 5 article) secured to small posts can possibly control and divert runoff. In response to Ms. Zimmerman's complaints about around-the-clock noise, Rise Gold erected a 24-foot high "fence." Why didn't Rise Gold instead enclose the drill rig as much as feasible, a much more effective source control noise reduction measure? While laudable that Rise Gold has made some effort to moderate Ms. Zimmerman's noise insults, the problem continues unabated. And Rise Gold's purchase and installation of better insulated sound reducing windows for Ms. Zimmerman's home, a small cost for appeasement, really is just "window dressing."

Mr. Mossman, if Rise Gold truly seeks to be "community friendly," a tremendous number of local residents would welcome a follow up article explaining Rise Gold's long-term plans, including how Rise Gold expects to address and mitigate the ore production extraction and transport related questions that doomed Emgold's efforts.

Or we all can wait for the eventual EIR and community review process. Transparency is paramount.

Given Emgold's history, any plan to re-open the Idaho Maryland Mine in Grass Valley will face monumental challenges from the community and is unlikely to succeed.

Greg Martin lives in Nevada City.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-hits-misses-miss-to-rise-gold-directors-claims/article_f57e318e-f4f1-11ed-b8cc-9fa91487dab8.html

Ideas & Opinions — Hits & Misses: Miss to Rise Gold director's claims

May 18, 2023

Each week we'll run through the sublime, the trivial and profound issues, decisions and goings on that strike us as Hits or Misses. you can join in, too, by emailing your Hits & Misses to editboard@theunion.com, also, to efunez@theunion.com

Miss (from Editorial Board member Tom Durkin): To Lawrence W. Lepard's self-serving diatribe (The Union Ideas & Opinions 05/13) against the Planning Commission's unanimous vote to reject the Rise Gold Corp.'s attempt to reopen the Idaho-Maryland gold mine. He claims to have the community's best interests in mind, but the reality is that, as director of Rise Gold, it's his loss, not ours. He asks how we're going to pay the bills. We've been doing just fine paying our bills. This community does not need or want a gold mine.

Miss (from reader David Simonetti): In response to Lawrence W. Lepard Rise Gold director asks how are Nevada County residents going to pay their bills since the mine might be P.S closed for good. The answer is we have been paying our bills all these years without the mine. He states that in an independent poll that 59% support the mine which is false because if all of Nevada County was polled up to or over 90% would be against the mine.

Water is one of the main reasons to keep the mine closed since most years are dry. Decades ago gold attracted many people here but many left when gold became scarce. Nevada County does not own the mine so would we really benefit that much if it opened? P.S. Who did he poll anyway?

Hit (from reader Shanti Emerson): To the huge community involvement in the decision whether or not to re-open Idaho-Maryland mine. This was Democracy in action.

Hit (from Emerson): To Sierra Stages continuing productions after Peter and Ken moved to Washington. We will miss you, Ken. You made a difference in Nevada County with your kindness and your musical genius.

Hit (from reader Dorothy Murphy): Huge hit to what is hopefully the last editorial, opinion piece, letter to the editor and social media post regarding the attempted reopening of the Idaho Maryland mine.

Hit (from reader Richard Howell): To Ralph Hitchcock's offering on how the chance events of our lives go a long way to determining our deeply held values. Perhaps he might have mentioned that chance has a huge impact on determining the beliefs, some very negative by our standards, held by others.

Miss (from Howell): To the sour grapes piece written by Lawrence Lepard about the planning commission ruling against the mine application. A community should be able to determine how it chooses to grow and change. Nevada County is a beautiful place which has the resources to attract (slow) growth that is compatible with our communities. Look, for example, at the new construction near the airport. We'll be able to pay our bills, Mr. Lepard,

without doing harm to our roads and air, for which we'd all have to pay.

Hit (from reader Cristiana Kelly): A massive Hit to the Planning Commission for voting against the proposed gold mine. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I love our community.

Hit (from reader Susan Bewley): A belated thank you to the City of Nevada City for the new street signs that finally allow us to actually read the names of streets at night.

Hit (from Bewley): Thank you to LaMarr Fields for covering high school sports teams. As the grandmother of 3 students currently attending NU and 1 future student of NU, I like seeing recognition of these kids and teams.

Miss (from Bewley): To the lower number of Letters to the Editor and Other Voices columns in the Union than in the past. Are there less readers submitting letters/columns because this is not an election year? Or is it the intent of The Union to publish less opinions from readers?

Editor's note: Our submissions to the Ideas & Opinions page eb and flow. It is my goal to publish every possible submission. — Elias Funez

https://www.theunion.com/news/ideas-opinions-john-vaughan-comments-on-a-corporate-tantrum-at-rise-gold/article_66c93444-0715-11ee-ac93-c705803bf138.html

Ideas & Opinions — John Vaughan: Comments on a corporate tantrum at Rise Gold

John Vaughan | Other Voices
Jun 10, 2023

Let's break down the Rise Gold June 1 letter to the Board of Supervisors regarding the Nevada County Planning Commission hearings of May 10 and 11 (hearing) where after months of review, hundreds of comment letters, analysis by dozens of experts, and hours and hours of public comment (both for and against the project), the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to recommend denial of all parts of the Rise project, including not certifying the highly flawed EIR. One might say that Rise is a bit unhappy about the 5-0 vote. Along with hundreds of other community members, I was at both days of the Hearing.

First (with credit to the author John Grisham), "There's an old adage in bad trial lawyering that when you don't have the facts, do a lot of yelling." Well, the Rise letter is 164 pages of yelling, combined with childish temper tantrums and lots of smoke and mirrors. They seem to believe they are a defendant in a legal case vs. an Applicant for project. And of course, in today's world, where would a good story be without a large dose of conspiracy theory combined with a nice mix of disinformation and heavy reliance on "alternative facts". Rise even did an "initial investigation" and has "evidence" that allegedly proves their point. I wonder whose definition of "investigation" and

"evidence" they might be using.

Rise claims the world is out to get them where wild conspiracies abound with material not provided, "surprise findings" in the Staff Report, and "comment letters at the last possible moment"...Oh my! All these completely horrible events were apparently planned not just by the well-organized community opposition, who Rise seems to believe are ignorant and completely mis-informed, but by Nevada County Staff, the Board of Supervisors, NID's General Manager, NID's Board of Directors, Economic Consultant Robert D. Neihaus and even the County Staff people handing out "speaking tickets" for public comments prior to the Hearing.

And speaking of surprises, you might be surprised to learn the leading villain in the Rise "poor, poor, pitiful me" story is Commissioner Terry McAteer. Rise is just very unhappy that Commissioner McAteer asked difficult questions. It's possible I have it wrong, but I'm pretty sure that's his job. Rise is also unhappy that Commissioner McAteer even had a "script". Wow, someone who's responsible for learning the details of a highly complicated project has taken notes. We should all be afraid.

Each Planning Commissioner disclosed contacts they had regarding the Rise project. Without exception, each Commissioner had met with Rise and toured their facility. Each Commissioner had also met with various members of the public who are opposed to the mine. Again, I'm pretty sure it's their job to collect data and listen to both sides. Rise doesn't like that and hopes we all feel their pain.

Rise also notes they really, really wanted a chance to respond but believe they were denied. The facts are they had over 3 years of direct contact and heavy

pressure on the Planning Staff, Supervisors, NID, dozens of agencies and anyone else they chose to contact. Near the beginning of the Hearing, Rise was also allowed about 90 minutes of slide presentations to describe their view of the project benefits. This process was filled with questionable assertions and spin. I'm sure there were many members of the public who would have loved the opportunity to challenge their presentation assumptions. But that's not how the hearing process works. Rise knows that, but apparently hopes to convince the Board that they've been mistreated and change the narrative.

The Rise list goes on, grievance after grievance.

The challenge for Rise is that the facts have not changed: There is no viable plan for disposal of mine waste via off-site sales, there is no viable plan for well and groundwater mitigation, there is no viable plan for greenhouse gas emissions and compliance with the County Energy Action Plan, and there is no viable plan to fix the serious defects in the EIR including unresolved issues, unavoidable impacts, false and misleading statements, bias toward the applicant and many, many other issues.

You can't fix a bad idea with threats, whining and more empty promises.

Please contact your Nevada County Supervisor and ask that they support their Planning Commission and "Just Say NO" to the Final EIR and the Rise Gold project.

John Vaughan, a 56 year resident of Nevada County, lives in Grass Valley.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-john-vaughan-rise-gold-full-page-fairy-tale-nice-try/article_e3336f36-9383-11ee-bf8c-db6e5e1c0ea1.html

Ideas & Opinions — John Vaughan: Rise Gold full-page fairy tale – nice try

John Vaughan | Other Voices
Dec 6, 2023

There is so much to unpack in responding to the paid advertisement on the last page of The Union on 12/01/23, authored by Joe Mullin, the new President & CEO of Rise Gold. It's hard to know where to start.

First, Mr. Mullin's letter is an advertisement. Advertisements are designed to sell something and are not always factual. They tell stories, sometimes like fairy tales – sort of based in reality but not quite. In my opinion, we should take what Mr. Mullin says with a big grain of salt.

Most of the financial data Mr. Mullin uses does not hold up to scrutiny. The easiest example is the number of jobs, which is based on information in the Economic Report prepared for Nevada County by Robert D. Niehaus (RDN). The 475 jobs claimed in Mr. Mullin's advertising story includes 312 Rise Gold jobs and 163 "induced and indirect" jobs in other parts of the local community.

These 163 jobs are estimates including part-time and full-time jobs using "multipliers" in the Economic Study modeling software. While "multipliers" are widely used in economic studies, they are estimates at best and highly suspect at worst. The RDN study shows $44,000 average annual pay for these163 jobs. Maybe the calculators used in fairy tales are different from regular calculators, but the RDN study does not show 475 jobs at $142,000 per year.

Mr. Mullin also neglected to note these facts from the Rise Gold SEC filing for their year ended July 2023 (paraphrased for brevity): an internal audit conducted by the Rise CFO and CEO revealed material weaknesses in financial controls, caused by lack of segregation of duties due to insufficient personnel. The Rise SEC filing concludes there is a reasonable possibility that misstatement of Rise financial statements will not be prevented or detected. In summary, Rise is telling the SEC and investors that their numbers may not be correct. Maybe we should take them at their word.

Mr. Mullin describes the impressive résumés for some of the Rise Board of Directors. Mr. Mullin reports to the Board of Directors. He forgot to mention the previous CEO, Ben Mossman, who is now a member of the Rise Board of Directors was recently convicted on 13 counts of dumping waste into the environment.

Then we get a lot of whining about how Rise has been mistreated, including a bit about the Constitution says we get our way, so there! My grandfather used to say, "put on your big boy pants and stop whining".

The fairy tale continues when the advertisement talks about how Rise will have to comply with big, bad CALIFORNIA regulations…In other words –

sometime in the future, we promise, really...we promise things will all be good if you just give us a permit now. And we promise not to use our lawyers to delay or get around the regulations.

Of course, Mr. Mullin slips in a shot at CEA Foundation, a completely volunteer local organization that actually represents our community. If Mr. Mullin thinks CEA, 5,500+ petition signers and 250+ local businesses who oppose the mine will start shaking in their boots and give up, then he really does not understand the Nevada County Community.

Finally, there is the Big Bad Wolf threat: Do what we say or we will sue you into oblivion. Good one. Oh, and look at our lawyers, they have lots of experience...as lawyers. Followed by flag waving. We are an American company. That's great. Although the SEC filing mentioned earlier shows their "principal executive offices" in Vancouver, Canada. And gold mining is good. How cool is that!

The Rise advertisement just may be a misleading representation of the project and the issues involved. The story might play well with investors who could be easily influenced, but for people in the community with boots on the ground, we all know this fairy tale doesn't hold up.

You can do two things to make your voice heard: 1) Attend the Board of Supervisors Vested Rights Hearing on December 13th and 14th. Learn more at www.minewatchnc.org/post/attend-the-county-s-vested-rights-hearing, and 2) Become informed. Read the CEA response to Rise's Vested Rights claim at https://www.minewatchnc.org/post/cea-foundation-weighs-in-on-rise-gold-s-vested-rights-petition.

Just say NO.

John Vaughan

Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-john-vaughan-rise-gold-s-corporate-culture-lawyers-lawyers-and-more-lawyers/article_ecafd706-20e8-11ee-a5ab-f7c516cfc9a7.html

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Ideas & Opinions — John Vaughan: Rise Gold's corporate culture — Lawyers, lawyers and more lawyers

John Vaughan | Other Voices
Jul 13, 2023

Last month, I wrote about the corporate temper tantrum Rise displayed after the unanimous Planning Commission vote against their proposed project ("Comments on a corporate tantrum at Rise Gold", The Union Ideas & Opinions, 06/10).

It appears that another element of Rise's Corporate Culture is a willingness to use threats of legal action to get their way. A few examples include:

After receipt of some negative comments in response to the Draft EIR from the Air Quality Board, Rise's Attorney sent a long letter to the Air Quality Board claiming a number of grievances, including bias, influence by project opponents, defamation, violation of Constitutional Rights, challenges to the science and claims that Rise's business interests had been harmed. The lawyers letter concludes with threats of lawsuits and demands a retraction. The Air Quality Board apparently bent to their demands.

If Rise's grievances with the Air Quality Board sound familiar, that's because it's basically the same elements included in the Rise June 1st letter sent to the Board of Supervisors following the Planning Commission's unanimous vote

against their proposed project. Grievance after grievance because the Planning Commission did their job, and the outcome was not what Rise wanted.

Following their June 1st letter to the Supervisors, Rise has submitted Public Record Act Requests (PRAs) affecting dozens and dozens of people at several Agencies, including Nevada County and Nevada Irrigation District. Each of these requests does the typical lawyer thing, demanding "any and all" documentation about anything that's ever happened regarding the Rise project in over 30 different categories. Responding to PRA's requires volumes of paper and likely requires hundreds of hours of staff time to collect data and provide a response. This effort seems to be aimed at finding "evidence" that proves a conspiracy, when the facts are that what happened before and during the Planning Commission Hearing is a great example of democracy in action.

Of course, Rise has a right to the information, but what we are seeing may well be a key part of the Rise Corporate Culture. If the Board of Supervisors approves this project, it's unlikely the legal actions will end.

Rise wants us to believe that no environmental issues of any kind will happen at any time for any reason for 80 years. But just for fun, let's hypothetically suppose that some water quality reports are late or show toxins leaking into Wolf Creek, or maybe the waste rock asbestos content is higher than acceptable limits, or wells start going dry. Any of those scenarios and dozens of others require enforcement actions by the County or an outside Agency. These legitimate Agency demands for compliance will likely be met by Rise's Attorney with obfuscation, delays, more long letters claiming County Staff or Agency bias, defamation, violation of Constitutional Rights, challenges to the science and threats of lawsuits. Good luck with getting any non-compliance

enforced.

In addition, close examination of the wording in the FEIR and the enforceability of the mitigations and conditions of approval will reveal they are riddled with ambiguity. Such ambiguities in the FEIR feed a corporate strategy which appears to be designed to ensure that no one but Rise will decide whether or not they are in compliance, whether or not anything has to be done about it, and when it will be done.

All the mitigations, compliance promises, and plans noted in the FEIR and Development Agreement are likely just smoke and mirrors as the apparent plan is to use the Rise lawyers to do whatever they want.

One might think that the Rise Board and especially the Rise CEO had learned from the negative outcomes (for the community, the employees, the environment, and the CEO) at the Banks Island mine in Canada. But Corporate Culture is often a reflection of leadership and is very difficult and unlikely to change.

You can't fix a bad idea with threats and empty promises. Please encourage your County Supervisor to "Just Say No" to all parts of the Rise project.

You can find your Supervisors contact information and detailed analysis of why the Rise project is wrong for Nevada County at www.minewatchnc.org

John Vaughan, Grass Valley

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Julie Becker: Alarm at the depths of irresponsibility

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 29, 2021

Julie Becker | Other Voices

The banner on the cover of Time magazine in late April read: "Climate Is Everything." Inside the issue, among a selection of viewpoints, was an essay written by economist William Nordhaus, "The Ninth Circle of Corporate Irresponsibility," an excerpt from his recently published book, "The Spirit of Green."

The book focuses on "green thinking" — on finding cures for some of the most serious economic and environmental problems around the world.

Nordhaus praises businesses engaged in socially responsible practices, but feels it's fruitful to be aware of businesses that do the opposite. Businesses with little or no concern for legal, societal or ethical obligations. Those that pollute the air and the water, drastically overpay executives, avoid paying their fair share of taxes (or any taxes at all) and sidestep well-grounded regulations. Those that turn a blind eye to the consequences of their actions.

Among these businesses, he assigns the most egregious, those that deliberately mislead or provide false information, to the ninth circle of corporate irresponsibility, drawing a parallel to the ninth circle of hell in Dante's "Inferno" — a circle designed especially for those who practice treachery and betray our trust.

According to Nordhaus, star candidates for the ninth circle, all "languishing in their ethical filth," include Philip Morris, which made mincemeat of research showing the harmful effects of tobacco; ExxonMobil, which famously played down any awareness of climate change, then went on to fund climate deniers; and PurduePharma, which made billions from the sales of OxyContin while playing dumb to its addictive qualities.

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The businesses cited above are all international in scope, but there's room in the ninth circle for lesser-known corporations, as well, and I'm inclined to include Rise Gold Corp. in the mix.

Oh yes, Ben Mossman paints a glossy picture, promising a new golden era for our community once he and his cohorts reopen the Idaho-Maryland gold mine, shuttered since 1957. He promises to provide high-paying jobs and to restore prosperity to our region, but in truth, I believe he's gilding over reality.

He's told us that local residents don't need to worry about having their wells run dry during the dewatering of the old mine tunnels. And really, he shrugs, it won't be a big deal if they do, because trust him, he'll make arrangements to hitch them up with NID. No problem.

So that takes care of water, but what about air pollution? How will our air quality be affected by the diesel exhaust put out by 20 ton open hauler trucks transporting mine tailings to the dump site off of Centennial Drive, spewing out toxic particulates along the way? Wonder how that will affect all the people with asthma in the area? Or if prevailing winds will send polluted air down toward the hospital or to nursing facilities on Dorsey Drive?

Part of the Centennial dumping site parcel is composed of wetlands and marsh, which will essentially be buried and obliterated under megatons of rubble delivered by the monster trucks. Ironically, the rumbling trucks will growl down Whispering Pines Lane past Peaceful Valley Farm Supply to make their deliveries. Imagine gardeners dreamily wandering around the nursery looking at native plants, suddenly zapped out of their reverie when a huge truck roars by. Peaceful Valley won't be peaceful anymore.

Now in reality, the reverberation of truck deliveries could pale in comparison to the drilling, crushing and blasting that will take place at the actual mining site near the corner of Brunswick and East Bennett, where ammonium nitrate will be used underground to break up rocks in the tunnels, leading to earth-shaking vibrations that may be felt underneath the homes of local residents. Many of them long-time residents who purchased property in a bucolic area, never expecting that their backyards would border a 24-hour heavy industrial operation. Never expecting that their property values would plummet due to a severely ill-conceived plan to reopen a sleeping mine.

Ben Mossman likes to call opponents of the mine "alarmists." But let's be clear here. There is a vast difference between Chicken Little and the call to be legitimately alarmed.

Contrary to Mossman's belief, we don't need more gold dug up from below the ground, for with our history, our natural beauty and our thriving arts community, we have more than enough gold above ground. For the well-being of us all, let's keep it that way.

Julie Becker lives in Nevada City.

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Ken Bernstein: Look to the past to predict mine's future if allowed

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 3h ago

Ken Bernstein | Other Voices

The Idaho-Maryland Mine project is generating more controversy than any other local topic. Discussions of pros, cons and what might happen are becoming louder and more emotional.

I am not interested in speculation. I believe the most accurate predictor of a person's future decisions are those made in the past. Instead of joining the noise and confusion of these discussions, I wanted to get to know Ben Mossman, CEO of Rise Gold, what decisions he made in Canada, and what could happen in Grass Valley.

Before Mr. Mossman came here, he was president, CEO, CFO and director of Banks Island Gold, which operated in Banks Island, Canada. This is a timeline of that project:

March 2014: Banks Island Gold receives approval from the Canadian government to run a small underground mine. Banks Island Gold publishes on their website that the mine will produce 75,000 metric tonnes of ore annually. In Canada, this amount triggers a full environmental assessment. When Banks Island Gold files its mining application, it only shows 73,000 tonnes/year, just beneath the environmental assessment threshold, avoiding a full environmental study. This practice is known as "project splitting," breaking a project down into smaller chunks to intentionally avoid a rigorous review. Mossman takes advantage of this loophole, setting up his mine to operate with minimal environmental assessment and oversight.

January 2015: Banks Island Gold begins commercial production of the Yellow Giant Mine.

Trending Articles



June 25, 2015: The Canadian Ministry of Environment, after receiving information from a whistleblower, conducts an on-site inspection. This inspection allegedly uncovers effluent discharges of contaminated water and silt into the local waterways, plus a number of alleged permit violations.

July 15, 2015: The Canadian Energy and Mines Ministry orders the entire Banks Island Gold operation to immediately shut down because of the effluent leak and alleged permit violations.

July 24, 2015: Banks Island Gold issues a press release acknowledging the July 15 shutdown order.

July 28, 2015: Banks Island Gold issues a press release saying they are continuing to process ore, in violation of the Canadian shutdown order.

Aug 4, 2015: Banks Island Gold issues a press release stating that as of July 31, the operation had shut down.

January 2016: Banks Island Gold files for bankruptcy. Mr. Mossman walks away from the site, abandoning it. Consequently, the Canadian government is now responsible for toxic cleanup costing more than the cleanup bond.

That is the story of Banks Island Gold. Shut down by the Canadian government after only seven months in operation. One year from start to bankruptcy. Mr. Mossman left behind a toxic legacy the Canadian government and indigenous Gitxaała Nation must clean up.

As of 2021, the site was still considered by BC Mining Law Reform as one of British Columbia's "Dirty Dozen" top polluters.

In a nutshell, I see that Ben Mossman opened a gold mine, manipulated permit requirements, made a mess of the environment, declared bankruptcy, shorted his employees, left town, and then moved to Grass Valley. To open another mine. To do it all again. History always seems to repeat itself.

Bottom line: Mr. Mossman's past patterns of behavior demonstrate to me that he is extremely unlikely to be a good steward of the operating permit for the Idaho-Maryland Mine, nor will he protect the essence of what makes Nevada County a paradise. I respectfully ask the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to consider this when it comes time for them to vote on the future of Nevada County.

Ken Bernstein lives in Nevada City.

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Ideas & Opinions – Lou Douros: Will Ben Mossman be convicted in Canada? (Spoiler: It doesn't matter)

Lou Douros
Apr 25, 2023

I'm an independent filmmaker. I work largely in nonfiction formats, relying on doubts to propel a story forward. There's a strange mix of vision, obsession, and luck in my business. For a film I've been developing called "Shafted", I wanted to understand Rise Gold's proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. My experience has proven that when you look for stories, you most often find people.

This is where my journey began. A year ago, I reached out to Rise Gold's CEO, Ben Mossman. It was my first invitation to subject matter experts requesting an interview for a film about the conflict here in Nevada County. At the time, I only saw opposition to Rise Gold. I've since learned that there's a clandestine population that thinks a gold mine here is a pretty good idea. My request went unanswered by Mr. Mossman. Instead, Jarryd Gonzales, Managing Principal of Good PR Group, took a call to weigh the opportunity. A week later, Gonzales declined the invitation on behalf of the company and wished me luck on the film.

There's a lot of speculation about Ben Mossman — his most recent business failure resulting in criminal trials for alleged environmental misconduct and

economic practices that ended in bankruptcy. I set out on a lonely path a year ago through a remote meeting link that connected me to a small provincial courtroom in British Columbia. Since April 2022, I've not missed a single hearing of R. vs. Mossman & Meckert, 29244-4C. What follows chronicles my pursuit to understand the story behind the man behind the mine.

My day(s) in court

Mr. Mossman is currently facing criminal charges for the environmental damage sustained on Banks Island while acting as the CEO and Mine Manager of Banks Island Gold Ltd. I observed the presentation of evidence, witness testimony, and argument. In 2015, inspectors reported 300-400 meters (around four football fields) of significant sedimentation in one location and unpermitted dumping of tailings in another. Meanwhile, samples taken approximately eight months earlier indicated deleterious contaminants were released by the mine into the environment.

Neither legal team disputed the fact that there was a spill; that much was obvious. Never mind that the "sediment and blow-down" appeared to the inspectors to have "occurred over a long period of time". Unsurprisingly, this case pivoted on who was liable for the crimes.

Over the past year, Ben Mossman attended only once in person in the courtroom in Prince Rupert, B.C. for his testimony and cross examination. His occasional remaining appearances were accessed via the same remote link I used. For the balance, his attorney appeared as agent for Mr. Mossman.

Nevada County residents have expressed intense curiosity about the contents and potential outcome of the Mossman trial in British Columbia. They want to

know who is the Canadian CEO of the Idaho-Maryland Mine? They've asked me about the extent and seriousness of the criminal offenses, the regulatory violations, their consequences, and what they might portend for Nevada County if Ben Mossman reopens the Idaho-Maryland Mine. I've never been a gambler. When playing Settlers of Catan, I always buy sheep when bricks would be smarter. I know little to nothing about asbestos and arsenic prevalent in serpentine rock. But when I review what I've heard in the courtroom and seen in content like the now-disabled banksislandgold.com website, it would be irresponsible to keep it to myself.

Setting the stage

In 2010, Ben Mossman and one other partner, Jason Nickel, set out to reopen the once productive but abandoned Yellow Giant Mine in British Columbia. The following year, Banks Island Gold, Ltd. (BOZ) went public on the Canadian TSX Venture Exchange, with an initial public offering of $1 million CAD.

Over the next 5 years, Mossman and Nickel went on to raise the additional millions in capital it would take to bring the abandoned mine into production. Mr. Mossman recruited more than 100 employees, many of whom were unskilled members of the First Nations Gitxaala (pronounced "Kit-Kat'la") tribe, promising average wages three times higher than what they might make elsewhere. He built and maintained a village to house his workers; roads, a helicopter pad, a boat dock, and most importantly, extensive industrial mine works in preparation for full-scale production at three different sites on the pristine Banks Island. An on-island emergency medical facility was required in the event of job-related injury for workers rotating on two-week intervals. Meals and sanitation, diesel generator power, fuel, food, and transportation

were all necessary just to get crews to and from the mine portals. A buddy system kept the workers safe from an active population of wolves that lived off the plentiful prey surrounding the camp.

Mossman the boss man

From the start, the Banks Island Gold corporate formation and eventually the day-to-day mining operations were under Ben Mossman's control as Director, CEO, and Mine Manager. He applied for the permits. He leased the mineral rights in his own name, then transferred them to the company. He negotiated with the many vendors required to sustain his work force and extract and process ore in this remote location. Mossman's institutional knowledge was fundamental in filling out the board of directors and org chart with the most expert talent he could find.

The British Columbia Ministry of Energy and Mines issued three MX exploration permits allowing 10,000 tons of bulk sample processing for each of the "Bob", "Discovery", and "Kim" mine zones, and a Major Mines permit (#241) for the primary "Tel" portal. During the trial, "bulk sample" was specifically defined to only include the targeted mineral deposits. The MX permits allowed an unlimited amount of excavation to reach the bulk sample, hopefully containing the gold. It's important to note that everything pulled out of the ground needed to be handled in accordance with permits.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---pt-2-will-ben-mossman-be-convicted-in-canada-spoiler-it/article_9c06148e-e3b0-11ed-93b2-b7d7794c33cf.html

Ideas & Opinions – Pt. 2, Will Ben Mossman be convicted in Canada? (Spoiler: It doesn't matter)

Lou Douros
Apr 26, 2023

(Cont. from 04/25/23)... Not long after building out the facility, Banks Island Gold announced a declaration of commercial production in January of 2015. And that's when it all went wrong.

Not all that is gold, glitters...

Just five months later, in June of 2015, the company's safety manager sent an anonymous complaint to the British Columbia Ministry of Mines. The report included photographic documentation of numerous worker health and safety violations that he had observed and attempted to mitigate while working at the mine site.

Improperly stored fuel posed a fire hazard. The mine's ambulance was missing first aid supplies. After workers complained of headaches, the safety manager discovered a generator chugging carbon monoxide into a nearby air compressor that supplied oxygen to underground workings. Later, CO sensors were allegedly disabled for disrupting productivity. Workers blamed Tessa Brinkman. Described in the trial as Mossman's second-in-command and now, as I understand, his wife. Escape ladders were blocked by pipes, the list rattles

on... The report was damning, but there was something that really caught the attention of the inspectors.

Photographs showed sediment and mine waste flowing into the sensitive riparian environment of Banks Island. Images included other permit violations; cement trucks pumping mill tailings into a pit formed by collapsed portion of the Bob site. The complaint inferred that the concerns reported to Ben Mossman, the mine manager, were met with inaction.

The anonymous tip elevated inspectors' planned visit to the mine to priority status. Inspectors from the British Columbia Ministry of Energy and Mines, Environment Canada, and a government conservation officer made two visits by helicopter, a week apart, to Banks Island in July of 2015 to inspect the site. It didn't take long. The inspectors reported under oath that they could see the spill from the air as the helicopter circled in to land.

They found an installed pipe emitting mine sediment up to 6" thick and contaminated water 300-400 meters into a creek, wetlands, and a small lake. Observing the spills and other violations of the mining permits, the government agencies shut down the mine. Shortly thereafter, the British Columbia Securities Commission issued a "Stop Trade" order. Rather than cleaning up the spills and mitigating the safety risks, the board of directors suddenly resigned. Mossman was left to manage bankruptcy, lay-offs, investor, and creditor communications.

The employees, including the First Nations Gixtaala, were left jobless and approximately 170 individuals, local supporting businesses, and other creditors, were left with a total of $15 million of unpaid bills. The site was abandoned, and Mossman and two colleagues faced initial criminal charges

for failing to report spilling pollution into fish-bearing water, unpermitted activities, and exceeding toxic waste limits. The British Columbia government charged them with dozens of counts of safety and environmental violations.

Initially, all but two charges were dropped, but the case was appealed by both parties and eventually was heard by the B.C. Supreme Court. After a legal process spanning several years, a new trial was ordered which commenced in April of 2022, beginning with “voir dire” hearings to determine what evidence was admissible.

Prince Rupert Provincial Court, Room 200

April 14, 2023. Following the voir dire decisions, Prosecutor Geoffrey McDonald for the government of British Columbia, the “Crown”, argued in his final submissions to the court that the mine manager bears liability and responsibility for criminal action or negligence by a mining company that endangers public or environmental health. He held that a corporation should not be allowed to hide behind a bankruptcy after failing to protect the public. Mossman’s defense team, Mr. Chilwin Cheng and Ms. Janessa Mason, argued that the corporation, the now-defunct Banks Island Gold, Ltd., was the liable party and that Mr. Mossman bore no responsibility for the operational decisions.

The trial series began in 2015 and has exposed many issues related to Charter Rights (Canada’s equivalence to our Bill of Rights) and due process. The Hon. Judge Patterson of the provincial court in Prince Rupert, B.C. is scheduled to read his final judgement and publish it with the voir dire reasons on June 19, 2023.

This is part two from an article by Lou Douros. Look for part three tomorrow.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---pt-3-will-ben-mossman-be-convicted-in-canada-spoiler-it/article_ef719fd8-e475-11ed-a1af-ef947c0017be.html

Ideas & Opinions – Pt. 3, Will Ben Mossman be convicted in Canada? (Spoiler: It doesn't matter)

Lou Douros
Apr 27, 2023

What I've learned from the trial

Regardless of Judge Patterson's decision, Ben Mossman's years on Banks Island raise serious questions for Nevada County's decision-makers. He may be found personally liable and sentenced to time in prison. Or, he might be spared, leaving the empty husk of his prior company hanging from the gallows of liability. Nevada County's Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors would be wise to study the whole of what happened at the Yellow Giant Mine.

Mr. Mossman's pitches always include a kind of dog whistle for his potential investors. "Nevada County", he says, "is the lead agency for the permitting process. It's not the state and not the federal government." The secret message doesn't require a decoder ring to figure out. It's been eighty years since the Idaho-Maryland was part of a mature, knowledgeable mining culture. Investors in junior mines have lost millions because of government meddling. Nevada County is the perfect soil from which to reap mining's most abundant treasures unabated.

Using doubt as a lever to peer under the rock, here are some take-aways from

my weeks as a virtual visitor in a small provincial courtroom in British Columbia.

Regulations

Canadian statutes ensure that mine owners and corporations operate responsibly, as governed by the Mines Act, the Waters Act, the Environmental Management Act, and the Fisheries Act. The strict liability placed on the mine manager is intended to threaten handcuffs for anyone who might be tempted to acquiesce to criminal conduct. But what will govern a mine in Nevada County, a local government that has no working memory of ore extraction? Do our statutes deeply and specifically address the details of modern mining, or do they leave gaping holes through ambiguous and nearly unenforceable terms? A pirate code, more... guidelines, than actual rules.

Regulators

Statutes are only as effective as the agencies that enforce them. And in British Columbia, where mining has continued uninterrupted for centuries, multiple agencies at least try to ensure accountability specific to mining. While environmental managers in B.C. have been steeped in the complexities and risks involved in mining, Nevada County's expertise is in writing permits for rooftop solar and deck additions. So, who will have our backs if Rise Gold, vastly larger than Banks Island, racks up millions in debt and trips over mismanagement of a complex business. As history is wont to repeat, would Mossman find the best attorney money can buy to incarcerate a nonhuman entity drained of its cash as he looks to the next frontier in resource extraction?

Expert Analysis

Scientific reports and expert analyses don't solve problems. Scientists can try to describe what happened in the past. Analysts can model potential future outcomes to quantify risk. Compared to B.C., Rise Gold relies heavily on non-mining-specific environmental laws in addition to scientific reports to claim it will ensure public safety. Presumably, Mr. Mossman published the same expert analysis and proformas for investors and inspectors before reopening the Yellow Giant Mine. Ironically, it was science that quantified the resulting damage to the environment. The judge will only decide who is responsible for something everyone admits was a crime.

Job Security

Rise Gold has promised sky-high wages as long as they're in business. When a Grass Valley mine failed in 1940, there were any number of local operations still hiring. Gold was like that back then. Since the 1970's in Nevada County, talent from the Bay Area put on the Grass Valley Group's "pinecone handcuffs" and relocated here. Now, there are engineers who regularly entertain valuable offers from within our new economy without relocating, missing a car payment, or their dream vacation. Even Banks Island Gold workers could apply at another mine in B. C. Where will the former Rise Gold miner go for work?

Payroll

The promises Ben Mossman made to starry-eyed workers in B.C. are strikingly similar to Rise Gold's Facebook blitz targeting Nevada County's young men. The 100 or so mostly male workers on Banks Island never

dreamed they'd be unemployed inside of a year. Many of them never reached their first "$100,000 average annual salary". I wonder if they received the severance package listed in the unsecured creditors chart or if they had to foreclose on their first-time home purchase. Did they have to sell the new truck they bought to avoid their own credit hit?

Economic Growth

Banks Island Gold's board of directors all fled within months of the spill. The tally of creditors, including severance packages and vacation pay, and local businesses who gambled on Mossman's projections approached $15 million. Furthermore, the company's bond of $420,000 didn't come close to covering the costs of environmental cleanup. Canadian taxpayers inherited a rusting industrial wasteland, gaping flooded caverns that were once mine portals, deforested roads-to-nowhere scars, discarded fuel barrels, and unmeasurable seepage into the ocean. Can Nevada County sustain a similar hit by a substantially larger Rise Gold collapse?

It would be one thing if we were being told, "this time it'll be different". A little humility goes a long way. But that's not the message coming from Ben Mossman, not even from Rise Gold or Jarryd Gonzalez. Their message is "trust us, it's all going to be fine".

There are proponents on social media who have tried to wave off the environmental and safety concerns under Mr. Mossman's watch, minimizing what they call "a little bit of mud". But how could something so small could devastate such an otherwise intelligent and well-funded operation? It doesn't add up. Not even the Crown Prosecutor, Geoffrey McDonald or Chilwin Cheng, Ben Mossman's, attorney denies the presence of the environmental

disaster. They've lived with this story for almost a decade. No, the matter currently in The Hon. Judge Patterson's hands is, who did this? Who is liable? He will depend on specific laws and active regulators who guide thousands of active mines to operate profitably and safely. Most of them fall out of compliance at times. Most of those recover as a result of good management and disciplined practice.

There aren't thousands of mines under consideration here. There's only one. If California's laws are even slightly unclear about who is liable for keeping all of us safe from the Idaho-Maryland Mine, it's the doubter in me that says Ben Mossman will likely make sure it isn't him.

This was the third part of an article by Lou Douros, who is a documentary filmmaker based out of Grass Valley, his recent work can be found at vimeo.com/douros

https://www.theunion.com/news/rise-gold-s-ceo-found-guilty-on-13-counts-in-british-columbia-retrial/article_115a0afc-1d1c-11ee-91c5-9b9962eb049a.html

FEATURED

Rise Gold's CEO found guilty on 13 counts in British Columbia retrial

Lou Douros
Jul 7, 2023

1 of 6



An aerial view shows the Yellow Giant Mine site in British Columbia that was shut down in 2015 due to mine waste spil
Banks Island Gold, Benjamin Mossman, who is now trying to reopen the Idaho Maryland Gold Mine in Grass Valley, wa
substances into the environment above permitted amounts by a Canadian court.

Film stills from 'Shafted' courtesy Lou Douros

Special to The Union

On Friday, July 7, Judge David Patterson of the Provincial Court in Prince Rupert, British Columbia read his judgement after the re-trial of Benjamin Mossman, then CEO of Banks Island Gold. Mr. Mossman has been fighting charges of environmental crimes since 2015 after the Banks Island Gold Corp.'s Yellow Giant Mine was shut down by regulators in response to the discovery of mine waste spills into the sensitive environment of Banks Island. After declaring bankruptcy in British Columbia, Mr. Mossman left the Banks Island mine works behind, along with a long list of creditors, and bought the long idle Idaho-Maryland Mine property in Grass Valley, CA. Mossman has since established Rise Gold Corp. and has been raising capital and developing a plan to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Mine, causing intense debate and organized opposition from many residents of Nevada County who fear environmental degradation, air, water, and noise pollution, local well failures, and other concerns in their quiet foothills town.

The outcome of the trial in British Columbia may have an impact on the upcoming decisions by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to issue an 80-year use permit for the Idaho-Maryland Mine, one of the largest producing gold mines in U.S. history, but now surrounded by over thousands of homes and adjacent to active tourist destinations. That decision is expected in early October.

Dan McLaughlin, Communications Counsel for the BC Prosecution Service states that the offenses with which Mr. Mossman is charged in British Columbia are "related to allegations of the discharge of waste, effluent, and other deleterious substances into the environment in contravention of several

statutory regulations".

After a nearly yearlong trial, Judge Patterson found Ben Mossman guilty of 13 counts of discharging substances into the environment above permitted amounts. He was judged not guilty on 10 counts of failing to report environmental spills and dumping, discharging mine waste into the environment, and unauthorized works in and about a stream.

In his written judgement, Judge Patterson repeatedly stated that he had his suspicions about the charges on which Mossman was exonerated, but that the prosecution had failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Mossman was directly responsible for the environmental damage resulting from the well-documented spills. The judge stated that the testimony of the prosecution's primary witness, the mine's Environmental Manager and Site Biologist was flawed because of "her profound hostility, animosity, and negative attitude" towards Mr. Mossman and the trial process, as well as her less than satisfactory recollection of the events prior to the 2015 shutdown of the Yellow Giant Mine. The judge stated that he believed the evidentiary record on those charges was incomplete and required speculation on his part as to Mossman's direct involvement in the decisions which resulted in the environmental damage.

Mr. Mossman will be sentenced on the 13 counts for which he was found guilty on a date to be announced. It is as yet unknown whether the sentence will require jail time, fines, or both.

Lou Douros is a Nevada County documentary filmmaker in development of the unscripted narrative; "Shafted". He has spent the past 15 months attending every hearing of the Ben Mossman/Dirk Meckert trial via MS Teams weblink. Lou has lived in Grass Valley for 31 years where he and his wife, Melinda have raised their five children.

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Mark Wilson: Questioning mine claims

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 20h ago

Mark Wilson | Other Voices

Life is messy. Even in the best of times, the careful plans we lay out for ourselves get derailed. Faced with an economic setback, a dishonest associate, a natural disaster or a serious health problem, our plans begin to fall apart and things slip through the cracks.

Even more messy are complex business plans. Take, for example, an underfunded penny-stock company attempting to reopen a gold mine cheek-to-jowl with a small rural community still trying to overcome the environmental legacy of its previous generations of mining.

Rise Gold's slick mailers hope to convince us that every one of the more than 25 significant environmental and health impacts identified in the draft environmental impact report will be mitigated, and that they will protect our community from those impacts continually, 24/7, for the next 80 years.

That's a bold promise. One might consider it utterly unbelievable.

In an environmental impact report, the applicant (here, Rise Gold) lists mitigation measures it has identified to prevent or lessen the adverse impacts of its operations.

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Of course, success of these measures is based on a variety of economic, human, ethical and supply chain assumptions. That is, that all the ducks will line up in an orderly row to ensure compliance.

But as we've seen repeatedly over the past couple of years, life is messy. Shifting economic decisions alter business decisions. Humans make mistakes, act foolishly, and behave unethically. Critical equipment and supplies become unavailable, forcing new operational decisions and making required maintenance impossible.

So any mitigation measures laid out in the draft environmental impact report are only a promise made before one shovelful of dirt is turned, one ounce of water is drawn, or one cloud of emissions wafts into the air — nothing more.

Given these unavoidable uncertainties and the significant impacts on our community, we must ask two questions: Does the draft environmental impact report accurately characterize the situation? And Do those in charge have a track record of impeccable behavior in ensuring their heavy industrial facility will meet our health and environmental guidelines for today and the next 80 years?

The draft report's 1,070 pages contain far too many issues to address here, so we'll focus on one: Does it accurately characterize the area's current air quality? It's questionable.

The air monitoring data for ozone and small particulate matter is from monitoring equipment located about a mile northwest of the project site. Rise Gold didn't conduct air monitoring at the project site or in any other direction emissions from their operations will travel.

Years ago, citizen ozone monitoring conducted at various locations around the Grass Valley/Nevada City area confirmed that ozone

levels vary widely here due to our topography.

So it's clear that Rise Gold's use of data from a single air quality monitor is insufficient to characterize at least the ozone in our area. For other air pollutants, the draft environmental impact references a monitoring station in Yuba City — 31 miles away.

As for Rise Gold's track history, there isn't much. The company, formed for this project, has never operated a gold mining operation. Yet to approve the proposal, the county supervisors (and their constituents) are expected to believe that this group is capable of cobbling together a team that can implement the numerous, complex mitigation measures outlined in the draft environmental impact report from the get-go, with no slip-ups.

And then there's the history of Rise Gold CEO Ben Mossman's former mining management in British Columbia. In less than two years, his Banks Island Gold Ltd. operation had polluted the local environment enough for the Canadian government to shut it down. When the company's safety manager identified safety issues in the mine, he was let go. And when they went bankrupt, scores of employees were left unpaid. And the security bond didn't come close to covering cleanup costs.

Now Mr. Mossman and Rise Gold and their marketers want to set the same table for us, promising us a feast of plenty. They want us to believe they'll protect our environment and health. But ladling sweet promises over a stale history of mismanagement and environmental degradation doesn't cut it.

Let your county supervisor know that you're not falling for their hype, and ask them to vote no on approving the mine.

Mark Wilson lives in Nevada City.

Editor's note: California environmental regulations have some bearing, as well, on whether a mine may operate or continue to operate if standards are violated.

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Martha Turner: Open letter to Rise Grass Valley president

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | January 5, 2021

Martha Turner

Dear Mr. Ben Mossman, president, Rise Grass Valley Inc.:

How could I miss your full page ad in The Union on Dec. 23, 2020? It was a slap in the face to all of us who live in Grass Valley. You wishing us all a Merry Christmas while publishing what I believe to be falsehoods about what high standards Rise Gold Corp. will follow and presuming to know what the reopening of your mine means to our community.

You say you moved to Nevada County three years ago. Exactly where are you and your wife and your young child living? Is it in the neighborhood of the mine where I'm afraid you will have your peace and quiet disturbed by the noise of a mine running 24 hours a day, seven days a week? Where you will have your well water impacted and maybe lost completely?

We, who have lived here for many more years, are horrified at the idea of opening a hard rock mine so close to our town. There may be a few who believe the promises and hold a nostalgic and misinformed perspective of what this mine means for our community. And there are those, like yourself and your Board of Directors, who I imagine can only consider the money to be made, regardless of the harm done to the community and environment.

I say shame on you, Mr. Mossman, and shame on Rise Gold Corp. for coming to exploit another community. I read about the last company you worked for, only two years ago, named Banks Island Gold Limited in Canada. I learned that this company ended in bankruptcy and had the security bond of $420,000 confiscated by the Canadian government toward cleaning up the mess left behind on the last gold mine company you were president of. I am not reassured.

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The grass roots effort to prevent you from opening the Idaho-Maryland mine will continue and we will fight you tooth and nail, for it is not "a worthy endeavor" by any stretch of the imagination.

Martha Turner

Grass Valley

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Mike Shea: Too good to be true

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 5, 2021

Mike Shea | Other Voices

Wow, if we believe everything Rise Gold and Ben Mossman tell us, reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine sounds like a great deal! But, can we believe technical reports that they and their investors paid for?

All you have to do is type "distorted science" into your internet browser to find numerous examples of how industry-funded studies can misrepresent or distort their findings. I suspect the companies performing studies for Rise Gold do the same thing.

Here's an example of what I mean. Rise Gold had a biological assessment done on 129 acres at the Brunswick site where the mine and processing facility would be based. The results of the assessment were reported in an October 2020 document.

That report stated, "The field survey did not record any observations of deer." This is no doubt an accurate statement if it means the botanist didn't see any actual deer. But any deer hunter walking the property would have noticed the deer trails, scat, and bedding areas located there. It's pretty unbelievable that the botanist didn't see any of this.

Yet they chose to word their report in such a way to give the false impression that there are no deer on the property. They could have said, "There are numerous signs that deer live on the property, but no deer were observed." See the difference?

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The survey goes on to say, "The Brunswick area does not contain any known major deer migration corridors, known deer holding areas, nor critical deer fawning areas."

Well if they didn't see any deer, of course they can conclude all that. I live next door to the property and can attest that bucks, does and their fawns live there, along with many other animals — rabbits, skunks, squirrels, coyotes, raccoons, and the occasional bear.

But who will our county supervisors believe? Me, a homeowner, or Rise Gold's paid botanist?

Would Rise Gold submit a report that doesn't support reopening the mine? There's no way we can know. And isn't it strange that all the potential issues their report did identify were either "less than significant" or things that could easily be mitigated?

They want to build an industrial-scale processing facility and underground gold mine and run it for 80 years, but nothing is going to go wrong. No fires, floods, tunnel collapses, toxic atmospheric contaminants, dust or gas explosions, or premature blasts? That's not realistic.

Rise Gold doesn't want to open a mine here for our benefit. They hope to make the corporation's owners and investors rich. They will do what other corporations do to make money and cut costs where they can. (In case you weren't aware, both Rise Gold Corp. and Rise Grass Valley Corp. are not incorporated in California, they are both incorporated in Nevada where there is no state income tax.)

And the motivation of those of us against the mine? We aren't doing it for financial gain. We are trying to protect the place where we live and that we love.

In his June 8 op-ed in The Union, Ben Mossman claims that the majority of information given by people who oppose the mine is "either biased or misleading and based neither on science nor logic." Seems like the same could be said for him.

Mike Shea lives in Cedar Ridge.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/town-talk-mine-folks-out-of-touch/article_d764edb8-f042-11ed-a1be-676968dec3be.html

Town Talk: Mine folks out of touch?

Submitted by Pamela Meek
May 12, 2023



“Riding to the Rood,” classy or clueless?

Submitted by Pamela Meek

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---peter-n-brewer-supervisors-do-not-be-hoodwinked-by-the-dazzling/article_c63339fe-de0a-11ed-a247-738a15556d14.html

Ideas & Opinions – Peter N. Brewer: Supervisors, do not be hoodwinked by the dazzling but false claims by Rise Gold

Peter N. Brewer
Apr 19, 2023

Dear Nevada County Supervisors and Planning Commissioners,

I write to you as a very concerned resident of Nevada County to implore you to reject the re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. I live on Banner Mountain (District 1) and I am terrified of the consequences not only to me and my property, but to the community as a whole, if this mining operation is allowed.

In a moment I will briefly summarize some of the significant reasons to reject the proposal, but you are no doubt familiar with those facts, so I wish to begin by something far more obvious and indisputable. That is, if you lie down with snakes you are going to get bit(ten). Rise, and its C.E.O., have a demonstrated track record of environmental carnage, broken contracts, and such. Rise Gold has never opened or operated a mine and has never made a profit. Their C.E.O.'s predecessor company polluted tribal waters, declared bankruptcy, and left responsibility for their cleanup to the Canadian citizens. Their C.E.O. is currently on trial on charges relating to toxic spills in current operations.

Why would anyone in their right mind consider doing business with persons or institutions that can so predictably be counted on to compromise public

health and cause economic crises and environmental destruction?

The economic projections that Rise puts before you in support of their application are neither fact-based nor honest. They are, at most, happy-talk and unbounded optimism. Bear in mind that, “figures don’t lie, but liars often figure.” So is the case here.

Why would anyone consider exposing our community to the sacrifice of its character for the benefit of a Canadian company? The re-opening of the mine will cause significant and unavoidable impacts. The increased traffic (18 wheelers) and noise on Brunswick alone is reason enough to reject this proposal, and that traffic increase can neither be denied nor mitigated. The threats to water wells and air quality scream for denial of the application. You simply cannot pump 3.6 million gallons of polluted water every day for six months and another 1.2 million gallons per year for up to 80 years without creating health and environmental damages. The claim in the E.I.R. that this dewatering will not have significant impacts has to be recognized as the unmitigated horse pucky that it is.

Our county’s air quality already gets failing marks. How can this not be exacerbated by fugitive dust from continuous rock crushing, hauling, and compacting that will release asbestos and silica particles, in addition to the output from hundreds of diesel trucks each day. Again, the E.I.R. drops the ball here, calling these inpacts, “less than significant.”

Many residents, for miles around, will suffer reduced quality of life and diminished property values. The staggering amount of greenhouse gasses (more than 9000 metric tons annually) will contribute to our terminal problem of climate change – shame.

There is NO demonstrable need to extract our subterranean gold. There is sufficient gold already in vaults to satisfy the legitimate needs of generations to come. This proposal is only justified by the profit motives and greed of outsiders, untrustworthy outsiders at that.

As for the highly suspect predictions of economic benefits to our community, consider instead promoting high-speed, fiber-optic, Internet connectivity. Our area is a mecca for educated professionals fleeing major metropolitan areas to live in our bucolic paradise. But many of these people are working, or want to work, remotely, thus bringing economic benefits to our community with no negative impacts, environmental or otherwise. Why not support, instead, this area of economic growth that poses no downside?

Please do not be hoodwinked by the dazzling but false claims by Rise Gold. Please do the right thing as officials we elected or appointed to lead and protect us in an honest and exemplary manner. Please deny Rise Gold and instead focus on shepherding us into the 21st century with fitting and appropriate technology and infrastructure.

Thank you. Very truly yours, Peter N. Brewer

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---richard-celio-why-rise-gold-reopening-the-mine-should-be-a/article_20642326-ee04-11ed-8396-0f9f92483580.html

Ideas & Opinions – Richard Celio: Why RISE GOLD reopening the mine should be a non-starter

Richard Celio
May 9, 2023

Dear Supervisors,

Most of the discussion about Rise Gold and the reopening surrounds environmental impact or economic benefit, i.e., will it help the economy, bring jobs, etc.. I need to point out that there is perhaps an equally important reason to stop this mad short term money grab by a few.

Some background... I am a recently retired professional electrical engineer. After college I worked with a major utility, an instrumentation company, a large multinational consulting engineering firm and then, in 1994, I started my own company and built it into a leading system integration firm. Before starting my own company I worked in significant positions at a range of corporations and gained extremely valuable, in fact, completely necessary experience. I established a great reputation within the community of companies in our industry. In other words, I built a strong resume. Without that resume and experience I would never have been able to get contracts with Santa Clara County, Alameda County, The State of California, Federal Contracts, many fortune 100 companies, etc, etc, etc... In fact, in some cases if I could not demonstrate that a contract would not constitute more than 10%

of my business revenue, I would NOT get the contract. They cared, and rightly so, about hiring a business without the resources to absorb some bumps in the road. I believe this was a sound practice because I've witnessed well meaning companies and their employees get hammered (kicked off projects, sued, bankruptcy) due to a single mistake on a large project. I believe you, as our elected reps and stewards of our great county, should care at least as much.

My point and I don't want this to be personal but unfortunately, we have no choice. This is not Rio Tinto, Newmont or Barrick (huge mining corps).. There is one person running the show. Rise's web page has a listing of management who appear to be elsewhere doing other things which makes sense when this not ever going to be a full time gig for them. They are there for window dressing, a common theme in stock speculation. Why are we, for such a high risk project, even considering a company that has NO resume of successful projects. Your own purchasing department would not hire them to wash windows without demonstrating some experience. You would never allow a major construction project to be engineered by unlicensed persons or constructed by a company having only one failed project to their name. Yes, I know you aren't contracting with Rise Gold but you CANNOT close your eyes to the facts. If you compare just about any successful business persons LinkedIn page to Rise Gold's CEO, you'd understand what I'm saying. ZERO — He lists Rise Gold and a university with no endorsements or previous experience (and apparently we know why)... When you invest in a company you are investing in people (or a person). Unfortunately, it appears Rise Gold's investors have not done their homework (or perhaps they are looking for losses to offset their successful investments). I don't know about them but your decisions are more than rubber stamps. Endorsing this scheme is using our future as capital for some outsiders penny stock speculation. The citizens

of this county expect you to invest wisely.

Richard Celio

Grass Valley

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Robert A. Hubbard: Rise Gold emphasizes 'best possible outcome'

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 20h ago

Robert A. Hubbard | Other Voices

The recently published draft environmental impact report for the proposed reopening of the old Idaho Maryland Mine needs careful scrutiny.

Taken at face value, it concludes that the project would have no impact on the community that could not be mitigated. The report is based on language and measurement values provided to it by Rise Gold, and is correct in its conclusions only to the degree that that language and those measurement values are correct.

The real-life conditions could be quite different from the conclusions in the report. Evaluating the level of impact should be based on worst-case conditions, not best-possible conditions.

The ambient noise levels used in the study are currently four to five years old. The operations at issue will not start occurring for several years in the future, so these noise levels will likely not reflect the actual ambient noise at the time operations actually start. The conclusions are questionable.

The Nevada County General Plan, Table 4.10-4, notes:

Trending Articles



"(The noise) standards shall be measured only on property containing a noise sensitive land use as defined in Policy 9.8 and may be measured anywhere on the property containing said land use. However, this measurement standard may be amended to provide for measurement at the boundary of a recorded noise easement."

Rise Gold has chosen to measure and compute noise levels at what they call "the nearest receptor," which in the case of the multi-acre parcels surrounding the mine operations is the residence on the property located at the greatest distance from the mine operations. To provide a realistic level of the impact on the property, those measurements and computations should be made at the property boundary, rather than the far end of those properties.

The draft environmental impact report also says: "Assuming a bulldozer, grader, excavator, front-end loader and compactor were operating concurrently at the Brunswick and Centennial industrial sites, ... it was assumed that all of this equipment could be operating concurrently, but that the equipment would be spread out over the sites during the site clearing/construction operations. As a result, average noise levels were predicted for the Brunswick and Centennial industrial sites ... assuming the noise sources were distributed throughout the sites, ... based on the closest proximity of the equipment to the sensitive receptor locations."

This seems to be a false assumption, since these machines work jointly to accomplish their task, and would sometimes be operating in close proximity. The impact report is full of statements that use "is assumed" and "is projected to be" as given fact in arriving at its conclusions.

Sound level calculations for the the report's tables are based on values for construction noise from The FHWA Roadway Construction Noise Model, and shown in Table 4.10-10. These values differ substantially from sound levels shown in the Noise Navigator Sound

Level Database, published by the University of Michigan Department of Environmental Health Science.

For example, where the noise model shows compactor and front end loader sound levels at 80dBa, the Noise Navigator chart lists them as 92 and 93dBa. An earth scraper in Table 4.10-10 is listed at 85dBa. In the Noise Navigator chart, it is 107 to 111 dBa. The noise level values on the Noise Navigator chart are twice and four to five times those on the chart used in the impact report.

The actual machines to be used, the true sound levels of those machines, the real numbers of those machines in use at any given time, and their locations around the working locations at any given time are not actually known.

The impact report describes a sound monitoring plan that says: "If the results indicate that the county noise standards are being exceeded either by individual equipment or processes, or cumulative noise generation of the entire facility, operations shall cease until additional engineering controls can be implemented as needed."

At this point, Rise will have sunk several million dollars into construction and development costs prior to starting operations. Are we to believe that they will just shut down until they can solve the problem, or will they continue to operate and pay fines levied as "the cost of doing business?"

These issues must be resolved before any permit is issued.

Robert A. Hubbard lives in Grass Valley. This letter is based on comments prepared for the Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

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Robert A. Hubbard: Who is this guy?

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 23h ago

Robert A. Hubbard

Some people are confusing Rise Gold with Ben Mossman's mining disaster in British Columbia. Here's a thumbnail sketch of the facts:

Banks Island Gold LTD, with Ben Mossman as CEO, was incorporated on Jan 18, 2011, and after its environmental disaster was shut down by the government, bankrupted and went out of business in December 2015.

The company now known as Rise Gold was Incorporated on Feb. 9, 2007, as Atlantic Resources. After a number of changes in ownership and names over nine years, the company named Ben Mossman as CEO and changed its name to Rise Gold on Aug.1, 2016, subsequently acquiring the Idaho-Maryland Mine property on Aug 30, 2016, for $2 million.

One does not enter lightly into a project involving multiple millions of dollars and an 80-year commitment without exhaustive and time-consuming research. And yet, only seven months after the collapse of his adventure in British Columbia, Ben Mossman rides into town as CEO of a different mining company with $2 million in his pocket.

Who is this guy, and is he really interested in operating a gold mine or is he just panning the gold streams of the world looking for nuggets he can sell?

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Robert A. Hubbard

Grass Valley

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ALL COMMENTS 1 newest 5

DN **Donna Natali** 19 MIN AGO

He is mining the pockets of investors at the expense of quality of life here in Grass Valley and surrounding communities. He is a scam artist and

nothing more. We are so foolish to even consider letting this charlaton and his outfit come here and try to destroy our lands, water and small town way of life. The Board of Supervisors are either completely bought off or lacking in common sense to even consider such a project. And two million is not that much money for a scam artist to get their hands on.

REPLY 0 0

ACTIVE CONVERSATIONS



Jo Ann Rebane: Are we too far gone?

83



Crazy prices: Economist digs into the cost of gas

4

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-unanswered-questions-about-the-idaho-maryland-mine/article_69b39a4e-1f81-11ee-8375-abd6fac708f4.html

Ideas & Opinions — Unanswered Questions about the Idaho-Maryland Mine

Robert Hubbard | Other Voices
Jul 11, 2023

Maya Angelou said, “When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.”

THE CEO’s HISTORY

In January, 2011, Current Rise Gold CEO Ben Mossman founded the junior mining company Banks Island Gold in Canada and subsequently began mineral exploration for the Yellow Giant gold mine in the remote tribal territory of the Gitxaala [pronounced Kitkatla] Nation on Banks Island in northern BC, Canada. In November of 2012, he put the mine into commercial production.

Because the Canadian government cannot afford to monitor the activities of all the mines that exist in the country, it requires that events which are out of compliance with Canadian mining law be reported by the mine operator. Over the next 3 years, a series of compliance failures, including an overstuffed explosive locker whose doors would not close, a series of toxic waste spills which polluted the shellfish banks and fishing waters of the Gitxaala Nation, numerous safety violations, and ore being processed from an unlicensed site

resulted in 2 stop work orders (which the mine failed to honor), and shortly afterwards, a full shutdown order in July, 2015.

In Jan, 2016, Banks Island Gold declared Bankruptcy. The reclamation bond posted was far from sufficient to repair the harm. Mossman walked away and left taxpayers holding the bag for the damages, the Gitxaala Nation's food supply damaged, and employers and suppliers unpaid.

THE COMPANY HISTORY

Mining companies fall into two categories: major mining companies and junior mining companies. Junior mining companies explore for minerals and attempt to find funding to mine them. They are famous for mining investors, rather than minerals.

The junior mining company now known as Rise Gold was originally incorporated on Feb. 9, 2007 under the name Atlantic Resources, and has a checkered history. Over the next 9 years, the company bought mineral rights, attracted investors, failed to realize a profit and acquired new CEOs, changing the name of the company a number of times.

On August 1, 2016, seven months after bankrupting in Canada, Ben Mossman was named as CEO of the former Atlantic Resources, changing the name to Rise Gold. He then acquired the Idaho-Maryland Mine property on Aug 30, 2016 for $2,000,000. He applied to the county for a permit to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine, and the events which followed are local history.

GUILTY

On July 7, 2023 Mossman was found personally guilty of 13 of the 23 charges

of environmental crimes he has been fighting in Canadian courts since 2015. Although the prosecution was unable to prove that Mossman was 'directly responsible' for the other 10 charges, he was CEO at the time. Ultimate responsibility for the actions of his company stop at his desk. Read more in the article: Rise Gold's CEO found guilty on 13 counts in British Columbia retrial...

TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Although numerous problems with reopening the Mine have been thoroughly discussed, there are two important questions that I feel have been left out of that discussion.

First, who will watch the watchers? Neither the State of California, nor Nevada County has the resources to independently monitor compliance with the air, water, mine waste and noise standards of this operation. Like in Canada, Rise Gold will need to be self-reporting. We have seen how well that worked in Canada. Should the mine reopen, the County should require from Rise Gold sufficient funds to pay for mining operation compliance to be monitored 24/7 by a County environmental scientist/engineer for the duration of the mine's operation.

Second, Rise Gold's big claims to benefit the County are the jobs it is offering, and the money its employees will bring to the area. However, Rise also says (to set our minds at rest around its operations) that it uses the most modern mining methods. But the most modern mining methods include automated mining, where robotic machines replace human workers. Keep in mind that it was only 54 years between the Wright Bros flight and astronauts landing on the moon. How long will human labor be working the mine, should it open?

How long will those jobs last?

My suggestion to the Board of Supervisors: Ben Mossman has shown us who he is. Believe him.

Robert Hubbard, Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/opinion---robert-l-zuelsdorf-rise-golds-previous-lawsuits-need-to-be-settled-first/article_46fd4644-8ba2-11ed-a7d1-3b21a63cf0fa.html

Opinion - Robert L. Zuelsdorf: Rise Gold's previous lawsuits need to be settled first

Robert L. Zuelsdorf
Jan 3, 2023

Information from: The Union July 20, 2022

"The CEO of Rise Gold Corp is currently on trial in a Canadian court on accusations of discharging waste, effluent and other substances into the environment.

CEO Ben Mossman and Dirk Meckert face 16 offenses under the British Columbia Environmental Management Act, nine under the Fisheries Act of Canada and four under the British Columbia Water Act....

... The (Canadian) mine closed in 2015 after Environment and Climate Change Canada said waste from the mine was found in nearby woods and wetlands, CBC has reported"

The failure to satisfy the above environmental requirements negates anything stated in the EIR, and this failure leaves Rise Gold a Non-Starter in their quest to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine. Until the above court issues are totally satisfied the Rise Gold efforts cannot be considered in any way. Should any Elected Official support reopening the Mine prior to this, efforts to remove them from Office shall be a primary concern.

Robert L. Zuelsdorf PE, ret.

(Robert Zuelsdorf is author of the Book: Memoirs of a Broadcast Engineer.)

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Robert Zuelsdorf: Idaho Maryland Mine advertisements missing mine's potential damage

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | May 29, 2020

It appears that Rise Gold is engaging in a perhaps subtle, and possibly deceiving, advertising campaign to cast their proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland mine in a favorable light.

Two full page ads in The Union entitled, "The Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine, Historic Newspaper articles Covering a Century of Prosperity" do have a disclaimer at the very bottom stating "Sponsored by Rise Gold" but this is easily missed and may appear to many as being presented by The Union. The second of these ads is displayed in The Union of May 19, 2020, and was originally from May 9, 1908. This one says "Part 2 of 6" so four more are coming. The first ad ran in mid-May.

This clever bit of advertising is quite obviously an attempt to use the mine's past success and profitability to imply that reopening the mine will translate to a good thing at present and in the future. However, there is no mention of the possible problems and potential collateral damage reopening of the mine could cause.

Robert Zuelsdorf, PE ret.

Alta Sierra

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Sharon Delgado: On reopening the mine

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 16, 2020

I found The Union publisher's Don Rogers' July 10 column about reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine insulting and disrespectful.

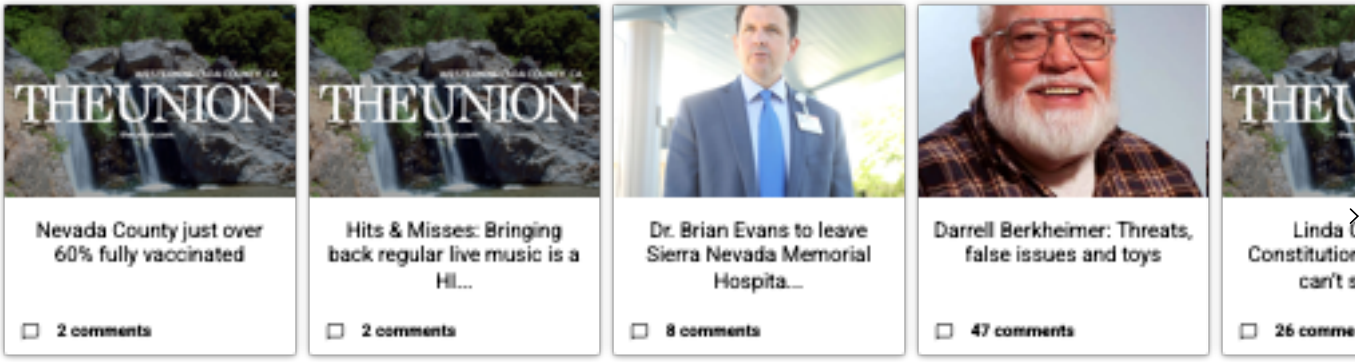
He claimed that "nearby residents and environmental advocates" who oppose the mine's reopening are "trying to smother the baby in the crib." What a violent metaphor. Later he lists people who fail to persuade him either way: "Know-nothing neighbors resorting to rumors, scare-mongering environmental advocates, or chamber of commerce types who see no evil so long as a whiff of cash hangs in the air." Who are these people? I know quite a few people in this community — none fit these stereotypes. Is this really what The Union's publisher thinks of us?

His comments were also fatalistic. While downplaying Rise Gold's previous environmental violations, stating that "he got a talking to" and calling them "paper problems," he predicted that "Gold mining will return to the foothills sure as rain in the coming decades ..." With democratic participation this should not be a foregone conclusion.

Also, the idea that reopening this mine will improve the environment and reduce pollution is naïve, as those who have read the documents that Rise Gold submitted to the county can attest. I suggest Mr. Rogers do the same.

Sharon Delgado

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Shirley Benedick: Not buying that mine poll

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 2, 2021

Shirley Benedick

According to Rise Gold, the public is "overwhelmingly in favor of the mining project proposed for Grass Valley," citing a recent poll of 500 Nevada County residents. As a retiree and 35-year resident living near downtown Grass Valley, I have serious concerns about both the survey and the reopening of the mine.

The telephone poll (paid for by the mine owners) of 500 Nevada County residents selected from voter lists, 100 from each of Nevada County's five districts, is irrelevant and misleading.

Five-hundred people (out of a Nevada County population of 99,755 in 2019) were polled, but only 100 from Grass Valley, which is the region most heavily impacted by reopening the mine and probably has the largest population density.

Why, for example, should the quality of life of Grass Valley residents be determined by the nostalgic feelings of those living in Truckee? Would they be OK with dozens of loud, large, heavy diesel mine trucks running night and day seven days a week near their downtown, clogging streets, wearing out road surfaces, decreasing air quality, and discouraging tourism?

In addition, the mine will put a strain on our power grid, operating 24 hours a day, pumping out water. We have had prior examples of what can happen. North San Juan lost their water when their local gold mining operation dewatered several homes and a school.

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Current owners of Rise Gold address potential water problems by saying they will pay for new water hook-ups (and the water bills) if local wells are affected.

When the representative for the previous mine owners (Emgold) was asked where the flooded mine's water came from, the answer was that there were some questions about water intrusion via uncertain geology around the Wolf Creek area. So, is dewatering/pollution of Wolf Creek a probability?

And what about those jobs that will be created? When Emgold owned the mine, their Canadian penny stock speculators stated that most of the mine jobs would be filled by skilled miners from out of the area. Is this still the case?

And what about our air quality, already bad, and global warming carbon loading combined with less rainfall? Yes, it is bad now, but it would get worse.

We who live here would pay a high price, yet the mine speculators don't even have to make a profit. Approval would likely guarantee their penny stocks would skyrocket in value, thereby rewarding early investors.

Their contract guarantees them 80 years, but even if the mine eventually fails, they will have made their money. We will live with the damages.

Mining is an interesting part of our history, but this is our town, our quality of life now, and our children's future. These concerns need to be addressed before our community allows this questionable project.

Shirley Benedick

Grass Valley

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Daniel Desmond: Mine survey flawed

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | 1d ago

Daniel Desmond

I was disappointed in your decision to run the full page ad in the October 13 issue by Rise indicating that 59% of the population of Nevada County supports the mine project. The survey that was done by a marketing firm hired by Rise is clearly flawed both in design and implementation. I have had former colleagues from the University of California review the survey and they found it flawed in design and results. I believe it is a disservice to the community to publish false or faulty information.

I personally feel the mine is a bad investment at several levels and will cost the county and its residents much more harm than good. In the future please consider the source of information provided to you before publishing it. Thanks for efforts to inform the community.

Daniel Desmond

Nevada City

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Darrell Berkheimer: Mine snow job fails

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 9, 2021

Darrell Berkheimer | Columnist

Rise Gold CEO Ben Mossman and J. Wallin Opinion Research have failed in their attempt to hoodwink Nevada County folks into thinking the reopening of Idaho-Maryland Mine would be good for the community.

They simply have been unable to snow the residents here with all the claims, promises and biased survey presentation. Instead, they learned that many residents here are well educated, well informed and not easily fooled.

That statement is well supported by the multitude of letters and other voices that poured into The Union from its readers during the past several weeks. Those strongly worded missiles from readers have provided a long list of good reasons for shooting down the mine proposal.

Readers who go online to read commentaries published by The Union also see many additional reader comments — most of which agree with those opposing the mine opening.

But that's not all.

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Those of us who have our personal email address added at the bottom of our commentaries usually receive additional comments that aren't available to even online readers unless we choose to write about them.

Most are appreciative kudos, while the majority of the negative comments usually are only online. I'm speculating that those few who include a touch of rudeness prefer not to disclose their personal email address.

For those of us who are not paid for our frequent column contributions to The Union, it is the personal laudatory comments we get that provide a major portion of our rewards for the time we spend doing research, writing, editing and rewriting for our commentaries.

To nearly all such notes received in my personal email, I usually reply with a "thank you for taking the time to write" — even to the negative ones.

Who doesn't like to receive comments like this one last weekend from Robert Hubbard: "Right on point! Thank you, Darrell, for a well-thought-out analysis."

Or this one from Jezra: "Thank you for pointing out the big ifs that The Union's article about the push-pull absolutely failed to mention."

Those two comments appear online.

But one that I received in my personal email suggested that the Wallin survey company was doing a bit of cherry-picking in determining which respondents to include in the survey.

A Lake Wildwood reader, who asked not to be identified, wrote:

“Mr. Berkheimer, I do not know you, but I enjoy your articles. I particularly liked the one you did July 3 regarding the mine survey.

“I did get a call from that survey company. They had my phone number and said they would call me back if the time was not convenient. I am knowledgeable about the mine, and took the call.

“When the questions became specific to the mine (which I am against), they did not like my answers and I was disconnected.

“I live in LWW and was using a true land line so the disconnect was clearly on their end and they did not call back. I wonder how many people they disconnected until they got the answers they wanted.

“Just thought you might want to know this in case you do any kind of follow up. Thanks again for all the great articles.”

Another reader who also prefers to remain anonymous reported his pessimistic opinion of surveys with this comment: “I have never in my life (70 years worth) taken a survey that allowed honest answers. They are designed by businesses, non-profit or for profit, to get the best results, which is sell their product and make money.”

Which brings me to a comment made by George Boardman when we were chatting about the mine reopening issue. He noted: “If this proposal was economically viable, the big gold mining companies would be interested in the project. The fact that Rise Gold is struggling to raise capital tells you what the investment community thinks of the proposal.”

Darrell Berkheimer, who lives in Grass Valley, is a frequent contributor to The Union. He has eight books available through Amazon. His sixth, “Essays from The Golden Throne,” includes 60 columns published by The Union, plus a dozen western travel and photo essays. Contact him at mtmrnut@yahoo.com.

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Darrell Berkheimer: Mine survey lacks credibility

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 2, 2021

Darrell Berkheimer | Columnist

I find much to criticize and question regarding results of the survey on opening the Idaho-Maryland Mine, as paid for by Rise Gold and reported last week in The Union. In a nutshell, it lacks credibility and the conclusions announced are not justified.

I have read and analyzed each of the 23 questions that comprise the survey by the J. Wallin Opinion Research company. I have concluded it is written to obtain the best results possible in favor of the mine reopening.

Any skilled writer knows how to phrase questions to obtain the desired results. The wording of the survey questions are designed to do just that, to falsely indicate there is strong support throughout the county for the reopening of the mine.

My beginning criticisms question the numbers surveyed. As reported, 500 residents were questioned — 100 in each of the five Nevada County Commission districts. That's a small number considering the ease of conducting a survey in a geographical area as small as a single county, but a county with a population of 99,000.

Of that 500 total, 32.4% reported in Question 4 that they had not heard of the proposal to reopen the mine, or were unsure of the issues or circumstances involved. That immediately lowered the valid survey results to only 338 residents who were aware of at least some of the issues involved.

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Next is the question of how many of those 338 reside in Truckee, North San Juan, Penn Valley and Alta Sierra, areas which will experience little or no effects from the mine's daily operations.

A survey designed to provide a true reading of support, or lack of it, would concentrate on the area most affected by the proposed operation. In this case, the bulk of the survey should be conducted within a 3-mile radius of the proposed mine operation.

Now let's return to the deliberate wording of the questions to obtain the desired results. A good example is Question 3, which asks: "Would you be willing to consider supporting a new mining operation in Nevada County if it provided (the three services you identified) as the most important to your community?"

Notice the strong qualification in the question with the three words "if it provided ..." for the changes wanted by the respondent.

The five main issues identified by the 500 respondents as the most important ones facing the community are the economy/jobs, government, wildfires, homelessness and affordable housing. So the question is worded with the pretension that opening the mine would be a significant factor in solving the top three issues named by the respondent.

I maintain that the opening of the mine won't solve any of those five main issues. At best, it would only provide some tax money. But how those issues might be resolved will require considerable commitment by local elected officials and other community leaders. Some additional money alone won't do it.

Questions 5 through 20 attempt to allay the negative concerns of opposition residents by addressing the issues of environmental effects, dangers at the site, noise and vibration, water stewardship, air and water pollution, public safety and health risks, plus revenue, jobs and trust in the company.

The answers to all of those questions are based on the assumption the company will meet all of its claims listed as part of the various questions.

The highest percentage of those indicating potential support for the project in questions 5 through 13 was 35.6% when asked about the total jobs the project might provide. The most likely support on the other issues were only at 32% and 33%.

In questions 14 through 20 — on health risks, impact of heavy equipment, water and pollution issues, and trust in the company — the company received as much as 48 and 50% support. But again, it is evident that support is based solely on the company meeting all of its claims.

The company, however, is claiming the survey "demonstrates strong local support" of 59% (actually 58.4%) for county commissioners to approve the project. But notice this wording in that question: "if it meets all environmental and regulatory requirements, and the independent environmental impact report shows that the project causes minimal or no significant impacts?"

Those are some mighty big ifs.

And remember that 58.4% support for approval included 162 residents who had little or no knowledge of the issues involved, while the other 338 respondents involved some residents in Truckee and other outlying areas of the county.

The big question is how high would the percentage of opposition be if the bulk of the survey results came from residents within three miles.

And then, even if we feel strongly that Rise Gold is sincere in its desire and ability to meet all of its claims, how much damage might be caused by equipment failures, such as water pumps, and human mistakes or errors in a heavy residential community?

Will there be round-the-clock monitoring? Do workers sometimes fall asleep?

There simply are no guarantees, and too many ifs.

Also, one final thought: If we could rely on the accuracy of surveys and polls, Hillary Clinton would have been our president for four years.

Darrell Berkheimer, who lives in Grass Valley, is a frequent contributor to The Union. He has eight books available through Amazon. His sixth, "Essays from The Golden Throne," includes 60 columns published by The Union, plus a dozen western travel and photo essays. Contact him at mtmrnut@yahoo.com.

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Jeff Kane: Here's a better poll for reopening mine

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 26, 2021

Jeff Kane | Other Voices

During the past month, numerous Union readers published eloquent critiques of its article about the poll that claimed to reveal majority support for reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

That poll actually speaks less about the mine than Rise Gold's low opinion of us. Its pollster was J. Wallin Opinion and Research (jwallin.com). Justin Wallin, its CEO, describes himself on his website as a "marketing concept" strategist. He holds an MBA with an emphasis in marketing and strategy. In other words, he doesn't advertise himself to potential clients as a pollster, but as a marketer. And, as he mentioned to The Union, he's good at what he does.

J. Wallin surveyed 500 Nevada County residents during the week following June 10, 2021. I urge you to read the query script at https://www.risegoldcorp.com/uploads/content/JWallinOpinionResearchCountyofNevadaVoterSurveyToplines.pdf?fbclid=IwAR11VCtC5AC1WTHnEgQrTw8zvk3jJssQ3MlGoQObCWa8Zk-nwCdeDKuqzsc

Here's the opening line: "This is _____ with the Great West Policy Research Center, a regional opinion research organization."

Wait a minute. The Great West Policy Research Center? Try finding that outfit online. Why not just identify as J. Wallin Opinion and Research? Could it be that the other title sounds more poll-y and less market-y?

Trending Articles



The script goes on to describe the reopened mine as the finest gift to humankind since the opposable thumb, outdoing even Rise Gold's own hyperbole. Each glowing description of its harmlessness is followed by, "Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to support re-opening the Idaho-Maryland Mine?"

Just one example:

"All of the Idaho-Maryland Mine's operations will be conducted deep underground, shielding the community from noise and vibration. Structures on the surface will be fully sound-insulated, while the natural terrain, trees and distance from Grass Valley residents means the project will be virtually undetectable. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to support re-opening the Idaho-Maryland Mine?"

Talk about leading the witness. You've got to hand it to J. Wallin, marketers. Their "poll" is an ad meant to convince us that the 20-ton diesel trucks hauling a thousand tons of tailings down our roads 16 hours a day will "be fully sound-insulated," that "the project will be virtually undetectable," and from another of its questions, that the 3.5 million gallons of water the operation will pump out of the mine

every day isn't oceanic in a drought. A "poll" that considers us such gullible rubes deserves a counter-poll like this:

1. "Dewatering the mine may not only bring buried heavy metal toxins to the surface, but contaminate waterways between here and the Sacramento River. That much pumping might lower the water table, drying up the wells of hundreds of homeowners. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to support reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine?"

2. "The mine will pollute Nevada County's air even more than its current sorry state, graded F by the American Lung Association. Our kids already suffer twice the state's average asthma rate. As for greenhouse gases, mine operations will produce 9,000 metric tons per year — equivalent to the exhaust of 2,000 cars. When the mine's heavy-duty diesels aren't hauling, they're estimated to idle 200,000 vehicle minutes a year. And this project plans to go on until the year 2100, exposing our grandchildren to hazardous air their entire lifetimes without them even having any say in the matter. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to support re-opening the Idaho-Maryland Mine?"

3. "As a commercial venturer, Rise Gold looks spectacularly lame. It has never operated a gold mine, and its finances suggest it's the shakiest outfit since Ford's Edsel division. Now, having presented its disingenuous, manipulative, and intelligence-insulting poll, it shows itself as contemptuous of our community. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to support reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine?"

Having helped resist industrial mining in Nevada County over the past 35 years, I, for one, am tiring of the relentless battles. Sure, mining is part of our heritage, but it's faded to zero during the last century.

Our county supervisors must be aware that our major industries now, tourism and recreation, have been around long enough to be considered equally valid heritage. I'd encourage our supervisors to pass an ordinance permanently prohibiting industrial mining in our county.

Jeff Kane lives in Nevada City.

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Jim Weir: The Rise Gold survey

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 2, 2021

Jim Weir | Other Voices

My “Probability and Statistics” class in college was taught by a cantankerous old geezer. One day we got off onto a tangent about surveys. His advice: “If you want a survey to come out a particular way, just pick your data from folks that don’t have a dog in the fight.”

Certainly Rise Gold must have had a teacher like that in the way they picked their folks to come out with a “strong support” for the Idaho-Maryland Mine project.

Consider this: They picked 100 folks in each of the county’s five supervisorial districts to formulate their data. Think about it.

District 1 is mostly Nevada City, Banner Mountain, and the area around. They will have little, if any, impact on their homes or businesses. Not much of a dog in the fight, is there?

District 2 is mostly Alta Sierra, Lake of the Pines, and the area around. Again, practically no dog in the fight.

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District 3 is Grass Valley, McCourtney to the Nevada County Fairgrounds, Ridge Road, Cedar Ridge, and Brunswick Road to the Y. Nearly 100% of the impacts of the mine projects are in this area and there is one huge dog in this fight.

District 4 is from the fairgrounds west to the county line and includes Penn Valley, Lake Wildwood, North San Juan, and all the way out to Lake Camp Far West. For all intents and purposes, there will be zero to minimal impact on this area.

District 5 is all of eastern Nevada County from 5 Mile House to Truckee and all the way to the state line with Nevada. Not only is there no dog in the fight, but you’d be hard pressed to find a single dog hair in that part of the county.

Think, then, if you will, about how the data is skewed. One hundred percent of the impact is on one supervisorial district and the other four have somewhere between zero and a miniscule amount of impact.

Suppose — just suppose — we had a proposal to drain Lake Wildwood and make it the county garbage dump? District 4 would come out of their shoes screaming naughty words. Same for Lake of the Pines and District 2. How about a high-rise hotel on Broad Street in Nevada City? Or how about we extend and widen the runways at Truckee Airport to be able to handle heavy jets 24/7/365 in competition with Reno International?

This survey smacks of the inmates writing the business plan for the asylum.

Jim Weir is a retired Nevada County supervisor for District 3. He is vice president of engineering for RST Engineering in Grass Valley.

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Lew Sitzer: Need an independent survey

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 5, 2021

Lew Sitzer

Recently, I received a phone call asking me to participate in an independent survey regarding the Rise Gold mine proposal. I asked how it was funded, and the fellow said he was not at liberty to say. I was wary of biased efforts in favor or opposed to the mine.

After one or two questions, it was clear to me that the survey was front-loaded in favor of the mine. I said so to the man conducting the survey and he assured me that the survey was fair. I gave him the benefit of the doubt and continued.

The survey took about 20 minutes, and to be clear, the end of the survey did cover some of the negative consequences of the mine operations. But most of the survey repeatedly highlighted the advantages of opening the mine and was not at all a fair, unbiased or balanced questionnaire. Its results need to be questioned.

Clearly, there is a conflict of interest. Upon reading the article on the front page of The Union, we learned that the survey was funded by the mine owners. To do so and represent it as fair and balanced is very misleading to the public and questions their honesty.

The owners commented in The Union article that public comments about opening the mine were on the negative side. The owners were interested in the silent majority, however that could be determined.

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If we are to have a community survey, it needs to be constructed and conducted by local government. Surely there is a better way to assess the public than to have this kind of questionable approach in what would be a major enterprise with huge impact to the quality of our lives for now and into the distant future.

I believe The Union is attempting to report in a fair way on a very important local issue. It needs to dig deeper and research the track record of this company and the industry in general, as we all need to be better educated.

Lewis Sitzer

Nevada City

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Linda O'Kay: Let the 'silent majority' vote at the polls

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 9, 2021

Linda O'Kay

The June 26 front page edition of The Union states that "the majority of Nevada County residents support the business endeavor" of re-opening the Idaho-Maryland Mine, according to a small survey funded by Rise Gold itself.

This is so not true. I am surprised there is even a debate still going on based on the possibility of negative environmental issues alone.

Is it possible to let the people of Nevada County cast their opinion at the polls? Then we would know what the silent majority really thinks, contrary to what Rise Gold is telling us.

Linda O'Kay

Cedar Ridge

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Mark Hotsenpiller: Mine survey is worthless

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | July 2, 2021

Mark Hotsenpiller

So Ben Mossman hired someone to conduct a private survey about Rise Gold. Is anyone surprised what this survey reported? Such a survey is worthless. It wasn't independent, publicly informed, and probably did not have any scientific basis for accuracy. These are the hallmarks of a valid survey.

Mr. Mossman is obviously desperate to open the mine, yet clearly public opinion is against him. The last thing Grass Valley and Nevada County needs during a serious drought is a mining venture that uses and possibly pollutes millions of gallons of water. Mr. Mossman: Take your bogus survey and your mine and go home.

Mark Hotsenpiller

Grass Valley

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Corniglio Digli JULY 5, 2021

"Mr. Mossman: Take your bogus survey and your mine and go home."

Thank you, Mark Hotsenpiller.

REPLY 2 0

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Tom J. Behlmer: What Rise Gold's mailer left out

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 3, 2021

Tom J. Behlmer | Other Voices

Residents of the area have or will receive a mailer from Rise Gold Corp. It asks the recipient to return the self-addressed reply card if they support the mine, which presumably will be used to lobby the Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

I was amazed at what was left out. The mailer makes it sound as if Grass Valley is being blessed with the mine opportunity. If Rise Gold is permitted to operate for 80 years, for which they asked, can they be trusted to operate safely and honestly. The mailer does not inspire confidence. Here is the whole truth that was not mentioned.

I wonder why?

Ore trucks, according to the permit application, will have 100 dump runs per day, operating seven days a week, 14 hours per day. That means a truck emitting exhaust coming or going about every nine minutes. Rise's filings with the county said the trucks will not increase the absolute decibel level. They fail to mention the increase in the amount of noise rather than the absolute upper level.

A truck going by your house once a day is one thing,.One every 10 minutes is another matter.

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CEO Ben Mossman's last venture before joining Rise Gold, Banks Island Gold Ltd., owned the Yellow Giant Mine in British Columbia, Canada, which polluted tribal waters, went bankrupt, and left Canadians with a mess to clean up.

Ben Mossman and another Banks Island executive had 18 pollution charges filed against them personally. They were initially acquitted of the charges, then it was overturned, and now they're set to go to trial again. Why was this never mentioned in the mailer?

There was no mention of the risk to property owners of their wells going dry because Rise will pump out underground water, which will lower the water table and drag down property values near the mine. So far Rise will only pay to hook up about 30 homes to NID. In turn, this would lower long-term property tax revenue to the county.

The extracted ore will be dumped in Grass Valley, raising the possibility dust blows over the area. Silica dust can have severe health affects. Rise said they will use water spray to contain the dust in their operations. Can we trust them to fulfill this promise?

What could go wrong when a company self monitors? Ask PG&E, Wells Fargo (illegal sales practices), Enron, British Petroleum (Deep Water Horizon), SCE (gas leak), Union Carbide (Bhopal explosion) and Texas chemical plants that explode.

Rise claims that 300 jobs will be created. Really? The old Em Gold draft environmental impact report, for the same mine location, indicated there would be 30 employees for a period of approximately five years during the dewatering phase. Rise claims local jobs will

be created. Even at the $95,000 salary that Rise claims, are there enough people locally that have the skills or desire to work underground, assuming the 300 job figure is not inflated?

An analysis by retired bankruptcy judge, Randall Newsome, (https://www.theunion.com/opinion/columns/randall-j-newsome-rise-gold-show-me-the-money/) raised severe doubts that Rise will have money to deliver on its promises as the amount needed far exceeds its current financial ability.

A nightmare scenario could occur where Rise runs out of money after pumping and lowering the water table to a depth where new wells are prohibitively expensive to drill or operate. Their paid hydrologist studies thinks this is highly unlikely. I can't help but reflect back on their paid traffic noise studies and its conclusions. A risk homeowners prefer to not to take.

Lastly, with ore trucks, employee commutes and supply trucks, traffic near the mine will significantly increase. Roads most impacted are: Bennett, Brunswick and Highway 174. They have bisecting streets that feed traffic that crosses on coming lanes, creating an unsafe situation. Think of the game Frogger. Plus Bennett and Highway 174 are twisty, two lane roads with limited visibility in places, creating potential for head-on accidents, which I have narrowly avoided. Our country roads were not designed to be boulevards.

Why does the mailer make no mention of these facts? Can Rise be trusted to carry out their safety and mitigation promises?

Please consider the above before returning the mailer response, or send the reply card to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors with "No Mine" written on it. The address: Eric Rood Administrative Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Board of Supervisors' Chambers, Nevada City, CA 95959. You can also express your concern to your local supervisor by emailing bdsupervisors@co.nevada.ca.us.

Tom J. Behlmer lives in Grass Valley.

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Tony Lauria: Too smart to fall for mine mailer

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 19, 2021

Tony Lauria | Other Voices

I'm sending my recently received Rise Gold mailer straight to the Board of Supervisors with remarks saying I do not approve of letting this company bring back a dangerous industry for their profit. I think this is the best use for their response mailer.

Their pamphlet says, "a brighter future." Is this a brighter future for our residential community? Eighty years of heavy industrial operations, blasting, drilling 24/7, draining millions of gallons of our groundwater, 36,000 massive diesel truckloads per year spewing exhaust into the air, silica dust and asbestos released from serpentine bedrock, toxic tailings piled higher than the trees, potential for wells to run dry with no alternative water source, home values possibly plummeting, constant unbearable noise possbily heard for miles around, wildlife displaced, Wolf Creek affected, contaminated material brought to the surface, energy use equivalent to 5,000 homes, endless dewatering in a drought, traffic congestion, transporting explosives through neighborhoods, storing explosives on site during wildfire season, residential communities subjected to the chance of constant vibrations and pollution.

Are the risks and realities something we want for our beautiful foothills? Heavy industrial operations have a legacy of severe impacts to humans and the environment. There is a reason deep bedrock gold mining ceased decades ago. Most mining sites are still contaminated with the results of those operations.

None of the facts we know about deep bedrock gold mining seem to be represented in the statements publicized by Rise Gold. I don't see "safe" as a way to describe those operations. "Protecting our natural environment" has never been achieved by the gold mining industry. How can the exhaust of 100 daily diesel trucks loads be "minimized." Why do they say "emergency service teams available to respond to emergency situations?" Is this alluding to the obvious, that mining operations are dangerous?

Nevada County is not "struggling to build a stronger economy." Our county is booming with construction, housing projects, new retirement complexes, tech industry success, new shopping centers, small businesses and jobs.

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In my opinion, we would exit the dark ages of the past, and avoid reopening the unsavory toxic legacy of gold mining. Can you imagine new tech, or any other progressive business, wanting to set up their base in a heavy industrial mining town? What comes to mind when you think of a mining town? Would that be a place you would want to live and raise a family?

Consider sending your mailer, in an envelope with a stamp, marked to oppose the mine, to: Eric Rood Administrative Center, Board of Supervisors 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City, CA 95959. Or, send your own personal note to the Nevada Count Board of Supervisors.

Tony Lauria lives in Grass Valley.

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Walt Froloff: Rise Gold's proposal is a scam

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 1d ago

Walt Froloff | Other Voices

It's old, it's cold, it's gold! That's what this is all about, money for the out-of-range rich and snake oil salesmen, I believe.

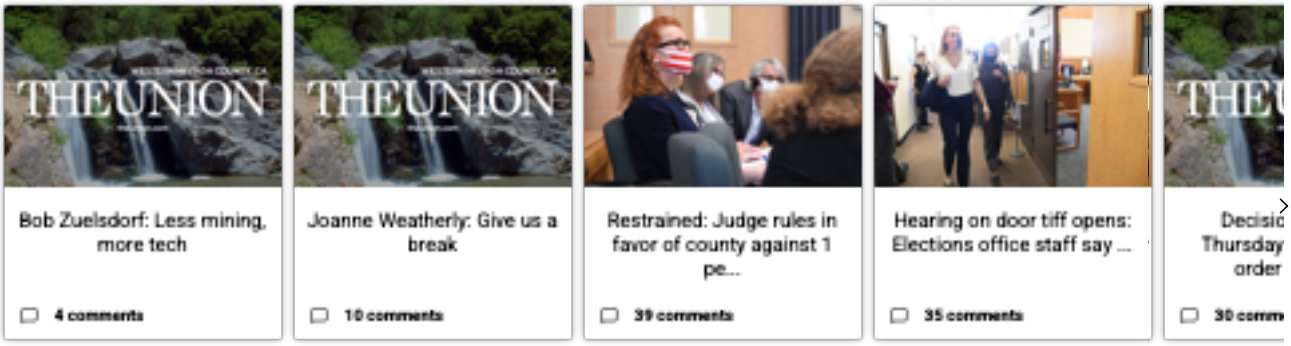
Even before reading the draft environmental impact report, most will conclude that for Nevada County to even consider reviving a mining project in Grass Valley is on its face strange and repugnant.

Strange because to open such an ecologically, economically, community, culturally, and socially disruptive business tortures common sense.

Repugnant because it makes no business logic from any position, save the one where proponents raise money, enrich themselves and then flee the country, leaving investors and the people of Grass Valley to clean up potentially enormous damage and harm.

As you may know, this scenario played out on a much smaller scale in Canada, where the CEO of Rise Gold with a different company conceived this practice and I think could be a dress rehearsal for here.

Trending Articles



Perhaps the Board of Supervisors should take a field trip to any of the public gold mine parks for a look into the past. Keep in mind that gold mine closings happened when regulations were non-existent. The mines were closed down then because they became unprofitable. That was when the costs were only considered for the owner's profitability, not inclusive of the true costs. Back then, owners could just take the money and run, and some did.

Today one needs to consider issues such as large wildfires, climate change creating challenges to energy uses and power outages, fire ignition and control, mass population evacuations, dry wells, hazardous waste disposal, toxicity to the environment and containment of contamination, population density increases, regulatory requirements, winds carrying toxic dust from exposed tailing, etc., etc.

It is well known that Rise Gold is undercapitalized. I think county money should be spent seriously investigating Rise Gold and the proponents of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

The draft environmental impact report reads to me like a high school report, liberally sprinkling general policy and motherhood edicts from various public agencies, drawing sweeping economic issues under the "volunteer cleanup" action, playing a corporate entity isolation game to disable the chain of liability and slip under regulatory controls.

The most egregious violation is the absence of any real cost analysis for any of the worst-case scenarios that must be addressed.

To be fair, to even think for one second that an environmental impact report will or even can address all of the issues is absurd. This entire reopening for a few "high paying" community jobs? Absurd. The gold mines were no longer profitable 50-plus years ago and [illegible] a time when hardly any of the true costs were addressed in the economics calculation. Today, I don't believe there is enough gold in the entire United States that can pay for this potential Chernobyl and EPA superfund site.

Financially speaking, Rise Gold is grossly undercapitalized and is dangling the jobs carrot — laughable. The only jobs created by the

Idaho-Maryland Mind reopening proposal are the county government jobs to evaluate the proposal.

We the citizens will remember how our tax money was spent and how quickly our government leaders jumped to jeopardize the community. And how they failed to remember the gold mine reopening debacle in San Juan just a few miles north and a few years back. Where is common sense?

Walt Froloff lives in Grass Valley.

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Yasha Aginsky: The mine's a rip-off project

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 2h ago

Yasha Aginsky | Other Voices

The other day, I opened up my mailbox to find, as you probably did, a piece of fancy propaganda from Rise Grass Valley urging us to return prepaid postcards to them to give to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to show our support for their mine.

Curious about the contradiction of an image on the cover of a riverbed covered by some kind of foamy gas accompanied by the words "The Science is Clear," I read on, struck by the lack of verifiable science in this pamphlet and the reckless use of language.

"Green gold?" Do they mean the mine would be good for the environment? Who knows of even one mine that is "safe, modern, well-regulated and environmentally sound?"

They write that their "plan to reopen the mine is safe and responsible." Their plan could be anything at all, but what about the mine itself? Resource extraction in a populated area is neither safe nor responsible.

They promise greater prosperity in the local economy. Is that because the profits from the gold they extract will be invested in our community rather than deposited into their investors' bank accounts wherever they are? Where will the profits go?

Trending Articles



"Good jobs?" Maybe they are referring to the estimated 312 mine employees they propose to hire, of whom they predict 205 will be recruited from current residents. Those jobs are estimated, not guaranteed, and "recruited" does not mean hired.

But do you want to work in a mine? Do you want your children to work in a mine? Is working underground in a mine shaft a "safe and satisfying career" with "exceptional opportunity"?

"Economic benefits?" How can they claim "new local spending of $50 million a year," much less 300 jobs that it would create? What are those imaginary jobs and why only 300? What are they talking about?

When it comes to extracting minerals from the earth, what does "green-friendly" really mean? "Minimizing the impacts to neighbors?" Tell that to the real estate agent who tries to sell the ex-neighbors' houses when they move away. Neighboring properties will lose their value.

With all the careful research recently cited in the articles in these pages, it is absurd to state that mining will have "no significant impacts on air, water or traffic," and who is to say what "significant" means?

Of course, everyone who lives here may be impacted by the increased traffic, dust, noise, air and water pollution. Do you want to reduce the quality of our lives here even a "minimally, not significant" amount? I don't. And for whose profit?

Disregard the gold miner nostalgia, the promise of riches and defeat this rip-off project. Let your supervisors know that you don't support Rise Grass Valley, and send back those prepaid postcards marked "No Support!"

Yasha Aginsky is a documentary filmmaker and resident of Nevada City.

SECTION TITLE

I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-bill-drake-handling-of-mine-meeting-draws-admiration/article_ab01fd70-9f96-11ee-9eba-ebf3a9ad98ea.html

Ideas & Opinions — Bill Drake: Handling of mine meeting draws admiration

Bill Drake | Letter to the Editor
Dec 21, 2023

This is to express my admiration for the Nevada County Board of Supervisors for how they handled the Idaho-Maryland Mine issue on December 13 and 14.

Proponents of the mine wanted the Board to determine that a vested right to resume gold mining has existed ever since the mine closed in the 1950s. This is in spite of alternative uses of the property, and an absence of gold mining, over the past seven decades. If true, this would let them avoid a use permit and more scrutiny than otherwise.

The supervisors spent many hours studying the issue before the hearing. The county's staff lawyer made an excellent case that Rise Gold's claim that they had a vested right to re-open the mine was not valid. The board members considered both points of view. And they unanimously supported the most logical perspective: the staff's view was correct and a use permit would be required for mining to resume.

Each member of the board and of their support staff deserves a lot of credit for all they devoted to this issue and for how it was resolved.

Bill Drake, Nevada City

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-bruce-rayner-vested-rights/article_b69e6e00-4e7b-11ee-89e9-db354fb7206f.html

Ideas & Opinions — Bruce Rayner: Vested rights?

Bruce Rayner | Other Voices
Sep 9, 2023

This article for Other Voices addresses the legal basis for the Rise Gold petition to allow mining due to a corporation's claimed vested rights to the property in question. Pardon me for the detail here, but the reader will have to do a bit of research to see the extent of the mess that could be created by such a petition.

The idea that a corporation can move into a small town and claim the right to use property for mining purposes is not new. Many states in our country have examples of mining activity that disrupt the environment of a locality for corporate financial gain. Close to home, Riverside County, CA is now embroiled with a similar petition to allow mining in an area surrounded by residential properties. Here is a link to that story:

https://nbcpalmsprings.com/2023/03/27/mining-operation-seeks-boards-recognition-of-vested-rights-to-expand/

(Go to The Union e-edition to see the link that can be pasted in your browser).

As mentioned in the article, The Federal Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 is primary law that provides guidelines for determining vested rights. It also regulates adverse environmental impacts before and after mining operations, even 80 years hence.

The real problem is not the nebulous topic of vested rights, but one of a potential legal battle and financial cost to support the County BOS decision. In the case of Rise Gold vs Nevada County, does our county have the financial and legal backing that Rise Gold has with their legal team of back east attorneys?

At best, the new legal ploy by Rise gold would be thrown out. Yet, the current court cases for other mining claims in our country currently on court calendars make it clear: If there is enough money on the table, a good corporate legal team will find a way to bypass local ordinances and zoning.

At worst, the Rise Gold attorneys could pressure our county into an extended legal battle, draining our finances. Do we really have the legal team in place to deal with such a threat? A failure here could have a very negative impact on our lifestyle and financial health of the county. For our future, it would seem better go with our current culture of high tech and clean industry.

What if we chose to go with Rise Gold? Enough has been said elsewhere about damages to wells, destruction of water sources such as Wolf Creek, extra truck traffic and so on.

Do we really want Rise Gold? It may be too late. The way of the future these

days is certainly not driven by the will of the people, rather by an ever increasing presence of large corporations, new laws, and government in general.

We are in real danger with the threat of the new actions by Rise Gold. We should have told them NO in the beginning, before they decided mount an attack on our BOS.

We can also learn from another type of mining movement in our country. Crypto mining, companies with high tech, huge computer installations that extract data for bitcoin, are now present in most states, after China told us they would not allow them. The companies move into a town, buy land, use huge amounts of power that produces much noise, then promise employment and local tax revenue. If the town refuses to follow, they apply legal pressure. Check out the history of these companies on google, many of which have gone bankrupt. When they choose a location, they become a drain on power infrastructure, local resources and the environment.

Did I hear anyone say, “That sounds like Rise Gold!”. Cross your fingers and hope we’re not too late to take preventative action.

Bruce Rayner, Nevada city, is an engineering consultant now active in matters of PGE power delivery.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/cea-foundation-weighs-in-on-rise-gold-s-vested-rights-petition-claiming-right-to-mine/article_f294647e-7ce2-11ee-8d25-f3ebc4b69d79.html

CEA Foundation weighs in on Rise Gold's vested rights petition: Claiming 'right to mine' after 67-year closure called absurd

CEA Foundation | Other Voices
Nov 7, 2023

Nevada County Supervisors will soon consider whether or not to approve an eleventh-hour petition to grant "vested rights" to Rise Grass Valley, a subsidiary of Rise Gold. The Canadian-headquartered junior mining company is aiming to reopen a gold mine that shut down 67 years ago. To inform their decision, local opposition leader CEA Foundation has provided a review and analysis of the petition.

Following the regulatory changes initiated by Nevada County in 1954, mining projects were required to obtain a Use Permit. As an existing and continuing operation in 1954, the Idaho-Maryland Mine was probably exempt from the requirement at that time.

Under both state case law and County code, a property owner may acquire a vested right to continue a use that existed at the time zoning regulations changed. But the right to continue is not permanent, and the burden of proof is on the applicant to establish the vested rights.

According to the CEA Foundation review, the Rise Grass Valley Vested Rights Petition ignores clear mandates in the County's Land Use and Development

Code which hold that any vested right to mine expires once a nonconforming use is discontinued for one year.

The mine shut down in 1956. Assets were liquidated shortly thereafter. The mine was then allowed to re-flood. All mining had ceased by 1957 and the mine has not operated since. Once the mine was abandoned, vested rights to continue mining were presumably lost.

"The notion that Rise could retain a legal right to resume mining that was abandoned over sixty years ago is absurd," said CEA Foundation President Ralph Silberstein. "Petitioning for vested rights so late in the approval process is an act of desperation, apparently in response to the County Planning Commission's unanimous recommendations to deny the project."

Rise's Petition, however, provides a narrative of continuing operations covering the period from 1956 to the present. To achieve this, evidence such as an owner being "...convinced the Mine would be operational again...", a third party running a sawmill on adjacent lands, and salvaging old surface tailings to be sold as aggregate, are used to build a story about continuous operations at the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

But the CEA Foundation review came to a different conclusion: that the story doesn't hold up either legally or historically. An owner's "intent" to resume mining doesn't qualify for vested rights. And while sawmills and aggregate operations did happen from time to time, both activities are distinct from the core business of gold mining that would be required to qualify for vested rights.

In the Petition, Rise relies heavily on selected passages of the 1996 Hansen

Brothers case, which awarded vested rights to an aggregate processing operation. However, the Hansen ruling was made under very different and more restrictive conditions. While Hanson Brothers did pause one type of quarrying for a period of time, they kept the business operational and never abandoned their plant, equipment, or utilities. In addition, rights were awarded specific to a single work product that produced an ongoing revenue stream – river and hillside rock combined to sell for aggregate.

"If anything, a careful reading of the Hansen case further diminishes Rise's claim of vested rights", said Silberstein. CEA Foundation's review concludes that almost all of the Rise Petition misses the main point – that there is ample evidence the mine was abandoned after 1956, and any vested rights were lost within a year. For example:

• There has been no recurrence of gold mining at the Idaho-Maryland Mine since it shut down.

• The EPA has determined it is an abandoned mine.

• Ben Mossman, recent CEO of Rise Gold, stated "...it has been closed since 1956."

Nevada County Supervisors will consider Rise's Vested Rights Petition in a public hearing at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, December 13 in the Board chambers, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City; with a second day added Thursday, December 14, if necessary to accommodate public testimony. Members of the public are encouraged to attend. Public comment will be restricted to historical testimony related to the Petition.

If the Board denies the Petition, the County will resume processing Rise's application to open the Idaho-Maryland Mine and schedule a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors early in 2024 for the final vote on the Environmental Impact Report and Use Permit.

A CEA Foundation review of the historical aspects of the Petition can be found at https://bit.ly/CEA-Historical-Analysis-Rise-VR. For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: www.MineWatchNC.org.

Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. www.cea-nc.org. CEA Foundation is the leader of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine. www.MineWatchNC.org.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/rise-gold-doesnt-have-vested-rights-we-do/article_50fcc2d8-67ab-11ee-8116-838d712b89f6.html

Rise Gold doesn't have vested rights. We do.

Concerned Citizen's Roundtable | Other Voices
Oct 11, 2023

Nevada County's seal depicts a gold-panning forty-niner. Those prospectors are gone, now, replaced by investment firms.

Mining corporations uniformly tout their schemes as ecologically safe and clean, but our experience tells us otherwise as we've coped, over the last four decades, with San Juan Gold Corporation, Siskon, Emgold, and now Rise Gold.

We know these operations boom and then bust. We know they wreck the land, decimate wildlife, and foul the earth, air, and water. And that's in normal operation, which can't anticipate catastrophic mistakes and failures. And we know they'll make a mess that our grandchildren will have to clean up. The next time you're in Memorial Park, check out the stream running beside the kids' playground. It's fenced off and bears signs warning that it's toxic runoff from a mine that was last worked in 1956.

For whatever benefits the Idaho-Maryland mine may bring, it will drain our well water, gobble our electric power, foul Wolf Creek, generate intolerable noise and heavy traffic, and poison our air. It will devastate our community's quality of life.

That's why the Nevada County Planning Commission voted unanimously in May to recommend that our Board of Supervisors reject both the proposal's Environmental Impact Report and its Use Permit application.

But the applicant, Rise Gold, still has a stubborn foot in the door. It's petitioned the Board for "vested rights," claiming that since the mine has been in constant operation, it should be allowed to continue.

Rise's argument is outrageous: no one's operated the mine for 65 years. The Board can deny Rise's petition simply on that basis, but there's a more serious reason to deny it, too. If granted vested rights, Rise Gold can crank up that day, ignoring every regulation in place since 1958. Imagine a mining operation in and beneath Grass Valley, 24 hours daily for 80 years, unrestricted by any environmental or health regulation. Our community would soon be uninhabitable.

Rise Gold's petition is so preposterous that we wonder why it was even submitted. Some say it's a "hail Mary," a desperate final attempt. Some say it's Rise's attorneys' appetite for billable hours. Some say it's a delaying tactic until it can conjure its next ploy...and then the next ploy, on and on. Its former CEO, sentenced in September for his previous endeavor's environmental crimes, told the L.A. Times that eventually they would wear us down. But that malignant persistence won't come cheap. Rise Gold's investors will never see gold, only legal bills.

Our Board of Supervisors will rule on Rise's petition for vested rights in a public hearing at Rood Center Wednesday and Thursday, December 13 and 14. A massive showing of residents will demonstrate that we will resolutely, tirelessly defend our community.

Concerned Citizens Roundtable, Nevada City: Tim Ogburn, Jeff Kane, Rondal Snodgrass, Charlie Brock, Yasha Aginsky, Kathy Ogburn, Jeff Gold, Randall Newsome, Rob Agrimonti

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-jeff-gold-show-our-community-strength-dec-13/article_327d0e96-8fbd-11ee-8f57-f36bbab4cdf9.html

Ideas & Opinions — Jeff Gold: Show our community strength Dec. 13

Jeff Gold | Letter to the Editor
Dec 1, 2023

On December 13 the most important decision about our community's future will be made by the Board of Supervisors, when they evaluate and vote on Rise Gold's new application to immediately open the Idaho-Maryland Mine based on Rise's position that they have 'vested rights' to do so. This is Rise Gold's attempt to dodge the fact that our County Planning Commission voted 5-0 to recommend denying it a use permit.

Rise Gold's strategy is ridiculous! Yet, Rise Gold submitted 2,000 pages of historic Union news clippings interspersed with bogus legal arguments to create the illusion "...once a mine...always a mine" for their Brunswick site. Their 'vested rights' position ignores our County codes and General Plan and is contrary to State and Federal law and court rulings.

I've lived in Nevada County for 50 years and traveled by the Brunswick site countless times. There was once the Bohemia sawmill and the aggregate operation. But, these are now gone, there's been NO sign of gold mining in those 50 years, and the record shows the mine was shut down and abandoned in 1956. There are NO 'vested rights' when a land use has not been sustained.

Please come to the Board of Supervisors' public hearing on Dec. 13 to show our community strength opposed to this Mine and this outrageous notion about 'vested rights'.

Jeff Gold, Nevada City

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-jeff-kane-encourage-supervisors-to-reject-rise-golds-vested-rights/article_e1f2dea2-8fc0-11ee-9ea3-9ff1f8ccd2d4.html

Ideas & Opinions — Jeff Kane: Encourage Supervisors to reject Rise Gold's "vested rights"

Jeff Kane | Letter to the Editor
Dec 1, 2023

Rise Grass Valley (RGV), a foreign corporation, wishes to re-open the Idaho-Maryland mine. In May, the Nevada County Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend that our County Supervisors reject RGV's Environmental Impact Report and deny it a use permit, as the project would materially impair our community's water, air, traffic, and peace over the next eighty years.

On December 13 and 14 RGV will try getting around that decision by asking the County to grant it "vested rights." It should be allowed to mine, so it claims, because it's been doing so since 1956.

Flashing neon preposterous! In my forty-plus years living here, I haven't seen anyone doing a lick of work there, and neither has anyone else. Nevertheless, the Board of Supervisors is bound to consider Rise's petition.

This struggle has been going on too long, wasting residents' energy and the County's resources. It ought to be clear by now how resolutely our community opposes this industrial devastation. By showing up at the meeting--at the Rood Center in Nevada City--we can support our Supervisors in rejecting Rise's so-called "vested rights," and finally end its unwelcome intrusion.

Jeff Kane, Nevada City

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-jim-bair-rise-gold-corp-has-a-right-to-do-what/article_d9498ba8-954b-11ee-bd74-470b9f9d3e96.html

Ideas & Opinions — Jim Bair: Rise Gold Corp. has a right to do what?

Jim Bair | Other Voices
Dec 8, 2023

Remember a time when you had a nagging need to “tell it like it is”? I have that feeling about Rise Gold Corp. (Rise), which has resorted to legal intimidation of our County government to force allowing the Idaho-Maryland Mine to reopen. While an astonishing 15,000 plus pages in the County record and thousands of public comments have addressed the environmental impacts, Rise has launched a new strategy.

Rise now claims that they can mine “without limitation or restriction” because they have vested rights (p58, Idaho-Maryland Mine Vested Right Petition, September 1, 2023). This is a new theory to many of us and arises from zoning law. There are thousands of pages of details [CH1] [JB2] [JB3] regarding the Rise petition for vested rights, but here is my brief understanding in preparation for the Board of Supervisors (BOS) Hearing on Rise’s vested rights petition, Dec. 13, 9AM at the Rood Center.

Zoning law protects landowners’ use of their land, not only the owners’ use, but the use by their neighbors. A classic example is a landowner’s right to live in an agricultural zone and not have a garbage dump constructed next door. While the nuisances of a garbage dump are obvious, the County can permit

the dump (nonconforming use) under certain conditions (as happened in western Nevada County).

Zoning is relatively new (early 1900s) compared to other land use controls. Today, it's not uncommon for a landowner to use his property for a legal 'business' and then have a municipality zone the area to exclude the 'business' use. That's unfair — consider a cattle rancher who after decades of ranching is told agriculture is no longer a legal use (nonconforming). Governments are attuned to the needs of businesses and have legislated vested rights so an owner can continue land uses that existed before new zoning and without a permit. In general, this is only fair, and if all the subsequent property owners in the "zone" know that previous uses like cattle ranching can be continued, they should be OK.

Yet determining vested rights can be tricky. Suppose a long-time owner of land zoned 'light manufacturing' (M1) has his land rezoned as residential. Later the owner discovers coal under his property and proposes to develop a coal mine. Does the owner have a vested right to extract coal in the residential zone? No, because there is no history of coal mining before the zoning change.

Vested rights are based on use before and within one year after the zoning change. But landowners can say, "I planned to mine for coal and discussed it with others, etc., so my right is vested by my intentions." The owner may produce letters, witnesses, and other "evidence" of the intention to mine, but unless they continued mining from before rezoning, they can be denied vested rights.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine stopped operating in 1954. In 1956, the Mine was completely abandoned (all equipment removed and the mine tunnels allowed

to flood). Subsequently, the property had other uses such as a sawmill. It changed ownership in complicated ways that included the property being subdivided into building-sized parcels. But Rise wants to restart mining claiming that previous owners intended to mine.

Case law has established (e.g., When Real Property Rights Vest in California..., Santa Clara Law Review, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1-1-98) that vested rights do not apply to a mine that has remained idle for over one year. The lack of required reclamation plans (how the area will be restored after mining) is evidence there was no intention to reopen.

But Rise is arguing, 'once a mine always a mine' even though it has been abandoned for 67 years. It's possible the BOS could accept that claim, thus bypassing the permit process (and the EIR). However, if the BOS does not recognize Rise's vested rights claim, Rise will likely proceed to court, an expensive and very different process. The BOS may appreciate our support, not only for rejecting vested rights but also if Rise decides to litigate.

Comments at the BOS Hearing on December 13, are required to address the history of the Mine. Even if attendees don't comment, our presence will be counted by the BOS. Note, if you want to be able to participate as a party in future litigation, you should state your objection at this hearing to gain standing and then seek a legal alliance with other participants in the court process.

Jim Bair is Leader of the UUCM Stop the Mine Task Force in Grass Valley, a former Planning Commissioner, a supporter of several local nonprofits, a KVMR "Sage," and a retired Scientist.

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-randall-j-newsome-vested-rights-rise-grass-valley-s-last-gasp-we-can/article_b4dcdebe-8fab-11ee-b0b9-0f245117929c.html

FEATURED

Ideas & Opinions — Randall J. Newsome: “Vested rights” Rise Grass Valley’s last gasp? We can only hope

Randall J. Newsome | Other Voices
Dec 1, 2023

Nevada County officials and residents spent countless hours and tens of thousands of dollars over the last four years reviewing and eviscerating Rise Grass Valley’s flawed application for a conditional use permit to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine. After the Nevada County Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the permit be denied, Rise Grass Valley (“RGV”) decided that it didn’t need that silly old permit after all. It now asserts that it has a vested right to reopen the mine regardless of what the County says. In support of this assertion, it has submitted 80 pages of mind-numbing prose accompanied by some 2000 pages of newspaper clippings; third-hand declarations vouching, among other things, for the intentions of dead people (who don’t make very good witnesses); and other papers of equally questionable evidentiary value.

The long and short of RGV’s argument is that the Idaho-Maryland mine has

been in continuous operation, or at least tried to continuously operate, from 1851 to the present and was engaged in a legal nonconforming use when Nevada County’s first zoning ordinance was enacted in 1954. Thus, it allegedly has a vested right to continue engaging in that nonconforming use without complying with the County’s zoning laws. The legal and factual basis for this Hail Mary ploy has been thoroughly debunked by other contributors to The Union, including the CEA Foundation. (The Union, Other Voices, November 7, 2023). But a couple of points bear repeating.

First, gold mining hasn’t been conducted on the Idaho-Maryland property since 1956, some 67 years ago. According to the California Supreme Court, it doesn’t matter that after 1956 a saw mill operated on the property for a while, or that decades ago waste rock was scraped off of the site for a few months, because “the continued nonconforming use must be similar to the use existing at the time the zoning ordinance became effective.” Hansen Brothers Enterprises, Inc. v. Board of Supervisors, 12 Cal.4th 533, 552 (1976). None of the activities on the Idaho-Maryland site over the last 67 years bore any resemblance to industrial gold mining.

Second, “nonuse is not a nonconforming use. . .and reuse may be prohibited if a nonconforming use has been voluntarily abandoned. “ Hansen Brothers at 552. It isn’t enough that someone allegedly wanted or intended to reopen the mine. They actually had to do it. The passage of 67 years without anyone operating a gold mine on the property in and of itself ought to constitute an abandonment of the right to do so. It’s 66 years longer than the County’s Land Use and Development Code allows. But it’s not just the passage of time that proves the point. In 1956, gold mining on the property ceased; all of the mining equipment was sold; the mine thereafter was allowed to flood with

millions of gallons of water; the mine operator filed a petition to liquidate in bankruptcy; and the bankruptcy trustee sold the Idaho-Maryland real estate to a private buyer who did not thereafter attempt to mine gold on the property. If that isn’t an abandonment of a nonconforming use, it’s hard to imagine what would be.

Finally, after fours years of public resource expenditures and distractive community tumult over the merits of RGV’s Environmental Impact Report and use permit application, why are we only now hearing about vested rights? If RGV really believed that it had a vested right, it wouldn’t have needed to spend the time and money to apply for a permit to reopen the mine. It’s highly doubtful that RGV’s legal counsel simply overlooked this potentially dispositive argument until now. Regardless of the claim’s lack of merit, RGV should be deemed to have waived its vested rights claim by failing to raise it sooner. The only conceivable purpose for raising it now is to further the strategy publicly articulated by RGV’s former CEO Ben Mossman—to bury Nevada County in expensive litigation until it finally acquiesces to RGV’s demands.

That’s why it’s important for the community to attend the December 13 hearing at the Rood Center commencing at 9:00 AM. The Board of Supervisors (wisely) has limited public comment to presentations regarding the history of the property. But a large attendance at the meeting will not only signal how important this matter is to the community, but also that the opposition to RGV’s scheme is undiminished and unyielding, both now and for the long haul.

SECTION TITLE

I. **The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine**

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. **The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine**

III. **News Articles**

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-bob-walker-talking-from-experience-no-speculation-here/article_cae00e4e-42c5-11ee-9b52-5789765a5689.html

Ideas & Opinions — Bob Walker: Talking from experience, no speculation here

Bob Walker | Other Voices
Aug 25, 2023

All I read is negative speculation on the proposed mine. I will give to you the facts and the truth as a former miner, timberman and a Korean Vet who has lived here 65 years.

The articles in The Union about the mine and the impact on the environment and well water is speculation at this point. You can take it from me, as a miner. I have been there, in the tunnels working in the mines.

It would be a big mistake to not allow the mines to operate. A mine would be a tremendous asset to the county as long as reasonable laws and regulations are set forth and adhered to.

If there is a well water issue the mining company will need to rectify it. There is always a resolution no matter what the issue arises.

There are hundreds of new homes being built in our area

New homes equals two cars per home, water for bathing, flushing toilets and watering yards. There is far more water usage in the new homes, than would be used in mining. The people that are worried about their wells going dry-

doesn't that mean that these folks are already into the mines property? The mines mineral rights go down 150 feet. This is in your deed to your property.

Regarding the rock in the mines, whatever the rock is, the mining company will find a use for it. The rock they haul out should go to a crusher and then people would use it for construction for all these new homes coming in, the highways and driveways because it is a usable product. Crushed mine rock is a product that is sharp all the way around and will stay in one spot. River aggregate has a round part and it is always trying to find its way back to the river, it will not stay in the same spot.

We need more Peace Officers and fire protection for our area. We do not have enough as it is. The mine would fund these positions.

How many people that are opposed to the mine have gold rings, gold teeth, trinkets, computers, and use cell phones with parts that came from a mine? Gold is a very good element. It is a marvelous electrical conductor that is hard to corrode, that is why it is used in the electronic industry. This gold is coming from somewhere, why not from our community, the benefits out weight the bad.

The mines are very safe, even more safe than driving on Nevada County roads. They are ruled by MSHA, which is federally regulated, not state regulated and they are tough! Inspectors come into the mine and check your work and they mean business.

Being an Industrial Electrician my cords had to have 'MSHA' on them. They had to be approved because of the caps for blasting. It had to say MSHA or you had to take them out for safety. The government stops mining if any

issues arise, it is regulated. They will shut you down and red flag you. I was very strict when I worked in the mines.

I don't know of anyone that worked the mines that died because they worked the mines. I didn't die or become ill because I worked in the mines and I am still pretty darn healthy.

The history of Nevada County and Grass Valley, state that there was no Great Depression in Nevada County because of the mining, that is a known fact.

Don't let Grass Valley become 'Asphalt Valley'. There was a survey taken and 85 percent of the people in Nevada County are from Los Angeles and San Francisco areas. No experience, just speculation.

Our area flourished with what the mines were able to supply. You have to look at all of those pretty homes that were built during The Depression when the rest of the country was dying. This community did not know there was a Depression. It is well noted!

I wish to thank all the ladies and men that I worked with in the mining and timber industry. May the good Lord bless you and your families.

Bob Walker has lived in Nevada County since 1957 and has spent his entire career as a Timberman and Miner of large operations.

THE UNION

YOUR AD HERE »

Christian Stewart: Hypocritical mine opponents obstructing clean-up of Centennial site

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | November 1, 2021

Christian Stewart | Other Voices

One of the lesser discussed aspects of the Idaho-Maryland Mine reopening is the rehabilitation of the Centennial site near downtown that was once used as a dumping ground for defunct mid-20th century mining operations.

More recently it has been a haven for homeless encampments, drug abuse and is a known fire hazard in the community.

Rise Grass Valley has proposed to pay for an extensive and essential environmental cleanup of the site and has initiated a review process with California's Department of Toxic Substances Control to rehab the site. No mining is proposed at all for Centennial, just clean up and grading so that it can be used for future needed commercial uses.

Regardless of how you feel about the mine, we should all agree that the cleanup of the Centennial site is a good thing for Nevada County.

Yet, Community Environmental Advocates — the people behind the opposition to reopening the mine — has come out against the environmental cleanup process at Centennial.

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Tom Behlmer: LaMalfa not serving his district
18 comments



Emily Raym need to r stand
16 comme

The group's rationale for opposing the cleanup strains the bounds of logic. According to their written objection to the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the existing mine tailings and the vegetation that has grown in the tailings is "a protected natural resource critical to a functioning watershed."

A "Save the Centennial Wetlands" campaign is actually attempting to "save" the historic tailings pond, which was designed to impound water. Yes, the environmental group is literally taking the position that intentionally created man-made "wetlands" constructed from tailings are a valuable natural resource!

Apparently, they also no longer have concerns about engineered fill or trucks, and they propose that Rise Grass Valley should truck a quarter million tons of fill to the site in order to save the tailings pond! The group is now pulling out all the legal stops in an attempt to force the state to slow down the review process to make it harder for the cleanup of a historic tailings pond to actually happen.

Community Environmental Advocates, which presents itself as an environmental group, is actually trying to kill the cleanup process of a blighted site in the heart of our community? They are so blindly opposed to the mine that they attempt to sabotage the inarguable community benefits of rehabbing such a troubled parcel at the edge of downtown Grass Valley.

The desperation from environmental group's move thinly masks the reality that the mine reopening is the biggest economic development project this county has seen in decades, and it is very likely to be approved by the Board of Supervisors after a thorough, exhaustive, multimillion-dollar environmental study process that will prove the mine is safe.

Community Environmental Advocates' opposition to Centennial cleanup is right out of the same playbook that NIMBYs are doing up and down the state — using the California Environmental Quality Act process to set up frivolous objections and lawsuits that have no merit in terms of planning or environmental protection. But they cost communities and businesses a lot of time and money.

It might be too much to hope that actual environmentalists call out this group for its cynicism and hypocrisy. If forward-thinking people in this county don't stop the meddlers and naysayers, this county's economy will be stalled forever.

Now is the time for advocates of new jobs and prosperity to stand up to the NIMBY nonsense in Nevada County.

Christian Stewart lives in Grass Valley.

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ALL COMMENTS 9 newest 3



Don Pelton 4 DAYS AGO

By the way, thanks to Community Environmental Advocates for being troublemakers, good troublemakers.

See: https://www.cea-nc.org/ and https://www.minewatchnc.org/

REPLY 0 0

CM

Christy M Hubbard 9 DAYS AGO

Mr. Stewart, I believe you're misunderstanding the very nature of the process. That's why they call it a "Draft RAP". The cleanup could move forward if they simply remove the mining activities that were added, stop the unnecessary habitat destruction and resubmit the RAP. Or they can include the project in the EIR for the mine. Even without CEA's comments, the result would have been the same. The water board's RAP comments submitted to the DTSC also made it clear that the project needs to be part of the mine. Here is what the water board comment said: "To the extent feasible, the cumulative impacts to water quality incurred by the project described in the RAP and potential future discharge of mine waste generated by the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine-Rise Grass Valley project should be considered in a single environmental document." [CVRWQCB Comment # 4, pg 5] CEA comments aside, Rise would have been unable to get the cleanup permit approved by the water board, which is required. And there is also the Army Corps of Engineers permitting they would need. In a way, CEA did the mine a favor. It's better that they find out about the issues with the RAP now rather than months from now when they try to get the permits from the water board and find out they have to start over. EDITED

REPLY 2 0

IV

IndePenndent Valley 13 DAYS AGO

Quite a hysterical screed

REPLY 5 0



MsChaitealatte 13 DAYS AGO

Based on my understanding of this issue, this letter is spreading misinformation. I was on a zoom meeting with the guy from the Department of Toxic Substances. I asked the question, "When you are done with the cleanup of the site, will it only be suitable for a hazardous mine tailing dump, or will it be suitable for other uses in case the mine is not approved?

This is a valuable piece of property and the mine may not go through. There may be other, future plans for the site, including a business park, farmers

3

market, affordable housing, or maybe even a park similar to our other old mines.

The answer was "No, we will use the surviving wetlands as borrow to cap the toxic waste, and then it will be suitable for nothing other than dumping toxic mine debris. The landowner, Rise Gold, is not willing to pay for cleanup beyond that suitable for a toxic dump site." I think our communities deserve more future options than this.

I suggested that if they were looking for borrow soil, maybe they could look at the sediment dredged from NID reservoirs to cap the pre-existing toxic waste instead of destroying the wetlands. The guy replied, "Well, then we would have to truck it in, and the mine owner wants to do things the cheapest way possible."

REPLY 6 0

PS

Paul Schwartz 13 DAYS AGO

The author tells a ridiculous story. CEA fully supports the Centennial clean up project. Every letter and communication clearly states that. The Rise Gold proposed clean up plan goes beyond cleaning up the legacy toxic waste. It grades the site clean and leaves behind a spot to dump tens of thousands of tons of crushed mine rock from the Idaho Maryland Mine. Thus the Reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine and the Centennial Cleanup projects need to be considered under one environmental review process. Its that simple. In addition, Rise Gold does not have the $4 Million needed to clean up the Centennial site. They are hoping to redirect funds from the Idaho Maryland Mine Reopening project to do the cleanup. Again, one fund source, one project. I hope their investors see this one coming.

REPLY 4 REPLIES 9 0

2 SHOW OLDER REPLIES

IV

IndePenndent Valley 12 DAYS AGO

Reply to **Paul Schwartz**

Mrs Murray, if there are a lot of people “in town” who NEED Centennial site cleaned up, and it’s just that so darned important and vital, then what pray tell are they doing about it other than supporting a failed proposal to mine gold?

Is that the only way to clean up a site in the US? Find a dubious OTHER project nearby, proposed by a sketchy company, and hope they’ll make enough money from THAT to clean it up?!

That’s it huh. The experts recommendation…”mine gold to clean up communities.” Sounds solid and logical and the only known option in the universe to the issue. SMH. Be better than that EDITED

REPLY 3 0

LM

Lisa Murray 12 DAYS AGO

Reply to

You really struggle with reading comprehension, don't you? Exactly nobody suggested that the mine must be allowed because of the Centennial site cleanup -- except that CEA's comment letter argues that the mine and the cleanup SHOULD be tied together. It's CEA's own argument that undermines your point! I don't think you understand at all what that letter said (yes, I read it, did you?).

REPLY 0 3

Add your reply

3

THE UNION

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Christian Stewart: Mine foes out of touch with life here

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 17, 2021

Christian Stewart | Other Voices

Over Memorial Day weekend I sat down for a nice meal at the Old Town Cafe and struck up a conversation with a man I'd never met who is in the process of moving to Grass Valley from New York state.

We talked about the things we love about Grass Valley — the history, the natural beauty, the local character. And then he told me that he had already joined protests against the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine.

I was dumbfounded, and angry. This guy hasn't even finished moving here yet, but somehow he thinks he knows what's best for this county?

There was zero appreciation for how hard it is to support a family of five on a local wage. This is unfortunately a level of arrogance I am seeing more and more often with the people who oppose the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

What this county needs more than anything are good-paying jobs, pure and simple. Anyone who denies the reality of that hasn't been paying attention to what's happening in our local economy.

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28 comments



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23 comments


Susan Bewle Build Bac
21 comme

Nevada County has among the worst average salaries of any county in the state. On top of that, housing costs are through the roof, driven sky high by transplants from Silicon Valley and elsewhere. If you were born here, there's little chance you will get to stay here.

The average age of a person in Nevada County is 51. In Placer it's 42 and in Sacramento it's 36. Young people in Nevada County are forced to leave in droves because there's no long-term job opportunity. We have fewer families here, and there's more and more talk of school closures because there aren't enough kids.

This county has massive economic problems that won't be solved by wealthy retirees from Sunnyvale snatching up acre lots and living on their 401Ks. It's only going to be solved by high-paying jobs locally — and the Idaho-Maryland Mine is the only project out there right now that's promising to deliver anything close to the 300-plus in-house jobs and another 300 or so around town.

For months mine opponents have been fear mongering and gaslighting the public about this mine, but the time is coming soon when they will need to put up or shut up.

What will opponents do when the Environmental Impact Report comes back clean and says the mine will be safe? Will they accept the facts, or will they accuse the county of lying in the report?

An even better question: If the mine is denied, what is their plan to create new jobs here? I'd like to hear a coherent answer to that

question.

Passing up re-opening the mine wouldn't just be foolish, it would be economically devastating to local working families.

Many of the mine opponents are content to allow longtime locals to serve their meals and bag their groceries, but when it comes to getting ahead instead of just getting by, they don't have your back.

But they will tell you what's good for you.

Christian Stewart lives in Grass Valley.

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Cindi Anderson: Don't throw it away

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | April 8, 2022

Cindi Anderson | Other Voices

I am writing in response to the Rise Gold issue of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. I was not born here, but was raised here since the age of 10 and am now 67.

I would like to know the average resident duration of those opposing this issue and how informed they are on the history of our community prior to moving to this area. I grew up after the mines had all closed around 1950 when it was not profitable to extract gold.

We have some of the richest gold-bearing rock and quartz in the world. There seems to be so much concern about water, air and quality of life. It is pure speculation that these factors will be disrupted.

I worked at the Brunswick/Bohemia sawmill in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The amount of logging and lumber trucks at that site alone numbered around 200 truckloads a day.

The influx of traffic in our area today is far more with construction and developments. Keep in mind that these trucks that traveled during the logging season drove over our roads and through several different counties to arrive at the Brunswick Road destination with very little impact on this area.

Trending Articles



We did not have the infrastructure that we do today, yet our quality of life was not disrupted with poor water, air or quality of life. The spotted owl had more impact on our lives than any other one factor like trucks.

The timber tax paid for our sports, school supplies, transportation, education for our local schools with no cost from families. Today the timber tax is gone due to the lack of logging, and so our families must foot the cost for our school age children.

If Rise Gold is allowed to open a facility in our area, there is a possibility that these benefits will return to our area as well as lessen the burden for state and local taxes. There are enough tunnels filled with water to travel from here to Disneyland underneath Grass Valley alone.

Could the mill site could be used for something other than reopening the mine and be used for housing, community center or business that would be better suited, better suited for who and the amount of traffic would exceed 200 per day?

During the Depression, Nevada County did not experience the same that the rest of our country did due to the mining in the area. "The 1930s: No Depression" is a book written by Gage McKinney.

It is a business based on our heritage industries that founded this area. For almost 100 years it flourished here, making it a desired area to live in. Nevada County is known as the heart of gold country. Gold is something used by almost everyone daily in one form or another.

The deeds to our homes state our mineral rights, which were established over 150 years ago, which you saw at the signing of any

purchase of property here or anywhere else. Nevada County is known for innovative thinking in the nationwide establishment of water rights, mineral rights, Miranda rights and so much more.

I ask others who have a voice the same as mine to please be included and reflect on our area and why we are here in Gold Country. I ask those opposing this project what brought you to this area known as Gold Country if there was not a resource for mines in our area. It speaks for itself.

Cindi Anderson is a Nevada County resident.

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newest

MJ **M Jensen** 1 HR AGO

Yes, I remember seeing scarred, clear cut, hillsides marring our glorious foothills along Hwy 80.

Businesses that ravage the earth can operate without doing so, unfortunately, it's rarely profitable. And therein lies the problem. Do you trust this business to do what's safe and right above doing what they think they can get away with in the pursuit of profit?

I do not. EDITED

REPLY 1 0

Dave Hardy 2 DAYS AGO

Thank goodness - a voice of reason. After doing a great deal of research and spending much personal time researching this mine proposal, I too have become concerned that the opposition to this project has become a fashionable hashtag for social media and a hobby for elite armchair activists. After discovering the lengths to which a shadowy group of folks will go to - openly publishing false facts and irrelevant historical comparisons to other projects I became very perturbed. Add to that the personal attacks against the Rise Gold CEO for what is at best a political bugaboo in Canada - and it’s a distasteful affront to common sense and normal discourse. The folks who actually

live near the proposed site, who have an actual legitimate interest in insuring our policymakers are aware of the concerns are who should be focused on. The clear positive economic importance of this project cannot be dismissed. These are opportunities that must be explored to their fullest potential. The noise from the hobbyists has got to stop - Let the process proceed without hysteria and lies. Support our policy makers to make sound decisions based on facts and real science - not the hyped claims of a mob of virtue seekers. Looking for likes on social media…

REPLY 1 REPLY 1 3

MJ **M Jensen** 1 HR AGO

Reply to **Dave Hardy**

What personal research did you do, read reports compiled by mining companies? And how is relating previous business failures and incompetence a "personal attack" against the Rise CEO?

I realize you see the possibility of some personal economic gain by the realization of this folly, but please don't insult us with feigned indignation, hyperbole, and sketchy information.

REPLY 1 0

Add your reply

2

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D.J. Dorville: Open all the mines

Letters FOLLOW LETTERS | April 22, 2022

D.J. Dorville

Open up all the mines so we can get back to our roots. Grass Valley was a great place to be in the 1940s, and the 1950s when I was a teenager. I was born in 1941 and all the mines were open and 90% of the work was deep underground, not in the open.

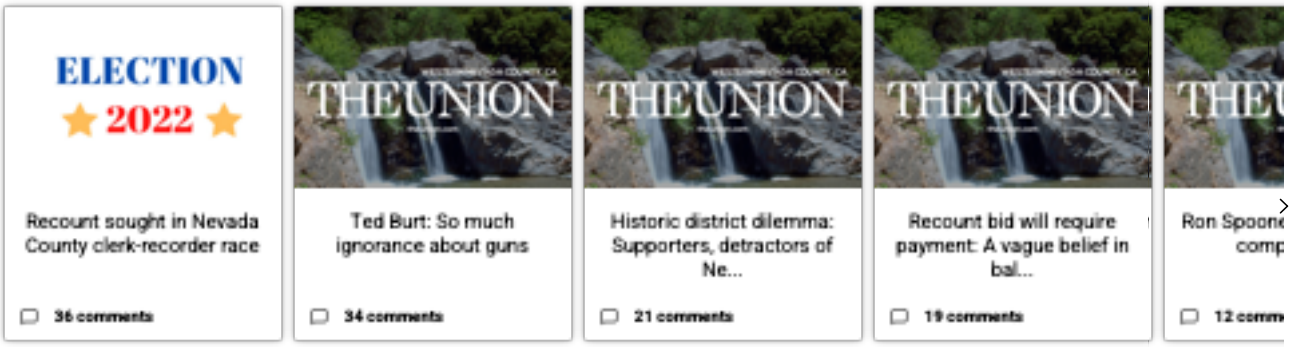
The air pollution we get is from the cities southwest of Nevada County. The water the mines pump has to be drinkable. Mining today is not like 100 years ago.

I would like to see The North Star Mine reopen as my grandfather worked there.

D.J. Dorville

Grass Valley

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-david-watkinson---why-the-county-needs-the-idaho-maryland-mine-and/article_8cfd16ea-9841-11ee-8bfd-c76233a533a7.html

FEATURED

Ideas & Opinions — David Watkinson - Why the County needs the Idaho-Maryland Mine: And why the Board of Supervisors needs to represent the entire population of Nevada County

David Watkinson | Other Voices
Dec 12, 2023

10-Year Budget History, Nevada County (July 2014-June 2023)

Fiscal Year	Annual Budget Millions $	Annual Increase From Previous Year Millions $	% Increase From Previous Year	Cumulative % Increase from 2013-14
2013-2014	183.5			
2014-2015	200.1	16.6	9.0%	9.0%
2015-2016	201.2	1.1	0.5%	9.6%
2016-2017	214.0	12.8	6.4%	16.6%
2017-2018	229.4	15.4	7.2%	25.0%
2018-2019	235.7	6.3	2.7%	28.4%
2019-2020	258.0	22.3	9.5%	40.6%
2020-2021	273.3	15.3	5.9%	48.9%
2021-2022	299.9	26.6	9.7%	63.4%
2022-2023	330.7	30.8	10.3%	80.2%
Total		147.2		

David Watkinson

There has been a well-run social media and political campaign as to why the

County doesn't need the Idaho-Maryland Project or the economic benefits that would come from the jobs it creates or the taxes it will pay. The reality is the re-opening of the mine will benefit every single resident of Nevada County. When the Board of Supervisors gets to the point of voting for either the vested rights determination for the Project or the certification of the Environmental Impact Report and approval of the Conditional Use Permit and other entitlements to all the Project to be developed, they need to remember they represent all of the residents of Nevada County, not just a vocal opposition. Many residents of Nevada County support the project and we are the silent majority.

The County has been on an unsustainable economic path for the last decade. Look at the County budget over that decade, which shows an alarming trend and an unsustainable economic path. When the County (or the City of Grass Valley or Nevada City) comes to you with sales tax initiatives and touts the need for funding for emergency services or school funding, it is hard to support these initiatives when you know the representatives of these government agencies are not doing all they can to support businesses that generate local tax dollars and responsibly spend your tax dollars.

The attached table shows the County's budget for the last decade. Funds from this budget get distributed to Grass Valley, Nevada City, Truckee, schools, emergency services, and many other critical services currently enjoyed by the residents of Nevada County.

In the last 10 years, the County's budget has increased from $183.5 million to $330.7 million, an 80.2% increase. The Consumer Price Index from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates the inflation rate between July 2013 and June 2023 to be 31%. So, the County's budget has increased 2.6 times the rate

of inflation. This is an average increase of $14.7 million per year. This was during a period of low inflation.

At the same time, the County's population has remained relatively constant. In 2013, the population (projected from the 2010 US Census) was 97,850 residents. In 2023, the population (projected from the 2020 US Census) is 100,720 residents. So, the population of the County has increased by 2,780 residents, or 2.9%. So, we have an 80.2% increase in the County budget with a 2.9% increase in population.

We are now entering a period of what could be an extended period of high inflation. In fact, the County's 2023-24 budget is $369.9 million, an 11.8% increase over the previous year. At the same time, the State of California has moved into deficit budgeting. Property tax values and taxes generated are likely to decrease – partly due to increased mortgage rates but also due to high insurance costs and the need to have California FAIR Plan insurance due to fire risk in Nevada County. So, the County's revenue is likely going to drop while at the same time costs continue to grow – you do the math. Service cuts, job cuts for county workers, teachers, fire fighters, police, etc.

The Idaho-Maryland Project will create approximately 475 new local jobs and $45.3 million per year in new local labor income. It will pay property taxes on its gold reserves and on the surface buildings and facilities it constructs. It will pay sales tax and other taxes locally. Annual local tax revenue is estimated to be between $1.4 to $6.4 million per year. This revenue supports local towns and cities, schools, fire protection and other special districts with $200,000 to $912,000 going to the County General Fund. The County needs tax revenue and a long term, job creating, high tax generating project that should be supported because of its benefits to the County and its residents. The Board of

Supervisors needs to support this project.

David Watkinson

Roseville Resident, Grass Valley Worker

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---david-watkinson-responsible-county-representatives-must-approve-the-idaho-maryland-project/article_5acf2ada-ee02-11ed-9ff2-579ee9a44277.html

Ideas & Opinions – David Watkinson: Responsible County representatives must approve the Idaho-Maryland Project

David Watkinson
May 9, 2023

Nevada County was built on the mining industry and historically hosted two of the richest and largest producers of gold in the United States – the Empire North Star Mine and the Idaho-Maryland Mine. These mines were shut down by the U.S. government during World War II under Production Board Order L-208. While the mines attempted to reopen after WWII, rising labor and supply costs after WWII, the fixed price of gold by the U.S. government at $35 per ounce, and the removal of the Nevada Narrow Gauge Railroad during WWII resulted in the mines becoming unprofitable and forcing their closure in the mid-1950's. Nevada County now has the unique opportunity to approve the reopening of one of these rich mines – the Idaho-Maryland Mine proposed by Rise Gold Corporation.

Reopening the Mine would provide many significant benefits Nevada County and its residents, a few of which I outline below. Have we learned the lessons of economic and social impacts of the Great Recession, COVID-19, and now high inflation? Do we not yet see that the transformation to a Green Economy and movement away from fossil fuels requires more mines, not less. The

County must approve the reopening of the Mine for the benefit of all the residents of Nevada.

What benefits will the Mine bring?

1. 312 direct jobs – jobs created by the Mine through the operation of its business.
2. 53 indirect jobs – jobs created by the Mine as the result of companies supplying goods and services to the Mine.
3. 110 induced jobs – jobs created as the result of direct or indirect employees of the Mine purchasing goods and services in the community (at grocery stores, retail stores, hotels, gas stations, theatres, real estate banking services, accounting, tax services, etc.)
4. High paying direct jobs – mine employment will have an average salary of $94,000 per year, including positions like management, supervisors, engineers, metallurgists, electricians, mechanics, welders, pipefitters, equipment operators, miners, mill workers, laborers, accountants, human resources personnel, health and safety personnel, etc.
5. Youth employment opportunities – local jobs will be created for a variety of education levels including high school, college, and university graduates. and they won't need to leave the community where they grew up to find employment that offers a future.
6. Opportunities for existing and new local and regional businesses – Proactive local and regional business will be able to provide goods and services to the Mine, such as engineering services, fabrication services, parts supply, health and safety equipment supply, maintenance of light vehicles, and many other goods and services that will be needed.
7. Diversification of industry – the main industry sectors in the County are government (16%), health care and social assistance (14%), construction (12%) and retail trade (11%). Bringing back the Idaho-Maryland Mine will allow diversification of the economy with a significant number of high paying jobs and a significant source of revenue for the County, allowing it to weather downturns in the local economy.
8. Increased tax generation — The majority of taxes raised in the County are through property and sales taxes, although other taxes also generate revenue. The Mine will generate $483,000 per year in property taxes, $318,000 million per year in sales taxes, and $80,000 per year in other taxes at full production. Total Tax Revenue is estimated to be $881,000 per year. These payments would go to local agencies and districts, including local fire protection, school, and other special districts. A portion of these funds, $147,000 per year, would go to the County's General Fund.
9. Provision of Nevada Irrigation District (NID) water to local residents — Historic mine workings will be dewatered prior to the start of any mining. The Mine will provide NID water supply, including provision of pipelines, to any impacted residences. Well owners will benefit from being hooked up to NID water at no cost to them, which arguably enhances the value of their property.
10. Future Uses — Perhaps the Mine can be transformed into a tourist attraction after closure – with underground tours and connected to the Empire State Park, creating a major attraction that would bring thousands of tourists to Nevada County each year.

The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors has to be responsible, look at the minimal impacts of the proposed Mine and the opportunity it

brings to Nevada County and its residents, certify the EIR as complete, and approve the Use Permit and entitlements.

David Watkinson, Roseville resident, Grass Valley worker

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Pat McKim: The rest of the Rise story

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 12, 2020

Other Voices
Pat McKim

Recently visiting Rise Gold CEO Ben Mossman, I read Denise Bellas' guest column. Since I'm one Ben "enticed" to invest, I'd like to offer "the rest of the story."

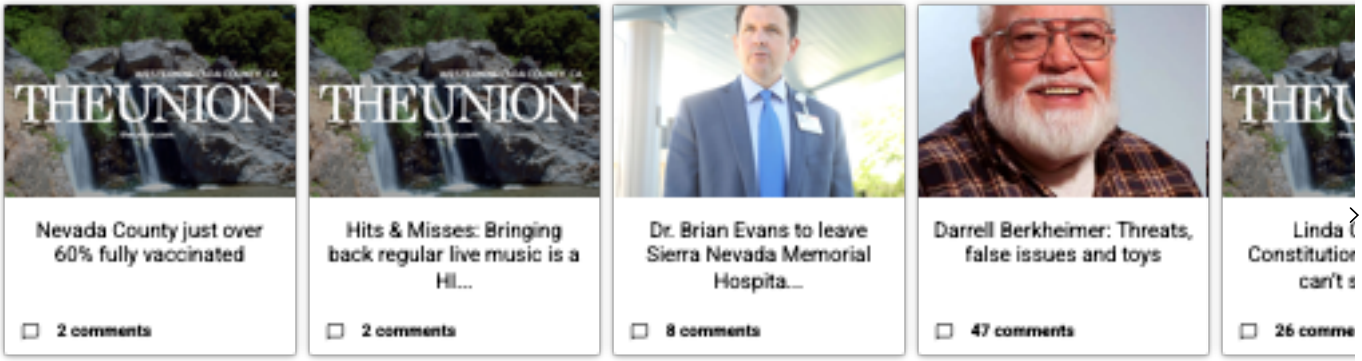
I'm a proud third generation Californian and lived most of my life in Northern California. Despite California's unfriendliness to dirty jobs, I was intrigued by the Idaho-Maryland's history of proven production results after restarts that indicate a rich future AND a clean past. It's exciting to bring back to life an honorable part of history and see it again benefit a local community that needs it.

My time outside Northern California includes much of a 34-year Navy career that started at the U.S. Naval Academy. There I lived an uncompromising Honor Concept to not lie, cheat or steal. Violation meant separation. Character is unique because only we control our honor during our life. At this stage in mine I've no need or desire to associate with anything untoward. Nor do I want to stand by and see a good person maligned as "unethical" with no cause. That's how "ethics" are "weaponized."

As in any significant investment, I did substantial due diligence before investing in Rise. Research included looking at relevant past history. My positive impression of Rise and Ben has changed since then: it's improved! There's no firm guarantees in life, as current economics show, but past performance of Ben and the mine indicate this team should stay upright in the community.

Ms. Bellas wants Ben and Rise separated from the Idaho-Maryland mine for imagined "unethical" behavior. At the Academy such accusations would require face-to-face board with evidence. That dog won't hunt.

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Briefly Ben's two $7,500 fines resulted from bureaucratic misinformation and error, not ethical lapse. Had Ms. Bellas been truly interested, she'd have asked Ben directly like I did. I don't sense a hint of dishonesty or evasiveness in Ben: nothing in him resembles her snake-oil salesman imagery. He's an honest, thoughtful, soft-spoken but direct engineer. From decades in technology I learned that if you want the truth, ask an engineer. If you want BS ask a marketeer.

Something else surprised me about Ms. Bellas' letter. Idaho-Maryland has a long, rich history that's well documented, including local Gage McKinney's book "MacBoyle's Gold." It weaves Errol MacBoyle's true tale of a newcomer from Oakland by way of Cal's mining school. He perseveres to restart Idaho-Maryland. Rapidly it becomes the U.S. No. 2 producing mine. Another of McKinney's books "The 1930s: No Depression Here" shows how Grass Valley and Nevada City uniquely thrived during the Great Depression from mine employment. Miners could buy cars and homes while the rest of the country sank into poverty. Sadly, the U.S. government shut it down for World War II; economic decline quickly followed.

A key at this mine: Despite NO environmental regulations at the time and rudimentary technology compared to today, the mine's tailings, or byproducts, introduced no pollutants to speak of and created no toxic legacy. Despite her "interest" in a clean Wolf Creek, Ms. Bellas showed no curiosity to delve into this history before her accusations. Is this a war on pollution or a "War on Work" as Bay

Area TV host Mike Rowe observed in a 2008 TED talk? There's no reason there can't be both: clean environment WITH "dirty" jobs.

Gold ore is trapped in benign rock at Rise. The byproduct is sand that won't be released into Wolf Creek but used in other productive applications. I'm sure Ben will be happy to discuss relevant processes and environmental oversight for those interested.

The world's in severe recession; debt's at all-time highs; unemployment's approaching Great Depression levels. Our time is remarkably similar to MacBoyle's as he restarted the mine. It saved Grass Valley in the Depression; it should help today. Gold performs well in hard times. Revenues should rise. When restarted, Rise will employ hundreds of workers paid many times current Grass Valley wage levels.

I hope residents will take the time to meet Ben and decide for themselves Rise's value to the community. Mark Twain covered this industry and prospered from it. He said history rhymes. Will Grass Valley allow the next verse?

Pat McKim lives in Walnut Creek.

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Don Pelton JULY 30, 2020

Best source of factual information about the Idaho-Maryland Mine here:

https://www.cea-nc.org/category/the-idaho-maryland-mine/

REPLY 0 0

9+

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---pat-n-mccoy-rise-to-the-occasion/article_b6b42282-e93f-11ed-9b0e-dbeed958dcd1.html

Ideas & Opinions – Pat N McCoy: Rise to the occasion

Pat N McCoy
May 3, 2023

We are fortunate that during the unstable economic period that a viable project to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine has been proposed by Rise Gold. The project will diversify and reinvigorate our local economy that has become stagnant as a result of COVID-19, reliance on an unreliable economic engine, tourism, that is dependent on availability and abundance of disposable income for travel.

For those that are unaware, the project has been studied three times in the last 30 years, by Emperor Gold (1993), Emgold (2005-2009), and Rise Gold (2022- 2023). The Idaho-Maryland Mine, its history, potential impacts, and mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to less than significant impacts are well known. Also well know are the tactics of Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) groups that now are affiliated with Community Environmental Advocates (CEA), one of which is the former Citizens Looking at Impacts of Mining (CLAIM-GV) for whom a co-founder was Ms. Heidi Hall, a County Supervisor. Ms. Hall went on record during the Emgold DEIR public meeting as being against the proposed re opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project.

There are two other well-known NIMBY groups that have openly opposed the project, South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) and the Sierra Fund

formerly led, respectively, by Caleb Dardick, currently the Nevada County Assistant CEO, and Elizabeth Martin. Is there any question as to why The Union has had and published so many letters and articles opposing the proposed project!

It is curious that individuals and representatives of organizations that opposed the Emgold 2005-2009 project, have become embedded with local government agencies. Could that be the reason the County staff report has proposed two paths for the Planning Commission to consider on May 10, 2023, one denying the project and the other approving it?

In accordance with the 1975 California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) that Significant Mineral Deposits (i.e., those associated with the project) the County has the obligation to comply General Plan Goal 17.1 which states: “Recognize and protect valuable mineral resources for current and future generations in a manner that does not create land use conflicts.”

Could it be that the County recognizes that since it has allowed land use — residential developments adjacent to the Brunswick project sites that have created land use conflicts associated with the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine?

The County Plan Objective 17.1 states: “Protect valuable mineral deposits from intrusion by incompatible land uses that will impede or preclude mineral extraction or processing. Promote the proper management of all mineral resource activities in the County and minimize the impact of extraction and processing on neighboring activities and the environment in general.”

Could it be that the City of Grass Valley recognizes that it has allowed

residential and mixed-use developments proximate to the historic Idaho-Maryland mine (i.e., the Loma Rica Ranch and Whispering Pines business park) that have created land use conflicts associated with reopening the Idaho-Maryland mine?

The City of Grass Valley Mineral Management Element (ratified by the State Mining and Geology Board states its goals are to:

“1. To protect where feasible valuable mineral deposits from intrusion by incompatible land uses that will impede or preclude mineral extraction or processing.

2. To promote the proper management of all mineral resource activities in the city and to minimize the impact of extraction and processing on neighboring activities and the environment.

3. To work cooperatively with Nevada County and other agencies to coordinate mining and reclamation activities that affect or impact the city within and near the city planning area.”

To facilitate the implementation of the goals cited above, the City establishes a Mining and Reclamation Combining Zone (MRCZ) that allows for mineral development for the project’s Brunswick and Idaho Maryland sites. It is curious that the City has documented opposition to the project.

It is important to acknowledge that reviving and stabilizing the County’s economy will be linked to reestablishing the mining industry with the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Recognizing the project is consistent with the County and City General Plan policies and that the potential significant impacts (i.e., construction noise, traffic, aesthetics) are mitigable,

the time is right to rise to the occasion and say “Yes – Mine.”

Pat N McCoy, Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-pat-n-mccoy-what-is-rural-quality-of-life/article_0a5ee264-f5ca-11ed-9c47-db2290f53236.html

Ideas & Opinions — Pat N McCoy: What is rural quality of life?

Pat N McCoy
May 19, 2023

Rural Quality of Life is a subjective term, something that means different things to different people. It is is one of four central themes that comprise the vision for development in the Nevada County General Plan which are:

1. Fostering Rural Quality of Life;

2. Sustaining a quality environment;

3. Development of a strong diversified, sustainable local economy; and

4. Planned land use patterns will determine the level of public services appropriate to the character, economy, and environment of each region.

The Rise Gold Idaho Maryland Mine Project is consistent with all four themes, although consistency with first Theme 1 has been challenged in one of two staff reports. Could it be that their perception of rural quality of life may be uninformed? You might wonder what fostering rural quality of life may mean from an objective analysis than that the County staff has asserted in one of the Rise Gold project staff reports?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development division established the Agriculture and Rural Prosperity Task Force Task Force to identify legislative, regulatory, and policy changes to promote the quality of life in rural America, Nevada County is a part of “Rural America” which comprises 72% of the nation’s land and 46 million people living in non-metropolitan areas/counties outside of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (e.g., Sacramento). What characterizes rural quality of life is “a measure of human well-being that can be identified though economic (e.g., modern utilities, affordable housing, efficient transportation and reliable employment) and social indicators (e.g., access to medical services, public safety, education and community resilience). Such metrics were omitted from discussion in the staff report to support staff’s and was not identified as an attribute that needed to be addressed in the Rise Gold project application or DEIR.

To achieve a measure of human well-being that can be identified through economic and social indicators, there is an apparent interdependency of the County’s Theme 1 and Themes 2 through 4 to develop a sustainable and diverse economy, quality environment, and enabling public services. Rural areas, such as ours, are more economically diverse than in the past. Traditional rural sectors such as agriculture, mining, and manufacturing employ a smaller percentage of the population than before and there has been an increase in government and service sectors, such as Nevada County. However, the traditional rural economic sectors like mining continue to anchor local economies such as Hansen Brothers and Teichert which have, respectively, mining operations in Greenhorn Creek and Boca in Nevada County. These mines contribute to our local economy and California’s, which is the fourth largest mineral producer in production value in 2022 as reported by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Another matter that the County has asserted in a staff report is that the proposed mining land use is inconsistent with the General Plan and zoning designation. Such an assertion is astounding because the State Mining and Geology Board has designated the Brunswick site as MRZ-2 in the Loyd and Clinkenboard, Mineral Land Classification of Nevada County, California, 1990, Special Report 164. This report appears as a footnote in the County's General Plan Mineral Element rather than being fully integrated therein by establishing a Mineral Extraction (ME) combining district (per Section L-II 2.73 of the County Land Use Development Code, LUDC) rather than M1 (Light Industrial, which allows for surface mining per Section Sec. L-II 3.22 of LUDC)/ SP (Site Performance) combining district zone for the Brunswick property. The City of Grass Valley established in its General Plan a Mining and Reclamation Combining Zone (MRCZ) for the property. It is time to correct the County's error and accept the referenced State MRZ-2 mineral resource designation and rezone the property as part of the County Planning Commission deliberations.

The Rise Gold Idaho-Maryland Mine project will contribute to fostering rural quality of life by adding primary industry jobs which will also sustain small businesses and public services (e.g., fire districts, upgrading electronic infrastructures, medical services, etc.). The project will be undertaken with best available control technologies and be environmentally sound, economically viable (E3), and ethically produced, one that will foster Nevada County's rural quality of life and is consistent with the spirit and intent of County's General Plan. It is important to acknowledge that reviving and stabilizing the County's economy will be linked to reestablishing the mining industry with the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. the time is right to rise to the occasion and say "Yes – Mine."

Pat N McCoy, Grass Valley

https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---pete-perez-reopening-imm-could-be-world-class-example-on-how/article_41e76398-de30-11ed-8af5-0f337e684c60.html

Ideas & Opinions - Pete Perez: Reopening IMM could be world class example on how to mine the right way

Pete Perez
Apr 19, 2023

With the world's reliance on electric products, reopening the Idaho Maryland mine is a must. Gold is the best conductor of electricity. It's not right that other countries who do not mine responsibly, ethically or cleanly get to supply the world's demand for gold. We could deliver a world class example on how to mine the right way. Gold will be mined regardless, so ask yourself if it's ok to buy products like cell phones, computers, and electric cars with gold as a conductor that come from companies that are not regulated in other countries.

Pete Perez, Grass Valley

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Majority support Idaho-Maryland Mine, Rise Gold survey states

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 24, 2021

Submitted to The Union

Rise Gold Corp. is pleased to report strong public support from the Nevada County community for the reopening of the historic Idaho-Maryland gold mine (the "IMM Project"), located on the company's private land in Nevada County.

A recent survey of Nevada County conducted by J. Wallin Opinion Research demonstrates strong local support for the IMM Project and provides insight into community issues and priorities. A majority (59%) of respondents supporting the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine with only 34% of respondents opposed. Majority support for the project is consistent across all of the county's five districts, which are each represented by an elected supervisor. According to the survey results, respondents indicated jobs and economy, wildfires, homelessness, and affordable housing were among the top issues facing the community.

Most respondents (66%) had previously heard of the IMM Project proposal. A majority of those surveyed believe that the Nevada County Board of Supervisors should approve the IMM Project (58.4% Yes; 33.8% No) with "yes" significantly outweighing "no" responses in all demographic groups, including district, political affiliation, gender and age.

"These survey results indicate consistently high levels of support for the Idaho-Maryland Mine project," said Justin Wallin, chief executive officer of J. Wallin Opinion Research, in a press release. "The fact that a strong level of majority support was maintained after hearing arguments both for and against the proposed reopening of the mine shows public support is robust and resilient."

The survey was conducted from June 10 through June 17, with a sample size of 500 Nevada County voters. The sample was stratified, meaning that the demographic composition of the results matches the demographic composition of the region surveyed. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.4%.

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Nevada County is currently processing the company's use permit application to authorize the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine and a majority of the five elected supervisors must ultimately vote to approve the project. The project's strong constituent support in every supervisorial district is very encouraging. The company is awaiting the release of the draft environmental impact report (the "DEIR") by Nevada County and remains confident that this independent scientific study will be favorable due to the modern environmentally sensitive design of the IMM Project.

The release of the DEIR will be a major milestone in the use permit process and the company anticipates that it will be released this summer. The document will provide analysis and conclusions on the environmental impacts of the project based on numerous technical studies and expert review.

A general outline of remaining milestones in the use permit process is outlined as follows;

1) Draft environmental impact report is published for public comment;

2) After review of the public comments on the DEIR, Nevada County publishes a final environmental impact report (the "FEIR") which will include responses to public comments;

3) The Nevada County Planning Commission holds a public hearing to consider the FEIR and makes a recommendation on the IMM project approval to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors;

4) The Board of Supervisors holds a public hearing to consider and make a final decision on the IMM project. A majority vote of the five supervisors is required to approve the project.

The timeline to complete the use permit process is largely dependent on the Nevada County government. The most recent EIR process completed in 2019 by Nevada County was the Boca Quarry Expansion. In this case, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors approved the project approximately five months from the release of the DEIR. Based on this recent precedent, the use permit process for the IMM Project could be completed by the end of 2021.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The IMM project is a past producing gold mine which produced 2,414,000 ounces of gold at an average mill head grade of 17 gpt gold from 1866-1955. The IM Mine was the second largest lode gold producer in the United States before being forced to close under War Production Board Order L-208 during World War II. The mine produced a substantial amount of gold in the years before the forced closure. In the two years before closure, 1940 and 1941, mine production averaged 920 tons per day with a mill head grade of 0.38 oz per ton (12.9 gpt) and 121,000 ounces of gold production per year.

The company recently completed 67,500 feet (20,600 meters) of exploration core drilling at the IM Mine. Numerous high-grade gold intercepts have been encountered, both near the existing mine workings, and to depths significantly below historic mining areas. The company believes its drilling program has been successful but cautions investors that no current mineral resources or mineral reserves have been defined.

The company's submission of an application for a use permit from Nevada County requires information regarding planned throughput and material quantities. The company cautions investors that no technical report has been filed to demonstrate that this rate of production can be achieved. The company has not completed a feasibility study to establish mineral reserves and therefore has not demonstrated economic viability of the IM Mine. The company has not made a production decision for the IM Mine.

PROJECT DESIGN

The use permit application proposes underground mining to recommence at an average throughput of 1,000 tons per day. The existing Brunswick Shaft, which extends to ~3400 feet depth below surface, would be used as the primary rock conveyance from the underground mine. A second service shaft would be constructed by raising from underground to provide for the conveyance of personnel, materials, and equipment. Gold processing would be done by gravity and flotation to produce gravity and flotation gold concentrates. The company would produce barren rock from underground tunneling and sand tailings as part of the project which would be used for creation of approximately 58 acres of level and usable industrial zoned land for future economic development in Nevada County. A water treatment plant and pond, using conventional processes, would ensure that groundwater pumped from the mine is treated to regulatory standards before being discharged to the local waterways.

Source: Rise Gold

SURVEY RESULTS

Question 1

In your own words, what do you feel is the most important issue facing your community today?

Economy/jobs 11.4%

Government 11.4%

Wildfires 11.2%

Homelessness 10.0%

Affordable housing 9.4%

Public safety 8.8%

Coronavirus/COVID-19 7.8%

Water/drought 4.0%

Education/schools/higher education 3.4%

Environmental issues 3.0%

Other (each less than 2% individually) 12.4%

Nothing/no issues 1.0%

Unsure/refused 6.2%

Question 2

I am going to read a list of several issues that may be facing your community. Please listen to each and then tell me which THREE issues should be the top priorities for Nevada County's elected leaders? Choose three.

Keeping our community safe from wildfire 40.6%

Fixing homelessness 33.0%

Helping to ensure housing remains affordable for locals 28.8%

Improving local schools, education, job training and after-school programs 24.0%

Protecting the community from crime, gangs, drugs, graffiti 22.8%

Reducing local unemployment and creating better, local jobs 17.4%

Ensuring a reliable supply of clean drinking water 14.4%

Improving local infrastructure like roads and bridges 14.0%

Protecting and preserving our forests and natural outdoor space 11.8%

Addressing the local impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic 11.6%

Improving air quality and a clean local environment 9.4%

Creating more opportunities for youth in the community 9.4%

Ensuring a healthy County budget and finances 9.2%

Reducing traffic congestion 9.0%

Creating more opportunities for seniors in the community 6.2%

Improving and adding new parks, greenways and open space 4.6%

Something else 2.6%

Unsure/refused 1.2%

Question 3

Would you be willing to consider supporting a new mining operation in Nevada County if it provided [NAME THE THREE SERVICES RESPONDENT IDENTIFIES IN Q3] to your community?

Yes 54.3%

No 34.4%

Unsure/Refused 11.3%

See the complete survey here

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Ben Mossman: A response from Rise Gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | April 5, 2019

Ben Mossman
Other Voices

Several "Other Voices" submissions have been published in The Union recently regarding Rise Gold and the exploration of the Idaho Maryland Mine.

In our view, these op-eds contain much incorrect and outright false information. We have submitted this column to provide correct and factual information, as set forth below.

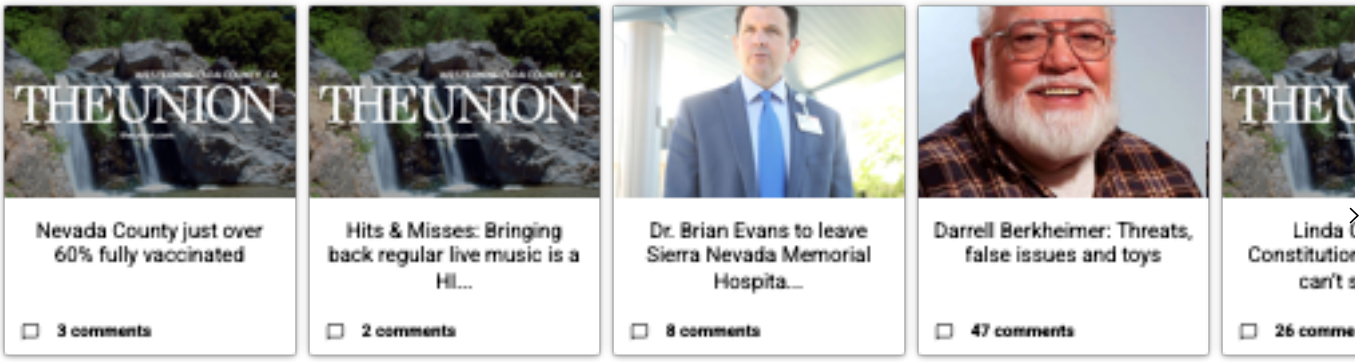
WHO IS RISE GOLD CORP?

Rise Gold Corp and its operating subsidiary Rise Grass Valley Inc. are both U.S. corporations. Rise Gold Corp. is a publicly traded company and trades on both the U.S. markets (OTCQB:RYES) and the Canadian markets (CSE:RISE). As a U.S. public company, Rise Gold Corp., is a fully reporting issuer to the United States Securities and Exchange Commission and complies with all securities laws and regulations.

> "If Rise is successful, Nevada County would benefit from the important economic contributions from such an operation ...

Rise has invested over $10 million dollars into Nevada County thus far and owns significant industrial property in the area. Rise is a gold exploration company and our focus is on exploring the historic Idaho Maryland underground mine. The goal of our exploration is to determine if an economic mineral resource exists.

Trending Articles



Rise is fully committed to complying with all federal and state environmental laws, and views protection of the environment as an essential part of its operations.

Rise employs numerous registered California professionals to support its work and ensure it is in compliance will all local and state rules and regulations. We employ lawyers, biologists, geologists, and engineers. Rise is in compliance with all regulations and Nevada County ordinances in the exploration and related work it conducts.

MISCHARACTERIZATION OF OPERATIONS

Previous articles have characterized Rise's current drilling operations as unlawful and harmful to the environment, but this could not be further from the truth. Rise is currently engaged in exploration of mineral deposits deep below the surface, which is consistent with Nevada County's long-standing industrial designation for the property.

In fact, Rise consulted with Nevada County prior to commencing its operations to ensure it would be fully compliant with all applicable laws and continues to communicate with the County. This deep exploration is done by drilling rock core with a hollow bit lined with diamonds to cut a cylinder of rock approximately 3 inches in diameter. The rock core is then studied by geologists and portions of the core are cut in half and assayed for gold content. Since the core is cut by a diamond bit, there is no hammer as would be common on most other types of rock drills.

There is no discharge of water, drill cuttings, or chemicals from our exploration sites. Consequently, there is no impact whatsoever to creeks or the surface. Water and drill mud recirculate through the drill rods to cool the drill bit and remove drill cuttings from the hole. No toxic chemicals are used, and none are discharged to the environment in this simple rock-drilling process. All of the water and drill cuttings are placed into a large tank on the surface, designed specifically for this purpose. Water is recirculated in the hole and drill cuttings contained in the tank are removed and trucked offsite to an approved landfill.

Once the drill hole is completed, and no longer of use for exploration, it is sealed to ensure that no impact to groundwater from the drill hole is possible.

NOISE IMPACTS MINIMIZED

Rise is in full compliance with Nevada County noise ordinances, including during the nighttime hours.

Rise employs local noise and sound control experts and continuously monitors sound levels from the drilling operation to ensure compliance with Nevada County ordinances. Noise monitoring devices have been employed throughout our property to ensure that we meet County thresholds. Rise has invested significant capital to ensure that its operation is in compliance with the law and to minimize sound as much as possible. This includes containments and insulation on the drilling equipment and the construction of a 24-foot high sound barrier at the drilling site. The sound levels are monitored 24 hours a day and examined and reported on by reputable sound experts, local to the area.

Nevada County noise ordinances include noise limits for industrial-zoned areas and residential areas abutting, which are much lower than in industrial zoning, and Rise is consistently below those limits.

MYTHS ON GROUNDWATER

There has been much discussion about the groundwater currently flooding the Idaho-Maryland mine. Unfortunately, much of the discussion has been hyperbole or complete falsehoods designed to scare the public. The natural groundwater currently in the mine has somewhat elevated iron and manganese.

The water is therefore very similar to the water you might obtain from your own private well in Nevada County. Some have characterized the water in the mine as somehow toxic and dangerous, but this is a complete fabrication. If the mine were to be dewatered, the groundwater would require treatment to bring metal content to meet the state requirements. The state requirements are very strict and the treated water discharged from the mine would have metals content equal to or perhaps less than your drinking water.

The volume of water contained in the mine is approximately 1,200 acre feet and the inflow in the mine, when it was in operation, was approximately 1,000 acre feet per year. Opponents of our exploratory operations attempt to make this number sound enormous and frightening. The reality is that this is a minute fraction of the more than 160,000 acre feet of annual water demand in Nevada County. Approximately 5,000 acre feet of water per year, more than four times the amount of water in the mine, is used solely to irrigate golf courses in Nevada County. The volumes of water in the mine are insignificant to the volumes of water transferred through and used by Nevada County residents.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF A MINE

Rise has carefully considered the regulatory environment in Nevada County and believes that an operating underground gold mine could be designed and permitted with no significant negative impacts to the environment and the community. We would not be investing our capital in Nevada County otherwise.

If we do find an adequate resource and proceed with obtaining permits for an underground gold mine, unlike the mining operations of the gold-rush era, consistent with state and federal regulations, the Idaho Maryland Mine would be designed to meet all modern environmental and safety standards with special attention paid to minimizing impacts on the community.

If Rise is successful, Nevada County would benefit from the important economic contributions from such an operation, along with the shareholders of the company.

Fear mongering by anti-development opponents, and implications that somehow a significant industrial project in Nevada County

could operate outside the law is ridiculous.

We believe Rise is an important member of the Nevada County community. We are open to discussions about our project and welcome any comments or concerns. More information is available on our website at http://www.risegoldcorp.com.

Ben Mossman is CEO of Rise Gold Corp.

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Ben Mossman: Facts matter — Don’t be a victim of mining fiction

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | June 8, 2021

Ben Mossman | Other Voices



Ben Mossman, president of Rise Grass Valley and CEO of Rise Gold Corporation, U.S. corporations.

The Union has printed several opinion pieces by Idaho-Maryland Mine Project opponents. The majority of these columns present "information" that's either biased or misleading and based neither on science nor logic.

Here are the facts. Rise Gold Corp. and its subsidiary, Rise Grass Valley Inc., are American companies incorporated in Nevada. Rise Grass Valley proposes to create more than 600 local jobs by reopening the historic Idaho-Maryland Mine. The mine is projected to employ 312 people at full operation, with two-thirds of these positions projected to be filled by existing local residents.

New local spending of $50 million per year will create an additional 300 indirect jobs in our community and bolster local businesses.

Mining is a heavily regulated industry. The project is undergoing an extensive review by Nevada County in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Numerous state and federal regulators will be involved during construction and operation, including the California State Water Board, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Conservation, Northern Sierra Air Quality District and Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine, which operated from 1863-1956, is an existing underground mine that has twice been flooded and dewatered. Groundwater continuously seeps into the underground mine, so pumping must occur in order to maintain the mine in a dewatered state.

Recent columns erroneously suggest that groundwater impacts cannot be accurately predicted. Numerous expert hydrogeologists and a century of mining at the Idaho-Maryland say otherwise.

Equally important, the impact of mine dewatering is well understood. Project opponents invent their own conclusions by defining static water level drops as low as one foot as important. These critics ignore the fact that the area's domestic wells regularly fluctuate by up to 25 feet seasonally and are not influenced by wet or dry years.

The actual conclusion is that no wells would be drained, and only a few wells, located near the Old Brunswick Mine, might be affected by a reduction in water column. In response, Rise has proposed to connect the entire East Bennett neighborhood to NID potable water and pay the water bills for current residents who choose to switch.

The Nevada County General Plan Policy Section 17.12 puts the burden of proof entirely on Rise Grass Valley to guarantee domestic water supply. This guarantee will be fully examined during the exhaustive CEQA process and specified in the project's conditions of approval.

Groundwater that seeps into the mine has elevated levels of iron and manganese that naturally occur. Groundwater of similar quality is already used by numerous Nevada County residents who are supplied by domestic water wells.

The project proposes to remove this iron and manganese with a conventional water treatment plant before discharging it into the South Fork Wolf Creek.

The project proposes to meet the stringent standards of NPDES permit CAG995002. This permit has criteria for metals content that is as good, or better than, both primary and secondary California drinking water standards. Water temperature and pH are regulated to ensure protection of aquatic life.

Discharged water is continuously tested, reported to and regulated by the California State Water Board. Water used in processing is in a closed circuit and cannot be comingled with discharge water.

Although small in comparison to the current water flows downstream, the mine produces a surplus of very clean water, which benefits downstream users. The water discharge volume, ranging from 1.9 to 5.6 cubic feet per second, is much less than the capacity of 80 cubic feet per second during a "bank full" event for South Fork Wolf Creek. Geomorphic fieldwork and analysis show no significant erosion or sedimentation caused by the proposed water discharge.

Finally, the project proposes to only mine at least 500 feet below surface, except for constructing a new service shaft on our property. We expect this depth will be a condition of project approval. The majority of mining would occur below the existing mine at 1,600 feet or deeper.

Those project opponents will likely continue to claim the sky is falling with every aspect of the Idaho-Maryland Mine project. We're proud of our environmentally responsible and economically advantageous project that will benefit Nevada County.

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." We agree.

Get the facts about the Idaho-Maryland Mine project. Visit our website at http://www.risegrassvalley.com. Also, when the draft EIR document is available, we encourage you to give it a read.

Ben Mossman is president of Rise Grass Valley and CEO of Rise Gold Corp., U.S. corporations.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions---lawrence-w-lepard-you-may-have-blocked-the-mine-but-how/article_43c999ae-f11f-11ed-8d43-ab322e72549e.html

Ideas & Opinions – Lawrence W. Lepard: 'You may have blocked the mine, but how are Nevada County residents going to pay the bills?'

Lawrence W. Lepard
May 13, 2023

The Nevada County Planning Commission just grabbed defeat from the jaws of victory.

They had an opportunity to recommend approval of a project which would have delivered manifest economic benefits to the residents they are supposed to represent, and yet they let their egos (Terence McAteer I am looking at you) and the FUD delivered by a small portion of their residents to kill a project that others had earnestly worked on and invested millions of dollars to deliver to their County.

This mine was as clean as they come and we took every precaution to deliver an EIR which showed almost zero environmental impact.

Furthermore, in an independent poll it was found that 59% of the residents of the County supported the re-opening of the mine. If the Planning Commission does not work for the people of the County, who do they work for?

There was a time in America when we did things. We produced things. We added value. In the 1930's Nevada County was one of the most prosperous

counties in the United States. Detroit sold more new cars in this county than any other county in America in that time frame.

All of that economic opportunity is gone. Forever. You may have blocked the mine, but how are Nevada County residents going to pay the bills. Good luck with that.

Sincerely, Lawrence W. Lepard Director of Rise Gold Corporation

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Robert Ross: Reopen mine for world's sake

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | May 14, 2021

Robert Ross | Other Voices

It astonishes me how many people in our towns are living in fear of the Idaho-Maryland mine being reopened. It reminds me of folks who are in favor of low-income housing being built until they learn one of those projects is planned for their neighborhood. Then it's: "Not on my street!"

Well, gold mines don't produce gold just for vanity items. Gold is also used for many common products, including electronics, as it is about the best electrical conductor there is. From circuits on satellites and the Mars rover, to just about every electronic device we all use daily, gold is a necessity.

Cell phones, smart phones, computers, TVs, music devices, automobile computers, electronic medical equipment, and countless other convenience and necessary items we take for granted all use precious metals in their circuits.

If the mine protesters are so opposed to mining, then perhaps they should give up their cars, their electronic devices, battery-powered tools and so forth, which all depend on mined precious metals and minerals to function.

We have an opportunity here to set the quality and safety standard for a mining operation that we as a community can be proud of, and the rest of the world will be envious of.

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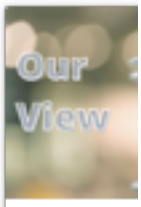


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28 comments



Our View:
23 comme

There are few other places where the environmental standards are as strict as here in California. So to think that the mine will be spewing out pollutants with these comprehensive environmental and processing regulations in place is ridiculous.

Anyone who is worried about mine pollutants should instead be focused on our county's ability to accurately test the mine's spoils. If the county can certify drinking water from water wells, they can also certify mine water and other materials as being safe, too.

That's why we have taxpayer-funded bureaucrats and endless environmental regulations. So let's use them and trust them.

When mining is rejected in areas such as ours where we have the highest environmental standards, it only increases the demand on mining elsewhere in other states or foreign countries that have fewer, if any, environmental standards at all.

I can't imagine there is anyone who hasn't seen photos or reports on the environmental devastation in Africa, South America, even Canada, and countless other countries where there is little or no enforced regulation on gold mining.

Are you local mine protesters OK with that environmental destruction going on elsewhere in the world? After all, you all still need those mined minerals, from lithium and lead for your rechargeable batteries, to the gold and other precious metals which make all

those device circuits function.

So I guess you are OK with mining as long as it's "not in our town!"

No, we can't eliminate poor mining practices in other states or countries, but we can show the world how to do it safely and correctly right here, and we can be proud of it. And to some degree, we would also reduce the dependency on destructive mining elsewhere in the world.

Environmentalism isn't just about Grass Valley. It's about the planet as a whole.

As far as private water wells go, no one knows ahead of time if or how those wells might be individually affected by draining the Idaho-Maryland mine. We live on a mountain, and gravity pulls water downhill and constantly refills the underground geological fissures.

Where I live here in Nevada City, some neighborhood wells have good water flow, and other nearby wells of the same depth have poor flow. Geology is not all interconnected like a giant sponge. Yes, the specific water well outcome may be unknown, but hysteria is not the answer.

Instead of obsessing on the worst that could happen with reopening the Idaho-Maryland mine, let's realize that the environmental and other regulations which will be in place will instead give us a positive result and a clean mine operation that we can all be proud of, and set the standard for the rest of the world to envy and follow.

Let's stop living in fear.

Robert Ross lives in Nevada City.

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Ross Guenther: A better option for tailings

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | July 16, 2021

Ross Guenther
Other Voices

The Idaho-Maryland Mine could become a tremendous economic and environmentally safe asset for the people of Nevada County.

The August 2020 permit application by Rise Gold was done reasonably well for this potentially very profitable mine. However, as I mentioned to the Nevada County senior planner in August 2020, I am concerned about potential environmental impacts regarding the stability of the engineered fill placed on a slope above the town of Grass Valley.

This planned engineered fill is about half mill tailings (very fine mineral grains that flow easily when wet) and half development dump rock fragments (up to eight inches in diameter) that may not compact well with the tailings.

Also, the entire project could be accomplished more economically using only the Brunswick site without the 56-acre Centennial industrial site.

In recent years there have been many failures of tailings facilities in Canada, USA, Brazil and many other countries with engineered fill that have caused disasters costing hundreds of lives, buried towns, and caused billions of dollars in damage. Expert engineers had signed off on these failures.

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47 comments


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A major concern of the existing engineered fill plan is the possibility of the tailings sliding down the slope to Wolf Creek and potentially burying downtown Grass Valley. Alternative tailings disposal will allow an environmentally safe option while only using the Brunswick industrial site without transferring any materials to the Centennial site.

One alternative would be a very high-cost venture of moving the tailings and development rock to another disposal site.

A better alternative would be to manufacture profitable high-quality, low-cost tile and many other green fireproof ceramic building products from the tailings.

The development rock could be profitably sold as aggregate. If the profitable alternative of manufacturing ceramics is taken, the entire project could be done on the Brunswick industrial site without hauling tailings and development rock to the Centennial site.

I have studied many aspects of the Idaho-Maryland tailings over the past 50 years, reviewing all the historical mine records, as well as interviewing several geologists and engineers who worked in the mine when it was producing.

I produced physical and computerized mine models showing the great economic potential the mine has. My teams had obtained a

positive EIR and all related permits to safely dewater the Idaho-Maryland Mine, assuring clean water for residents, and to initiate underground development at the Brunswick site.

The permit work included our studies of hundreds of wells in the area, as well as groundwater and surface water runoff. I also worked extensively with the Idaho-Maryland historical mine tailings, as well as newer tailings samples made from our more recent drill cuttings.

I invented and patented equipment to process Idaho-Maryland tailings into ceramics. Later, with the help of other geologists and engineers, I patented compositions and methods for materials, including the Idaho-Maryland tailings, and produced ceramics in pilot plants on the Idaho-Maryland property, producing several tons of high-quality ceramics.

In testing the tailings material to produce ceramics (prior to firing), with optimal moisture content and very high compression, the compressed material was still quite fragile. Adding larger rock fragments of development rock made the material even more fragile.

When water is added to the raw dried compacted ceramic material, prior to heating, the material quickly rehydrates, causing liquefaction and becomes a fluid mixture that easily flows. The resulting mix of wet partially compressed tailings and development dump rock about 100 feet above Wolf Creek may result in a more unstable engineered fill than that suggested by Rise Gold at the Idaho-Maryland-Mine.

The 40-foot-high engineered fill"is planned to be built by Rise Gold at the Centennial site on a downward slope toward Wolf Creek to 100 feet below the top of the fill.

One should consider the gravity of the situation. After the tailings become saturated with rain and groundwater, the wet fluid tailings with liquefaction could act as a lubricant to the larger development rock and move millions of tons of waste material down to Wolf Creek and Highway 49, potentially covering much of the town of Grass Valley.

However, as stated, there are environmentally safe alternatives for the tailings disposal. That alternative would allow for the production of high-quality ceramics while removing only high-quality ceramics, along with valuable aggregate and gold, from the Brunswick site while not disturbing the Centennial site and reducing traffic.

Ross Guenther is the general manager of Ceramext LLC and lives in Penn Valley

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https://www.theunion.com/news/community/ideas-opinions-ross-guenther-environmentally-safe-tailings-management-facilities-for-the-idaho-maryland-mine/article_320d3592-f5c8-11ed-965f-0f8ee0a67a93.html

Ideas & Opinions — Ross Guenther: Environmentally safe tailings management facilities for the Idaho Maryland Mine

Ross Guenther
May 19, 2023

In August of 2020, I commented on the Rise Gold Draft EIR that I was concerned about potential environmental impacts regarding the stability of the "engineered fill" for mill tailings. In the Final EIR these concerns were not adequately addressed.

In my opinion most of the Rise EIR does an excellent job in its presentation which closely followed my geologic, economic, engineering, and environmental research on the Idaho-Maryland Mine over the past 50 years. In the mid 1990's, with the help of my excellent team, I received a positive EIR and the necessary Idaho-Maryland Mine permits to dewater, explore and develop the mine via the New Brunswick shaft. This was done with a phased EIR and the next phase would include tailings disposal. The project became adequately financed at that point, but the company directors passed on the project wanting a better deal which they did not get.

Later I patented my Ceramext™ methods to handle the Idaho Maryland tailings by producing fire-safe ceramic carbon neutral products, including high quality floor tile, roof tile, exterior wall cladding, and countertops. Most

of these types of ceramic products available in the USA are now imported from abroad at a high environmental cost. Several tons of high-quality tile were produced at the Idaho Maryland Mine pilot plants.

Although Rise has done significant additional drilling for ore grades and mill recovery, no tests by Rise on tailings stability for this material have been presented. “Engineered fill” is best defined as fill that has been tested or a very similar fill that has been tested.

I have made numerous compaction tests that relate to “engineered fill” on both Idaho-Maryland historical mill tailings and tailings of finely ground material from freshly drilled Idaho-Maryland drill core. Even 500-ton presses over a half inch thick square foot with optimal moisture content failed to make a stable fill material. Adding larger fragments made the fill material even less stable. (Many of these tests were made to stabilize the tailings prior to heating them to form ceramic products.) Adding even a small amount of water to these “compacted tailings” will make the tailings extremely fluid.

In 2020 I met with Kimberly Morrison in Phoenix, AZ where she presided over several thousand attendees at the annual meeting for the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration. Kim is the Senior Director of Global Tailings Management for Newmont. She subsequently edited and wrote much of the thousand page “Tailings Management Handbook, A Life Cycle Approach” which was published in 2022. This book is presently the most comprehensive resource on new fundamentals for tailings management. At Kim’s request I wrote a case study included in her book titled “Repurposing Tailings and Other Earth Material Waste into Ceramics”.

Tailings engineers are only advocating tailings outside of dam facilities, with

or without larger dump rock, on a trial basis in dry remote areas, but not where millions of tons of tailings could travel down drainages like Wolf Creek to potentially bury areas like downtown Grass Valley. I do not believe the tailings “engineered fill” suggested by Rise would survive a moderate rainfall, let alone the atmospheric rivers we recently had.

In recent years there have been many failures of tailings facilities in Canada, USA, Brazil, and many other countries with “engineered fill” that have caused disasters costing hundreds of lives, buried towns, and caused billions of dollars in damages. “Expert engineers” had signed off on these failures.

The Idaho Maryland Mine project can all be done entirely on the New Brunswick property while manufacturing tile with no surface tailings disposal and not using the Centennial or other properties. And yes, gold and development rock for aggregates would still be viable byproducts.

Ross Guenther, Penn Valley

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Ross Guenther: Reopen the mine with zero waste

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 2h ago

Ross Guenther | Other Voices

The gold at the Idaho-Maryland Mine may be just the icing on the cake. The primary value for the people of Nevada County is likely the much needed clean and sustainable aggregate and ceramic-building products that might otherwise remain as waste dump rock and mill tailings.

Having worked and studied the Idaho-Maryland Mine over the past half century, I had documented most of the same geologic conclusions as in the present draft environmental impact report on the proposal to reopen the mine.

In the mid-1990s I received a final environmental impact report and related permits to dewater the New Brunswick shaft. Later, new management changed the location for the shaft. Subsequently, my team and I ran successful Ceramext pilot test tile plants at the Idaho-Maryland Mine. We also ran successful tests for over 50 types of tailings, including basalt fines with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and tailings for several copper and gold mines.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine tailings have only trace amounts of arsenic, an advantage. The contaminates, if any, are generally rendered inert to leaching or other means by locking them within a stable glassy matrix within the Ceramext composition. My team has patented several composition and method patents for manufacturing ceramics.

Recently, I was asked to write a case study by the editor of Tailings Management Handbook, A Life-Cycle Approach. The handbook was published in 2022 by The Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration. The case study was titled, “Repurposing Tailings and Other Earth Material Waste into Ceramics.” The study included a review of the success in manufacturing high-quality tile at the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Trending Articles



Part of the handbook discusses co-disposal of tailings, a relatively recent method of combining larger barren dump rock with much finer mine tailings.

This method is proposed in the Rise Gold draft environmental impact report to contain mine wastes at the Centennial and Brunswick sites of the Idaho-Maryland sites and has several potential disadvantages. These disadvantages include difficult compaction required, complexity of mixing particle sizes, and more difficult and expensive than other methods. Also mentioned is that the method could be a ground stability hazard in wet seasons in populated areas.

A better alternative would be to manufacture profitable high-quality low-cost floor and roofing tile, wall siding, counter-tops and many other green fireproof ceramic building products from the tailings. The larger waste development dump rock could be profitably sold as aggregate.

If the profitable alternative of manufacturing ceramics is taken, the entire project could be done on the Brunswick industrial site without hauling tailings and development rock to the Centennial site.

In our area, as well as throughout the world, we are having problems with climate change, fires and drought. Complicating this

problem further are supply chain issues causing more delays, expenses and pollution from importing ceramics and other materials from China and other distant places.

NID could economically conserve more water by using canal liners and piping made from tailings ceramics. PG&E needs thousands of miles of underground conduits (possibly partially made with tailings ceramics) to prevent wildfires and lower our energy costs.

In Nevada County, we can have a clean and sustainable gold mine without waste dumps and excessive traffic, and produce high quality ceramics. So yes, you can have your cake and eat it too.

Ross Guenther is the general manager of Ceramext LLC. He lives in Penn Valley.

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SECTION TITLE

I. **The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine**

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. **The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine**

III. **News Articles**

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

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'Come together': Protesters oppose Idaho-Maryland Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | 17h ago



William Roller FOLLOW
wroller@theunion.com

Gail Johnson Vaughan looks forward to frequent visits from her 10-year-old grandson to show off her property where she lives on Colfax Avenue.

"We're just 1,000 feet from Rise Gold's mineral rights land," she said. "A primary reason to oppose the mine reopening is that my grandson wants to have his grandchildren see how beautiful it is here. And he loves drinking the well water, and we have a lots of concerns about the preservation of our wells."

Some 50 people attended a Sunday protest against the Idaho-Maryland Mine at the Brunswick Gate of the mine on Wood Rose Way.

Vaughan questions the completeness of the draft environmental impact report.

"We are experiencing an unprecedented 20-year drought, so how can we use past assumptions on the viability of our wells?" she asked. "An adequate DEIR will test a variety of assumptions, including those not made by interested parties."

Trending Articles

A public meeting is set for 9:30 a.m. Thursday on the draft EIR at the Eric Rood Administrative Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City.

Mike Shea lives 2,000 feet from the mine entrance on Brunswick Road. He claims the mine will harm wildlife living in the area.

"The studies for the DEIR were paid for by Rise Gold, so it's a biased study," he said.

Ben Mossman, president of Rise Grass Valley, has said of the report, "The results of the county's independent study and analysis of the project speak for themselves; there are no significant impacts to water quality, groundwater, air quality, or the natural environment," wrote Mossman.

Itara O'Connell, organizer of the rally, said the land has plenty of uses other than a mine.

"We could use it for housing, a community center or other types of businesses that create more jobs than a mine," O'Connell said "Rise says there will be good jobs, truck drivers. And that's a big thing with me. All these trucks coming and going, every 10 minutes, 16 hours a day, seven days a week."

Trucks will make up to 100 trips a day, averaging 50, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

Jarryd Gonzales, public relations and communications representative of Rise Gold Corp., has said there are a projected 312 jobs connected with the mine. Of those jobs, 213 are estimated to be local hires. Additionally, the mine's contribution to state and federal taxes lessens the burden on local taxpayers.

Martha Turner, another mine opponent, said a reopened mine will destroy the quality of life in the county.

"How amazing to see a nonpartisan effort come together," she said of Sunday's protest. "We must all breathe the same air, and we all care for the future of our children."

William Roller is a staff writer for The Union. He can be reached at wroller@theunion.com

Opponents of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine rallied at the Brunswick Gate on Sunday.
William Roller

Mine protesters were accompanied by the beat of a drum.
William Roller

From left, Shirley Osgood and Itara O'Connell at the Sunday afternoon protest.
William Roller

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'Hung out to dry': Well owners contend with Idaho-Maryland Mine report's findings

News FOLLOW NEWS | 17h ago

By Shira Moolten
Special to The Union



Eric Gibbons' rural Grass Valley water well was one of many that a previous Environmental Impact Report showed would be dewatered if the Idaho-Maryland Mine was reopened. An EIR out for the current efforts to re-open the mine does not show Gibbons' well is in jeopardy, which he says makes no sense.
Elias Funez

Eric Gibbons has just enough water for the house where he lives with his wife and two grandkids — enough to run the shower, do the laundry, and maintain their vegetable garden, which they plan to rely on more now with food prices rising.

"Unless something goes haywire, like I leave a sprinkler on overnight, or a hose pump," Gibbons said. "Then we're out of water and it has to recharge a while. But that's OK, we've been here almost 30 years, and that's just the way it is."

If Rise Gold Corp. succeeds in reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine, Gibbons fears he may no longer have just enough.

Rise is the third company to attempt to reopen the mine in the past 27 years. If approved, the company would first have to dewater the shafts and tunnels starting 100 feet underground, and maintain that dewatered state for the projected 80 years of mining operations, a process that will reduce, or draw down, the amount of water in nearby wells.

7

Eric Gibbons points to where his 700-foot deep residential well is located outside of his rural Grass Valley home. He is concerned that Rise Gold's plans to dewater and reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine will also dewater his well.
Elias Funez

In January, the county released the draft environmental impact report, in which an independent consultant hired by the county reviewed all potential problems posed by the mine, determined their level of significance, and proposed mitigation measures. But while Rise says the report proves that mining won't dewater wells, local advocacy groups and well owners themselves feel far from reassured.

THIRTY OR 300?

One major point of contention arising from the draft EIR is the number of wells at risk.

Prior to mitigation measures, the document designates the threat to "substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge" as "significant." Required measures, including a Groundwater Mitigation Plan, would lower the threat to "less than significant."

Part of that plan would require Rise Gold to pay for a Nevada Irrigation District water line to 30 well owners on East Bennett Road, where wells are the most in danger of dewatering, according to a groundwater model submitted by consultants Itasca Denver on behalf of Rise.

The model predicts that only seven wells in the East Bennett area should experience greater than a 10% reduction, the level required for significance. Rise Gold will include all 30 along East Bennett as part of a "conservative approach," CEO Ben Mossman said.

But concerned well owners, advocacy groups, and NID all say that 30 is not enough.

"The mere notion that only 30 homes could be impacted is pure craziness," said Christy Hubbard, a well owner herself and one of the leaders of the wells coalition, a group of over 100 well owners and concerned residents.

The coalition asserts that reopening the mine could endanger roughly 525 wells within a half mile of the 2,585-acre mineral rights area, where Rise Gold could legally mine below people's homes. Hubbard is also a member of MineWatch, a group formed out of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, which has placed the number at over 300.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine is currently flooded with water starting at around 250 feet below ground surface (bgs), while most nearby wells reach depths between 100 and 400 feet bgs. The dewatering process would occur 24/7 for 160 days at a rate of 2,500 gallons per minute (gpm), lowering the water level from around 250 feet to 3,460 feet bgs, where the workings end.

Afterward, maintaining the dewatered state will require the continuous pumping at a rate of around 850 gpm, with a maximum of 2,500 gpm, for the remainder of the project. Meanwhile, Rise plans to mine at a depth of at least 500 feet throughout the mineral rights area, though it cannot predict the extent or location of the mining until it is already underway.

"It is expected that the actual mining areas will change from the modeled mining areas due to vein geometry and discoveries, which will only be known after extensive underground exploration is completed in the future," states Itasca Denver's groundwater model report.

Many skeptics have also raised the possibility that encountering surprise fractures in the bedrock during mining could suddenly dewater or contaminate nearby wells, which is what happened at the Siskon Gold Mine in the 1990s. But the draft EIR states that fractures, if encountered, "would not transmit significant quantities of water" because most mining operations occur at depths below where big fractures would occur.

For many wells beyond the East Bennett area, the projected drawdown ranges from 1 to 6 feet, but less than a 10% reduction, leading the draft EIR to conclude that "the project would not have any significant impact on groundwater supplies" in these areas.

But at a March 24 Planning Commission meeting, where commissioners heard public comment, NID requested for the EIR to include monitoring of wells in the Greenhorn, Woodrose, and Beaver areas, and, if needed, also supply them with NID water. NID's general manager suggested Rise Gold put up a $14 million bond to cover all potential costs.

THE MODEL

Eric Gibbon's well was included in 1995. Now it is not.

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The variance between the wells at risk in prior EIRs is due to the model used, said Mossman. Rise's consultants used a 3D finite element model, which produces more accurate predictions, while past consultants used a 2D model.

Nevertheless, the model has raised concerns. The CEA hired its own independent consultants, Baseline Engineering, to review the model along with the rest of the draft EIR. In a March 30 letter to the Board of Supervisors, the CEA wrote that the model relied on sparse data, such as only one water level measurement from the Union Hill mine in 1956, and "old and limited" measurements from private wells, introducing greater amounts of uncertainty.

Baseline Engineering concluded that the project may endanger the quality and quantity of well water "in a much wider area than is indicated in the DEIR," according to the letter.

Much of the data used to generate the model is at least 15 years old, derived from consultant group Todd Engineers' report for a 2007 EIR.

"It might be off by a factor of two, it could be half as much or twice as much," June Oberdorfer, a hydrogeologist who studied the consultants' reports for MineWatch, said of the model.

Rise Gold and MineWatch have also both obtained their data on current nearby wells from the state's Department of Water Resources records, but some wells, like Sarah Hendricksons', may not be included in those records at all.

Hendrickson lives on Idaho-Maryland Road, not far from East Bennett, but she said that her well doesn't exist in state records, and neither do many of her neighbors'. Because they live on a mountain, their wells also produce significantly less than average; Henderson's pumps only 4 gallons per minute.

"If we lose water, we're pretty much in dire straits," she said.

ONE OF THE 30

Renate Otto has now lived through three mine reopening attempts. In 2007, Todd Engineers labeled her well the third most endangered. Now, it's one of the 30 designated for NID water.

Only Otto doesn't want NID water at all. Her well pumps 40 gallons per minute. She had the water quality tested several years ago, and she's satisfied with the results.

"It's pretty darn pure," she said.

Rise will foot the bill, but if the Ottos sell their home, the next owner will have to pay for the water, as specified in the draft EIR.

If the proposal goes through, NID must provide the water prior to dewatering, a process that could take between five to 10 months, though an exact timeline is "difficult to assess," Susan Lauer, NID communications specialist, said in an email.

Others worry the process could take much longer, which would present a problem if homes need water beyond the designated 30.

"The concept of a quick replacement of a water line is a bit fictitious," said Dan Ketcham, who does acquisition appraisal for NID and is president of the Nevada County Historical Society. "They're kind of hung out to dry for a long period of time."

The draft EIR does state that, if needed, Rise Gold will be responsible for providing an immediate water supply to anyone whose well water is reduced 10% or more, though it does not specify where the water would come from.

CONTAMINATION

The threat to "violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality" is significant prior to mitigation measures, according to the draft EIR.

The dewatering process itself should not endanger well water quality because the water would flow away from the wells and toward the mine.

"Water quality in domestic water wells cannot be impacted by the mine dewatering," said Mossman.

Water pumped out of the mine will be high in iron and manganese, "constituents of concern," according to the draft EIR. The mitigation measures require a water treatment plant, a clay-lined pond where workers will remove any contaminants before releasing the water into South Fork Wolf Creek.

Mossman is still facing legal action for two spills that occurred when he oversaw a previous mining operation, Banks Island, in Canada, which polluted tribal waters, leading MineWatch to argue that he is unfit to lead another operation. But Mossman said that those spills occurred due to "errors in the workforce" and a more crude method of water treatment using sumps rather than a clay-lined pond.

"(MineWatch) should focus more on the specifics than this general, anti-mine rhetoric," he added.

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CERTAIN UNCERTAINTIES

As the draft EIR stands now, many uncertainties will remain unless the project goes forward, such as up-to-date groundwater levels and quality, the actual geology underground, and the extent of the mining itself.

The county consultant is now preparing a final EIR, responding to the issues raised.

Rise Gold has faith in the current version. On Feb. 11, the company sent a letter to well owners in the vicinity.

"The county has determined that no domestic water wells will be drained by mine dewatering," the letter, signed by Mossman, states, later adding, "The county has determined that there is no threat to water quality to domestic water wells from the Idaho-Maryland Mine project."

The letter did not mitigate their fears.

"This claim crosses the boundary from misleading into true misinformation," Otto said.

Eric Gibbons won't feel secure until he receives a 100% guarantee of an immediate water supply, paid for by Rise Gold, if his well runs dry.

"That is likely to not be economically feasible for them," he said. "I'm sorry about that, but with what they're trying to do, that's what the cost will be."

Shira Moolten is a freelancer with The Union

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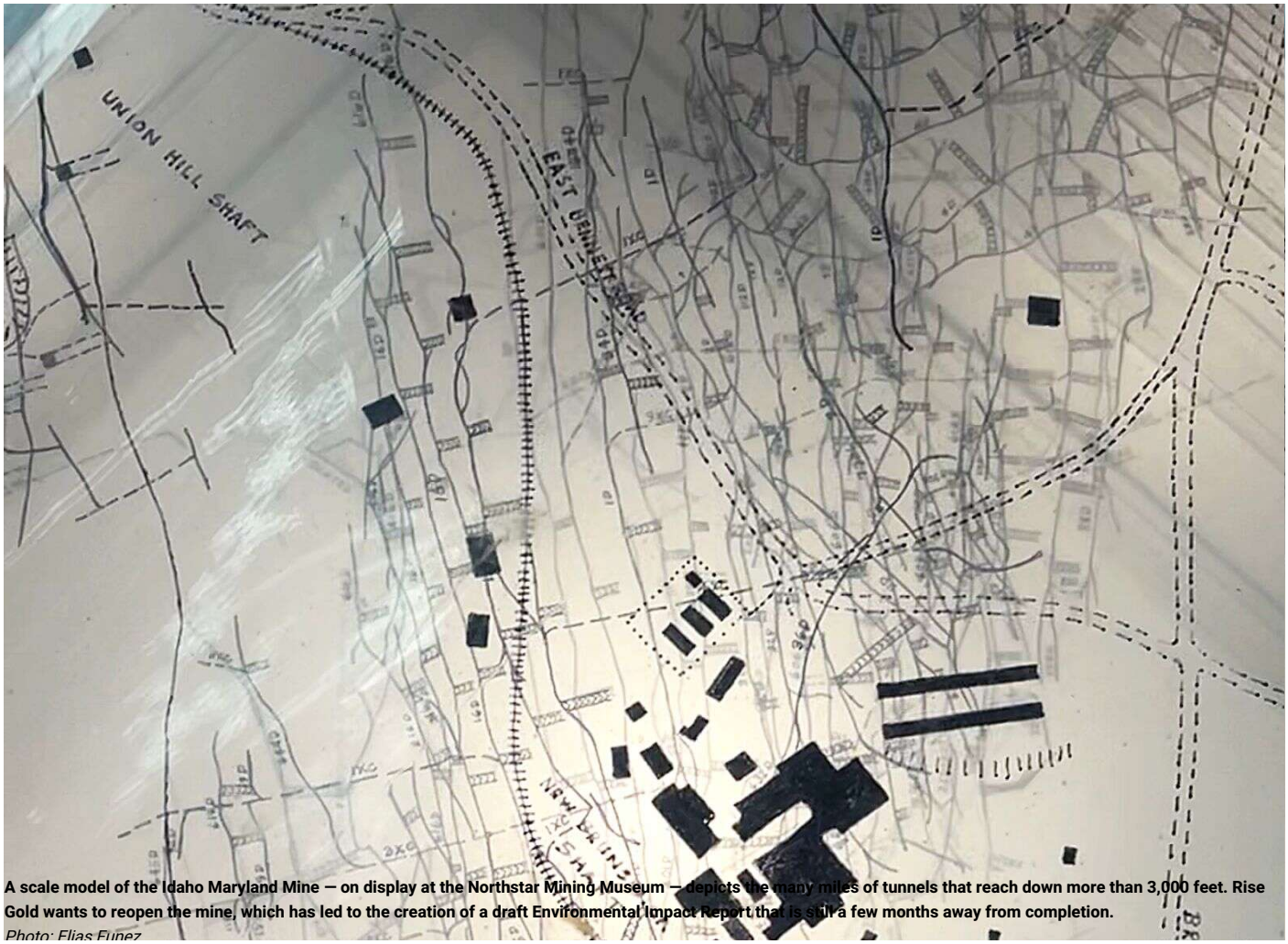
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'It's taking time': Idaho-Maryland Mine's draft EIR expected to take a few more months

News FOLLOW NEWS | October 28, 2021

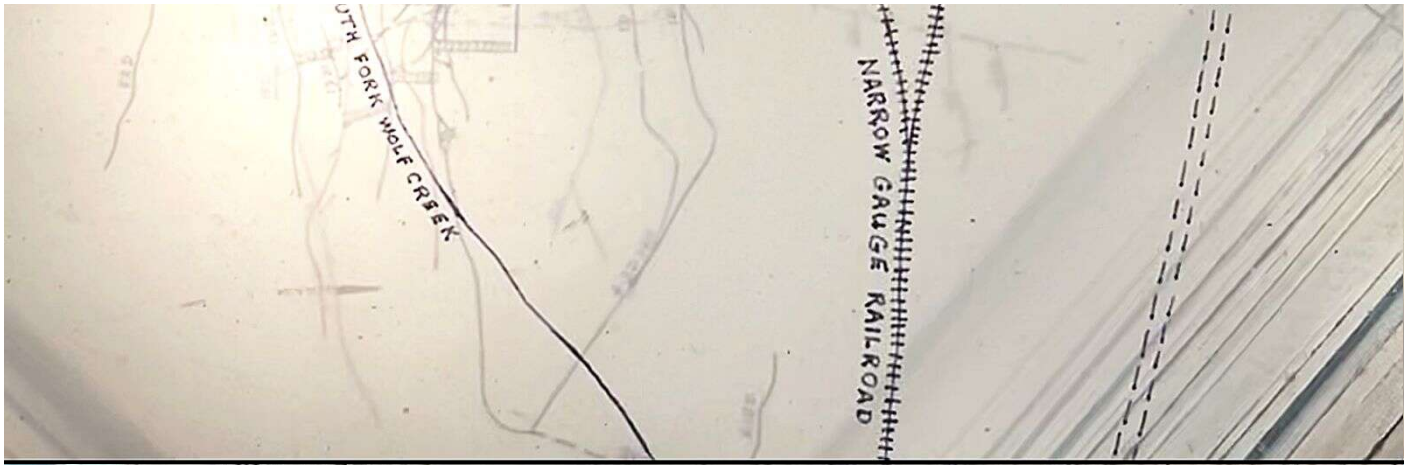


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A scale model of the Idaho Maryland Mine — on display at the Northstar Mining Museum — depicts the many miles of tunnels that reach down more than 3,000 feet. Rise Gold wants to reopen the mine, which has led to the creation of a draft Environmental Impact Report that is still a few months away from completion.

Photo: Elias Funez



The countdown for the Idaho-Maryland Mine's Environmental Impact Report looks similar to the countdown to the pandemic's end — unclear.

Rise Gold, the company interested in reopening the mine and miles of tunnels beneath Grass Valley, purchased the property in 2017. The company's CEO estimated in May that the draft EIR would be available around September. However, Nevada County's senior planner for the project, Matt Kelley, expects the draft to take another few months.

"It's taking time to put together," Kelley said, specifically referring to updates to a number of technical studies needed for the document. "Those took time to write and update. We're back and forth between the applicant, the county and our consultants."

The EIR, based in the California Environmental Quality Act, functions as a disclosure document, Kelley said.

"The CEQA statute and CEQA guidelines lay out the environmental review process," said Emily Breslin, deputy director of communications and external affairs in the state's Office of Planning and Research.

Kelley said all projects — be it an outhouse or a multi-storied apartment complex — require some form of environmental review by law. The review process ends quickly via categorical exemption for smaller projects, Kelley said, but the larger scale developments require real time to investigate intersecting realms of the community.

"In this case, the project requires EIR because one or more impacts would be considered potentially significant, so therefore CEQA would be (enacted)," Kelley said.

According to the public resources code, a "project" is defined as a "whole action" subject to a public agency's discretionary funding or approval that has the potential to either cause a direct physical change in the environment, or cause a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

"'Projects include discretionary activity by a public agency, a private activity that receives any public funding, or activities that involve the public agency's issuance of a discretionary approval and is not statutorily or categorically exempt from CEQA," Breslin said.

Kelley said CEQA requires developers to provide an initial study if the tentative project requires a discretionary use permit, like the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, which also entails a rezone and reclamation plan.

CEQA didn't require the initial study this time, as the county's Planning Department was able to determine there would be impacts.

"We went right through to the EIR," Kelley said, adding that the county does not keep records about how long certain kinds of reports generally take to complete.

Brian Foss, director of Nevada County's Planning Department, said the report is generally funded by the applicant or project proponent. The county charges and collects a fee from the project applicant to prepare environmental documents.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

To community members curious why they cannot vote on a project that uses the public's water supply and will increase the number of trucks on residential roads, Kelley said generally the public is not asked to vote on privately funded projects.

"There's no voter initiative with it, and private projects don't generally go to voter initiatives," Kelley said. Instead, the developers go through the filing process and in this case, the county Board of Supervisors has the final decision on it.

Kelley said after the draft EIR is submitted, the Planning Commission and the supervisors will have public hearings.

"During that process, there are many opportunities to comment," Kelley said, disputing claims that the draft EIR is the sole stage in the development process that allows for public input.

"There was public involvement during the scoping portion of the project," Kelley said, as well as with the project's Notice of Preparation. "Our NOP — that was one opportunity for the public to determine the scope of the EIR report and what should be studied."

After the draft is submitted, Foss anticipates a formal comment period of at least 30 days.

"Finally, there are hearings where, ultimately, the decision remains with the Board of Supervisors on whether or not to permit a project," Foss said. "In addition to the CEQA process, all discretionary land use projects in the county are reviewed in front of at least one hearing body where the public has an opportunity to provide comment before the hearing body makes a decision."

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Project application submitted to the Nevada County Planning Department – COMPLETED

2. Notice of Preparation (NOP) of Environmental Impact Report (EIR) scoping meeting and comment period – COMPLETED

3. County consultant drafts EIR based on submitted technical studies and application documents prepared by the applicant and peer reviews and public comments – IN PROCESS

4. Draft EIR is released for a minimum of a 45-day public and agency comment period as required by the California Environmental Quality Act.

4.a. Public hearing held with the Nevada County Planning Commission to receive verbal public comments on the draft EIR. — PUBLIC COMMENT OFFERED

5. County consultant drafts final EIR which contains responses to all comments received during the public draft EIR public comment period.

6. Final EIR released for public comment period for no less than 10 days.

7. Public hearing(s) with the Nevada County Planning Commission to consider the final EIR and project entitlements. — PUBLIC COMMENT OFFERED

7.a. Nevada County Planning Commission makes a recommendation on the project to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

8. Public hearing(s) with the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to consider the recommendation of the Planning Commission and all public and agency comments received during the application process. — PUBLIC COMMENT OFFERED

8.a. Nevada County Board of Supervisors makes a final decision on the project.

LEARN MORE

According to Foss, the qualified consultants hired to help draft the EIR "are evaluated for scope, quality, and cost and selected pursuant to the selection procedures in Land Use and Development Code Section L-XIII 1.6)

To learn more about the EIR process, public involvement and issue areas that are required to be addressed, visit http://www.mynevadacounty.com/3194/Environmental-Review-FAQs

The following link is to a CEQA information website and a webinar that was put on by the county earlier this year that explains the EIR process, the public involvement and the issue areas that are required to be addressed in an EIR and other types of CEQA environmental documents. http://www.mynevadacounty.com/3194/Environmental-Review-FAQs

The former Idaho-Maryland Mine's concrete silo located off Milsite Road, near the intersection of East Bennett and Brunswick roads.
Photo courtesy Nick Swartzendruber/Eclipse Aerial Solutions

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'No mine': Protesters oppose efforts to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | April 22, 2021

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Members of the Nevada County community descended upon the Brunswick Road and Sutton Way intersection Thursday afternoon to protest the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine by Rise Gold Corp.
Photo: Elias Funez

The sound of drums, chanting and car horns honking filled the Glenbrook Basin Thursday afternoon as about 60 demonstrators protested the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine.

The reopening plan proposed by Rise Gold calls for dewatering the flooded mine, rebuilding the existing mine shaft and constructing a second one, and creating a water treatment plant. The company expects to excavate around 1,000 tons per day and produce gold concentrates from the extracted rock using gravity and flotation concentration methods.

Protesters gathered at the intersection of Brunswick Road and Sutton Way said their biggest concerns about the mine were its potential risks to the environment, including wastewater run off, its effect on surrounding well water, as well as air and noise pollution.

A number of these yellow-and-black "No Mine" signs were distributed to people during Thursday"s protest of the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine.
Photo: Elias Funez



Steve Nathan, who moved to Nevada County this year, said he joined the protest because he believes the potential impacts outweigh the proposed benefits.

"It's hard to find good planets these days," Nathan said.

Rise Gold CEO Ben Mossman estimated the draft environmental impact report will be complete in a month or two.

Once the draft environmental impact report is completed, the firm will bring the report before the board and the public will have 45 days to comment on it before a final report is compiled, which will include responses to the public and board's comments. The final report will then go before the Planning Commission before advancing to the supervisors.

The report will look at how the six-month initial dewatering process will affect surrounding wells, how discharge from the treatment plant will affect water quality, how the project would affect erosion and nearby faults, how construction and engineered fill hauling will affect traffic and pavement conditions, and will study the noise effects of construction, blasting, mining and water treatment.

Mossman emphasized that the project will be well regulated by the state water board, the county, and California Environmental Quality Act requirements.

"All the processes and procedures are in place to address compliance and reporting issues," Mossman said. "And then of course, going through a very intense environmental review by Nevada County, under the California Environmental Quality Act."

Mossman said the water discharged from the mine would be cleaner than regulations require and "is the same as the drinking water quality standards." He added blast vibrations would be undetectable in almost all situations, and the noise would be well contained and even lower than the baseline of the surrounding area.

A map showing Rise Gold's land holding of the Idaho-Maryland mine was shown during Thursday's protest.
Photo: Elias Funez

OPPOSITION

However, many protesters felt that despite the preliminary reports on the mine's impact, they can't trust the company's claims.

Michael DeMartino, organizer with the Alliance for Resilient Communities, said he believes the science and history of mining in the area should be enough to persuade people against the project.

Pins and signs protesting the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine were distributed during Thursday's protest of one of Grass Valley and the Sierra Nevada's most successful gold mines.
Photo: Elias Funez

The group, along with the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, has been organizing people in opposition to the mine, making comments during Board of Supervisors meetings, meeting with community members on Sundays at Pioneer Park, and creating a group of well owners who may be affected by the dewatering process.

DeMartino said the community groups have a long-term plan to educate and pressure the supervisors before the project comes before them for approval.

"This gold money isn't going back to the community," DeMArtino said, reiterating that the company's claims are self-serving.

Other protesters pointed to Mossman's past as reason to be skeptical.

People hit drums and danced to the beat during Thursday's protest of the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

In 2018, as CEO of Banks Island Gold, Mossman was fined by the Provincial Court of British Columbia, Canada, for one violation of the Environmental Management Act and of one violation of the Fisheries Act. The fines were $7,500 each stemming from failure to notify regulatory officials about discharge of mine effluent into two fish-bearing bodies of water in 2015.

"That's a completely different company that has nothing to do with Rise Gold, or Rise Grass Valley," Mossman said. "Environmental compliance has been a top priority for the company."

Mossman added the past violations did not result in any environmental damage and due to this mine's design, "those types of discharges cannot happen with this project."

To contact Staff Writer John Orona, email jorona@theunion.com or call 530-477-4229.

Ten-year-old Jonakai Bottomley-Rappaport holds a sign protesting the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine Thursday at the intersection of Brunswick Road and Sutton Way in Grass Valley.
Photo: Elias Funez

Protesters filled all four corners of the Brunswick Road and Sutton Way intersection during Thursday's Rise Gold Corp. protest.
Photo: Elias Funez

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'This is not OK': Organizers mobilize in light of Rise Gold survey

Mine protesters organize in pursuit of "peace of mind"

News FOLLOW NEWS | July 22, 2021



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Mine protesters look over a map indicating areas that Rise Gold could mine if allowed to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Rise Gold's holdings stretch from East Bennett Street, to the Glenbrook Basin and the edges of downtown Grass Valley.
Photo: Elias Funez

One hundred and ten people signed up to protest at six different locations around Nevada County on Thursday to spread information about the potential risks of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Traci Sheehan helped organize the event to get petitions signed and distribute anti-mine signs, a yellow-and-black accessory for yards in the area. Sheehan, who worked to oppose Centennial Dam three years ago as coordinator for the Foothills Water Network, said the public-facing event was meant to counter any traction Rise Gold may have gained after publishing survey results she said are the antithesis to the community's true, overwhelming opinion.

Sheehan said she was unsurprised by the Rise Gold-funded survey results — which found over 60% of the county supports the mine's reopening, using a 500-person sample size — but not because she knows people personally who are vocal about their support.



Local cannabis cultivator Wade Laughter talks to people in front of Valentina's Organic Bistro Thursday morning about the impacts associated with reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

Christy Hubbard, a resident who lives close to the Idaho-Maryland Mine site, said she believes Rise Gold's intent behind the survey was to influence more than illuminate.

The survey had the opposite of Rise Gold's intended effect, Hubbard said, attributing the recent growth of the region's longtime Community Environmental Advocates group to the survey. Hubbard said she is grateful people have been galvanized by what she called obvious misrepresentation.

"People were like, 'This is not OK,' and it catalyzed the opposition," Hubbard said.

Sheehan said the group has grown "exponentially" over the last month.

RISK VERSUS GAIN

Hubbard and Sheehan, both environmental activists, said the mine makes little sense for the community when one tries to weigh the potential risk to potential gains.

Hubbard said she is grateful this is a nonpartisan issue, and that columnists who contribute regularly to The Union who she describes as conservative have come out against this business venture.

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Bob Hubbard talks to people and gets signatures from those opposed to reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Hubbard has a home in the area and says his water well would be impacted by the mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

about the mine. He said the mine will create 600 local jobs, and employ 312 people at full operation, with two-thirds of these positions projected to be filled by existing local residents.

"New local spending of $50 million per year will create an additional 300 indirect jobs in our community and bolster local businesses," Mossman said.

Hubbard said the mine would bring large risks against small benefits.

Laura Gagliasso has lived a quarter-mile from the Idaho-Maryland property on East Bennett Road for the last seven years. She said her interest in the issue began after she received a letter from Rise Gold saying that her well could possibly be affected by mining activity in the area.

Mossman has said that only wells near the Old Brunswick Mine could be affected.

"Rise has proposed to connect the entire East Bennett neighborhood to NID potable water and pay the water bills for current residents who choose to switch," Mossman stated.

Gagliasso is also concerned about noise levels, something she got a taste of during Rise Gold's period of exploratory drilling.

"It was 24/7," Gagliasso said.

Organizers in front of Three Forks in Nevada City collect signatures in opposition of Rise Gold's plans to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

Beyond the incessant noise, Gagliasso said traffic is another community concern. She said that her community has gotten a taste of the noise and traffic to come over the course of the Loma Rica Ranch project, and they do not want seconds.

Gagliasso said when the mine was shut down 70 years ago, the county's Board of Supervisors zoned the region for "light industry" and new homes were built progressively closer to the retired mine premises.

Finally, Gagliasso said she takes particular issue with Rise Gold's main selling point being the creation of jobs for the community.

"How many people in Nevada County want to work one mile underground?" Gagliasso asked. "Do you know any Nevada Union high schoolers whose mission in life is to work in a mine?"

Gagliasso called the land the mine occupies "a scarred piece of forest," and said she hopes the county supervisors will encourage and support light industry there that will employ youth.

"I don't disagree that we need jobs," Gagliasso said.

A signature is collected at an anti-mine information booth set up in front of Valentina's Organic Bistro Thursday morning.
Photo: Elias Funez

Tables were located outside of Valentina's Bakery, both Grass Valley Flour Garden locations, Natural Selection, Gaia Soap Supply and both SPD locations.

Sheehan is grateful for all of the community's support, but said she was especially moved by business owners like those of Gaia Soap Supply who explicitly came out against the mine's rehabilitation.

Sheehan said the community is rightfully concerned about how their quality of life will be affected by an active mine.

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

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'Without water, my property is worthless'

Well owners want protection from Rise Gold Grass Valley

News FOLLOW NEWS | 11 hrs ago



Christy Hubbard from Grass Valley began the public comments urging the BOS to collect a minimum of three years of baseline data on domestic wells: "Even though there are over 300 properties with wells within 1000 feet of the mine's mineral rights area, the DEIR did not provide current monitoring data from these domestic wells."
Photo by Marianne Boll-See

Well owners and community organizations urged the Nevada County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to implement better safegaurds to protect residents' domestic wells at Tuesday's regular board meeting.

Members of the Wells Coalition spoke about the need for baseline data required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) before Rise Gold Corporation's proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine continues.

"It is imperative that we have a process in place to gather baseline data for our wells before there is any further movement on this proposal. We could, literally, be facing life altering consequences and complete financial ruin without it...Without water, my property is worthless," Tony Lauria from Grass Valley said.



Tony Lauria from Grass Valley described a catastrophic event in the real possibility that [illegible] may experience. "You wake up and discover all the pressure is gone from the faucets...Oh my god! Without water, my property is worthless...Where is the protection from my county?"
Photo by Marianne Boll-See

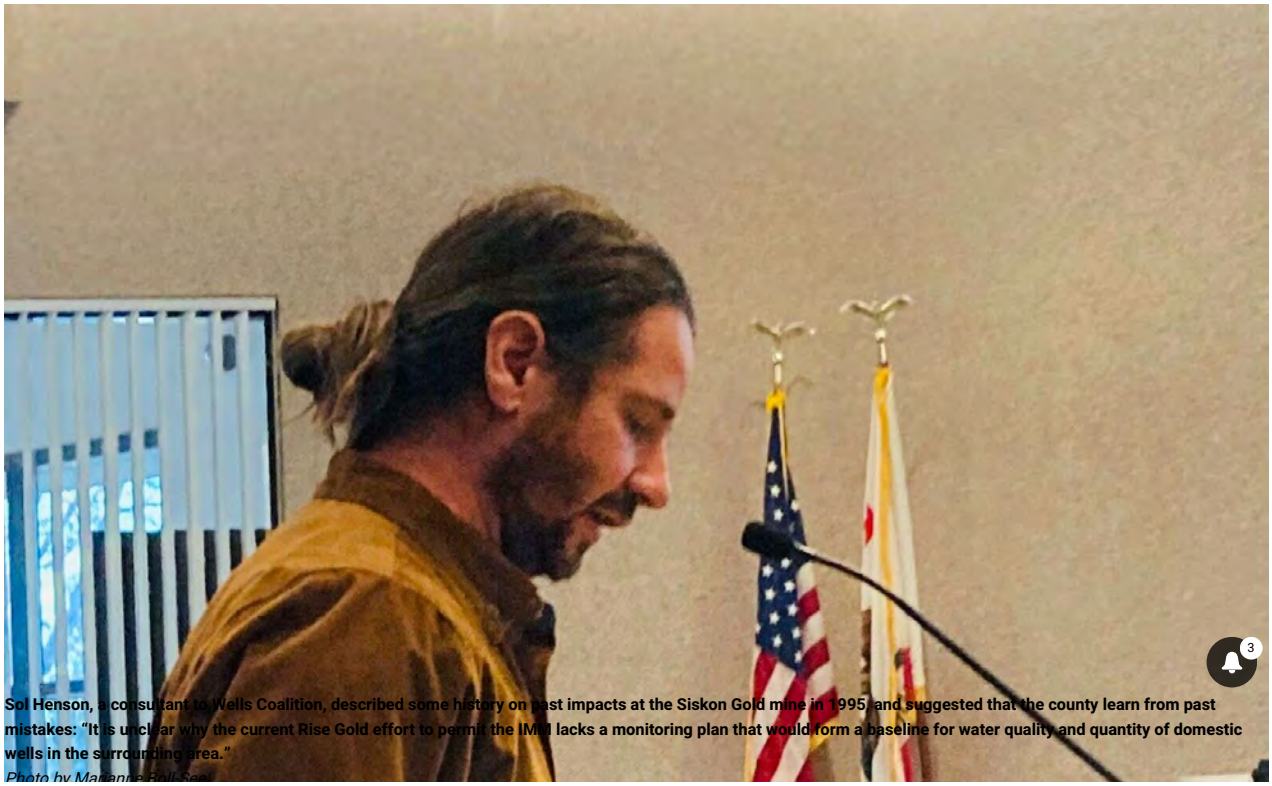


"We are confident that the county and its independent consultants will prepare a thorough final EIR to address all the comments submitted by the Nevada County community. We look forward to its release and a vote by the Board of Supervisors," Jarryd Gonzales, spokesperson, Rise Gold Corp. said in an email interview.

Rise Gold Corp. is applying to re-open the mine where the above ground properties sit on the edge of Grass Valley's city limits; however the company also purchased underground mineral rights covering over 2,500 acres in the same area. "Rise proposes pumping over a million gallons of water daily to dewater the mine. Residents are concerned that dewatering risks impacting hundreds of wells in the area," according to a press release from Wells Coalition.

In 1996 when past mining operations at the Idaho-Maryland mine occurred, a conditional use permit was granted by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to dewater the mine for exploration. Extensive preparatory work was required to assure that local residences would be able to get potable water immediately if a well problem was detected. Over 100 well monitoring sites were to be established during that time.

"In 1995 Siskon Gold operated a gold mine in the North Columbia Diggins on the San Juan Ridge. During the mining operations they breached a water bearing fault-line 300 feet underground. This breach led to water quality and quantity impacts to at least a dozen wells ...Some wells may have lost 50% capacity or had arsenic levels rise above drinking water standards," Sol Henson, consultant to the Wells Coalition told the BOS. Henson holds a master's degree in hydrology.



Sol Henson, a consultant to Wells Coalition, described some history on past impacts at the Siskon Gold mine in 1995, and suggested that the county learn from past mistakes: "It is unclear why the current Rise Gold effort to permit the IMM lacks a monitoring plan that would form a baseline for water quality and quantity of domestic wells in the surrounding area."
Photo by Marianne Bell-See

Well owners are concerned that without baseline monitoring for projects such as the Idaho-Maryland mine, well owners would have no recourse to prove the impact of the mining on their well if water levels drop or if water is contaminated.

The Wells Coalition urged the supervisors to initiate a comprehensive domestic well monitoring program for a minimum of three years and to include the baseline data in a revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIR) prior to any dewatering of the mine.

"Gravity! Nothing can stop it from drawing down water to its lowest point," Tony Lauria told the BOS.

Comments on the Draft EIR are currently being reviewed by Nevada County. The Board of Supervisors could vote on the proposal in early 2023.

"We were deeply grateful to Sue Hoeck for extending the time to allow these comments [at Tuesday's Board meeting] and those of other impacted well owners who added their voice to the effort," Chisty Hubbard from the Wells Coalition said in reference to Chair Sue Hoek, District V extending the public comment time on the agenda so all present could be heard.

The Union reached out to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors for comment, but received none as of press time.

A webinar with Robert D Niehaus Inc's Ian Monsma is scheduled to be held on Dec. 15 at 6:00 p.m. and will include an overview of the purpose and findings of the 90-page report followed by questions and answers. Attendees should submit questions in advance online.

The webinar is titled "Report on the Economic Impact of the Proposed Idaho- Maryland Mine Project" with Ian Monsma, Senior Economist, Robert D. Niehaus, Inc. leading the discussion

The zoom webinar, accessible at: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89957351191?pwd=SDBZb2pnbVc0Q3pLYk9qc0VMaTVldz09.

Find the independent report, "Economic Impact of the Proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine Project," at http://www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMEconomicReport.

> *To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com or call 530-477-4256.*

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A change of mine: Consultant makes suggestions about Idaho-Maryland Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | 20h ago



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Reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine is a hot topic in Nevada County following the end of the public comment period for the draft portion of the Rise Grass Valley proposal. The Grass Valley City Council this week hard from a consultant about the mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

A consulting group told the Grass Valley City Council this week that there are multiple technical deficiencies in the draft environmental impact report for the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Jeffrey Harvey, principal and senior scientist with Harvey Consulting group, LLC, pointed to a proposed 80-year permit for the mine, as well as water quality and emissions, when delivering his presentation Tuesday to the council. He recommended the county revise the draft EIR, recirculate it and again go through the public comment process.

Mayor Ben Aguilar said the city is not deciding the issue, but opted to hire Harvey to analyze the document and provide adequate comment.

Harvey told the council that the property is within its sphere of land use, and ought to have it reviewed before the Nevada County Board of Supervisors votes on it.

A vote by that board isn't yet scheduled.

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The Harvey Group recommended the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, which will decide whether to approve the mine's permit request, reconsider the whole approach.

"We suggest a 30-year alternative, with 10-year environmental performance reviews and adaptive management as needed," he said. "We also recommend reducing operational size by half to 500 tons per day, still a sizable operation. And we're looking at operational hours from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. We'd change to daytime hours only. The Centennial Site (10344 Centennial Drive) is proposed to have mine residual fill and it's not really acceptable for that material. It really should be permitted as a separate industrial project."

WATER, EMISSIONS

Harvey said water testing should be monthly, and if results indicate problems it should be monitored more closely. Additionally, Rise plans to use diesel equipment in mines, though Harvey said underground equipment should be electric as well, as greenhouse gas receptors have not included a map where they would be located.

"Their projected energy use is 50,000 megawatts for 80 years," he said. "We studied the Nevada County Energy Plan and found significant conflict."

There's certain significant impacts with emissions. A requirement calls for a consultant to confer with the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District, though there was no consultation with the district. A storm water mitigation was well done, Harvey said, but it was only a preliminary hydrology report and needs a final review before operations start.

There is a need for vibration monitoring for underground blasting, which should be adjusted as needed, Harvey said. A traffic assessment is a recent requirement by the California Environmental Quality Act, and the draft EIR undercounted trip generation by two-thirds, Harvey claims.

"Our recommendation, revise the DEIR of deficiencies and prepare a recirculated DEIR and go back through major public review process."

Jarryd Gonzales, spokesman for Rise, said his company is confident in the existing report.

"We are confident in the thorough analysis done by Nevada County to produce a DEIR that concludes there are no significant impacts on the environment — including to local wells, air and water quality," he said. "Rise looks forward to the county's final EIR and ultimately a decision by the Board of Supervisors."

William Roller is a staff writer with The Union. He can be reached at wroller@theunion.com

The public comment period for the Idaho-Maryland Mine draft environmental impact report has closed, though more public comment opportunities will occur in the future.

Photo: Elias Funez

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Against the mine: Environmentalists, activists explain their opposition to the Idaho-Maryland Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | September 30, 2021



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"Protect our air, water, quality of life" is written on the "No Mine" signs showing opposition to the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine in Grass Valley's Glenbrook Basin. Underground mining rights extend far underneath much of Grass Valley and community members are concerned that reopening the mine will negatively affect the area.
Photo: Elias Funez

A broad and eclectic range of local organizations have come out in opposition to the Idaho-Maryland Mine, including environmentalist nonprofits, social justice activists, and river conservation groups.

Seventeen organizations have signed onto a web campaign, titled "Stop the Mine," which was initiated by Community Environmental Advocates (CEA), a Grass Valley nonprofit focused on environmental awareness and activism.

The organizations that have signed onto the petition formally opposing the mine include The Sierra Fund, Earth Justice Ministries, the South Yuba River Citizens League, and a range of other local entities. While the mission statements and specific focuses of each of the organizations may vary, they all have the same message when it comes to the topic of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine: This is a mistake.

"It's just wrong to open up a mine like this," said CEA member and spokesperson Ralph Silberstein.

"What Rise Gold wants to do here is conduct a surgical strike, get all the money they can out of this mine, and then not clean up after

themselves," said Elizabeth Martin, CEO of The Sierra Fund.

"This mine is not the best choice for our community," said Melinda Booth, executive director of SYRCL.

The groups all said that reopening the mine would be irresponsible and could have devastating long-term impacts to both Nevada County's ecological systems as well as upon human habitation.

Mine officials disagreed.

"The Idaho-Maryland Mine is designed to produce sustainable, green gold while helping to spur the innovation economy in Nevada County with hundreds of good-paying local jobs," said Jarryd Gonzales, public relations representative for Rise Gold Corp., in a statement. "The project will use state-of-the-art mining, efficient processing techniques and zero-emission equipment to reduce greenhouse gasses and protect air quality — and that's why a survey shows a majority of residents who learn about the mine say they support it. It's also why hundreds of Nevada County residents have written us and said they support the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

"The county's independent and comprehensive analysis, the draft Environmental Impact Report, when released, is expected to weigh in on many of these issues," he added.

Signs visible from the front yards of homes along East Bennett Road in Grass Valley show their opposition to the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

CEA

Silberstein emphasized that while CEA has taken the charge in opposing large-scale projects that it sees as ecologically harmful — including the Dorsey Marketplace project, as well as the mine reopening — the nonprofit's goal is not to stifle all development.

Rather, the lifelong Grass Valley resident explained that CEA's aim is to improve public education concerning the environmental ramifications of such developments, giving business leaders the information they need to make their projects more ecologically friendly.

"What we do is make suggestions and comments. We're trying to improve these projects ... we ask for projects to make more room for trails, more open spaces, provide affordable housing and maximize energy efficiency," Silberstein said.

Silberstein said that CEA, founded in 2007, was originally a "conceptual unification" of three Grass Valley groups — the Rural Quality Coalition (RQC), Citizens Looking At Impacts of Mining (CLAIM-GV), and Citizens Advocating Responsible Development (CARD) — that shared similar beliefs and policy goals.

The groups all saw the need for the public to hear a different side of the story when it came to large-scale developments, at a time locally when Silberstein said that the only information being disseminated about such developments was propaganda put out by the projects' backers.

"Mainly, we want the public to be informed," he said. "The public isn't necessarily given the right information by the proponents of these projects and that's what motivates us ... we hear all these projects put before the county or city, and they hear all the things these people want to say, but if you don't have someone studying the other side of things, how this affects the environment and whatnot, that's an issue."

While the nonprofit tries to advise developers on how to make their projects more eco-friendly, the environmental hazards posed by

the anticipated reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine are simply too significant to ignore, Silberstein said, adding that CEA firmly believes that the only safe approach when it comes to reopening the mine is to shut it down altogether.

Among other concerns, CEA believes that the project's potential depletion and possible contamination of local groundwater reserves, combined with an anticipated increase in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the operation of the mine, make the project unsalvageable from an environmental standpoint.

"The impact to groundwater, to the wells of homeowners…there's just a whole host of issues there…there's virtually no way for the city or county to guarantee the safety of our groundwater with this project," Silberstein said.

Mine representatives have said the water it would discharge into Wolf Creek would be drinkable. It also would be held to standards more stringent than the federal government.

A sign along East Bennett Road in Grass Valley shows opposition to the mine. There have been few signs out in the community showing support for the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

SYRCL

Founded in 1983 by activists dedicated to protecting the South Yuba River watershed, SYRCL has since become a sizable nonprofit operation, run by over 1,000 volunteers and receiving approximately $2 million annually in funding.

Today, SYRCL's main focuses are restoring habitats in the Yuba watershed region, as well as on the conservation of the river itself. The group has secured permanent conservation status for 39 miles of land around the river since its inception, and continues to work on substantive restoration projects, including a 300,000-acre initiative in the north Yuba area, according to Executive Director Melinda Booth.

"The Yuba River is the economic driver of our communities…the towns around here exist the way they do because of the river…so we need to protect our resources the best way we can by creating a sustainable community," Booth said.

While the Idaho-Maryland Mine site falls outside of the Yuba watershed, Booth said SYRCL remains extremely concerned about the project's ecological ramifications, especially because Nevada County's Bear River is closely linked with the Yuba River.

"The Bear River can be considered roughly as a fourth fork of the Yuba River, and about 60% of the water in the Bear River is diverted from South Yuba," Booth said. "Whether you call it a different watershed or not, Grass Valley is still a part of our community as an organization."

In addition to echoing the concerns expressed by Silberstein regarding the mine, Booth said that SYRCL is worried about the impacts to soil sedimentation that developing the area around the mine could have on the surrounding ecosystem.

If the project goes ahead, excavating the mine could remove millions of cubic yards of soil from the earth, which is not only harmful to regional ecology but raises the likelihood of potentially devastating events associated with seismic instability, such as mudslides, Booth said.

"There's significant impacts that this mine would have on the geology and soil of the area … particularly in 'wet' years, this project could really create additional challenges to the seismic stability of the entire region," she said.

"No mine" signs have become a familiar sight around Grass Valley and Nevada City.
Photo: Elias Funez

THE SIERRA FUND

For 20 years, The Sierra Fund has focused on making landscapes more resilient to the ever-increasing effects of global climate change, Martin said.

"Our mission is to peel back the regional landscape to prepare it to better withstand drought, fire, flood, make forests and meadows resilient in face of climate change," Martin said.

The Sierra Fund is proactive in its conservation efforts, focusing a considerable amount of its resources on mine-land remediation, which involves restructuring abandoned mine sites to make these tracts of land both more ecologically conscious and amenable to human habitation, she said.

Additionally, Martin said that the nonprofit has successfully opposed environmentally unfriendly projects in its 20-year-history, including various damming, logging, and mining operations in the Sierra.

As it stands now, she thinks that reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine would be a foolhardy move, emphasizing that Nevada County should be focused on remediating mine sites to protect the landscape, rather than looking to reboot mining operations.

"It seems like they want to exploit the area for all the gold they can get without remediating the mess that the last gold miners there made on that land in the first place," Martin said, calling the Idaho-Maryland Mine a "terribly dangerous site" from an ecological standpoint.

The CEO echoed many of Silberstein and Booth's concerns that the mine could encroach on local groundwater reserves and would displace significant amounts of regional sedimentation. She also expressed that The Sierra Fund is extremely worried about the large amounts of potentially hazardous waste that will have to be disposed of in the course of day-to-day mining operations. Without a dedicated waste disposal site safely removed from living communities, Martin opined that the mining project could prove disastrous in its impact.

"This project's effects are a lot larger-scale than the project's managers want it to be ... will they fix these sorts of issues? It's just not clear," she said.

A mine representative has said the Idaho-Maryland Mine would produce 94% less waste than the industry average, and use zero-emission equipment.

FUNDING

CEA, SYRCL, and The Sierra Fund are all 501(c)(3) registered nonprofits.

Silberstein said that CEA's funding comes both through individual donations as well as significant grants from organizations that "support the cause" of the nonprofit. The nonprofit's complete tax filings are not available online, and CEA could not be reached for a comment regarding its annual revenues or compensation for its executive director and other staff.

SYRCL receives approximately $2 million annually in revenue, made up of both state and local grants as well as donations from individuals and private organizations, according to its most recent Internal Revenue Service tax filings. The organization's board of directors are all unpaid volunteers, according to Booth.

The Sierra Fund takes in about over $1 million annually in donations, according to its IRS filings, and like SYRCL also receives both state and local government grants, in addition to benefiting from individual donors. The executive director receives compensation for her role in the organization, while the remainder of the nonprofit's Board of Directors are unpaid volunteers, Martin said.

Stephen Wyer is a staff writer with The Union. He can be reached at swyer@theunion.com

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Canadian company buys Idaho-Maryland Mine for $2 million

Business FOLLOW BUSINESS |

Stephen Roberson FOLLOW

Rise Resources Inc., a junior mining company focused on exploration and based in Vancouver, British Columbia, has purchased the Idaho-Maryland Mine east of Grass Valley from Emgold Mining Corp. for $2 million.

Rise bought approximately 93 acres of surface land and about 2,750 acres of mineral rights.

“We just purchased the property and got all the old documents,” Rise Chief Executive Officer Ben Mossman said. “It’s still pretty early. The mine, the deposit itself, was quite a major deposit when they were mining it until 1952. There’s probably really good potential to build a mineral resource. That’s our interest in the property right now.

“It’s a significant mining deposit and we will look to confirm that. Once we’re able to establish a mineral resource we would look to expand that further.”

Mossman said the process will begin with geological and engineering work. A technical report must be created before Rise can move forward.

Emgold tried unsuccessfully in recent years to reopen the mine to capitalize on an estimated 472,000 ounces of gold. At one time Emgold’s Grass Valley-based president David Watkinson estimated reopening the mine would create about 600 jobs, with half going to local residents.

Environmental concerns played a significant role in Emgold’s failure to permit the operation, concerns Mossman hasn’t addressed.

“I haven’t talked to Emgold so I’m not sure what their plans were.”

Emgold, having tried to revive the mine since 2005, stopped listing it as a current project to its investors in January 2014.

The mine produced 2.4 million ounces of 15 grams-per-ton gold and was the second largest mine in the United States in 1941, producing up to 129,000 ounces of gold per year.

During World War II, the U.S. government forced it to shut down in 1942, deeming gold mining as non-essential. Instead, miners, equipment and supplies were reallocated to increase production of base metals necessary for the war effort.

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Local organization responds to mine draft report

CEA Foundation/MineWatch to request extension for public comments, hold community webinar

News FOLLOW NEWS | January 7, 2022



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Community Environmental Advocates Foundation and MineWatch, a campaign which the foundation sponsors, will submit a formal request to Nevada County asking that it extend the public comment period for the county's recently released draft Environmental Impact Report on the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, CEA Foundation president Ralph Silberstein said Friday.

Upon releasing the draft EIR on the county's website this week, as well as making the document available for review in a handful of locations, Nevada County staff stated in a news release that public comment on it was was invited for a 60-day period, which started Tuesday and will end March 4.

CEA Foundation has publicly opposed the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, with Silberstein stating in September that the only safe approach when it comes to the reopening the mine is to shut it down altogether.

In response to the draft EIR being released, MineWatch posted on its website earlier this week that the campaign and CEA Foundation's "allies have been working to analyze past technical studies and are now digging into this report." In addition, the campaign stated, it and CEA Foundation will be "asking for an extension to 90 days" to submit public comments.

"And one of the reasons is the project is massive," Silberstein said Friday, "There are hundreds of technical documents, thousands and thousands of pages, and it takes a long time to actually review those."

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Silberstein said that those reviewing the recently released technical documents have "a lot of catching up to do" as they review any changes from the versions of the documents which were released last year, adding that some are experiencing issues with accessing the draft EIR due to power outages.

"It's just a very complicated project, and it's too important to not give people an opportunity to actually understand what it means," he said.

Rise Grass Valley, which seeks to reopen the mine, has said the project's benefits outweigh the impacts.

"The results of the county's independent study and analysis of the project speak for themselves; there are no significant impacts to water quality, groundwater, air quality, or the natural environment," wrote Ben Mossman, president of Rise Grass Valley.

COMMUNITY WEBINAR

MineWatch will be holding a community webinar at 6 p.m. Jan. 27, inviting the public to "join coalition experts ... to learn about what's in the report and get inspiration for writing your own comments and making your voice heard by the supervisors."

Silberstein said the webinar's program had not been finalized as of Friday, and did not say at that time who will be speaking.

Following the release of the draft EIR, according to Silberstein, people involved with CEA Foundation and MineWatch have begun reviewing the updated technical documents with concern for whether particular areas of potential impact — such as wells, or air pollution — have been adequately addressed in the new versions.

He stated, however, that the documents to be reviewed are extensive and, at times, "very technical," meaning the effort is not one that can be completed overnight.

"So, we do have people in our group who have expertise in many of these areas, including hydrology, geology, chemistry, air and so forth," he said. "And so, we're very lucky to have so many skilled people supporting us, people who are concerned about the mine and its impact on the community."

Commenting on the contents of the draft EIR, Silberstein said, "I'd like to note that the document also states that the environmentally superior alternative would be to forgo the project entirely."

The draft EIR includes a section presenting four alternatives to the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine project, stating that an EIR "is required to identify the environmentally superior alternative from among the range of reasonable alternatives that are evaluated," as well as identify a second-place alternative if the "environmentally superior" choice is the "no project" alternative.

According to the document, the "No Project (No Build) Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative," and the alternative identified as ranking second to this one is "Elimination of Centennial Industrial Site." The latter, the document states, would reduce the greatest number of project impacts while still achieving a number of the project's main objectives.

Asked about the goal of the upcoming webinar, Silberstein said, "We have thousands of concerned citizens who want to know what they can do to stop the mine, and so we plan to help them to understand the process and provide some guidance on how to review the document, and to answer questions."

Victoria Penate is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at vpenate@theunion.com

LEARN MORE

MineWatch community webinar — 6 p.m. on Jan. 27

For more info, including a link to register, visit:

http://www.minewatchnc.org/post/take-action-draft-environmental-impact-report

To view information released by the Nevada County Planning Department about the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, including the draft EIR, visit:

http://www.mynevadacounty.com/IMMRise

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Changing times: Rise Gold seeks approval from Nevada County, not Grass Valley council

News FOLLOW NEWS | August 23, 2021



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When the first murmurings of reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine began in 1991, EmGold Mining Corp. began pursuing project approval from the city of Grass Valley.

Thirty years later, Rise Gold Corp. is seeking that same green light from the Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

Nevada County's Planning Director Brian Foss said although the mine's visible parts are located outside of Grass Valley, the two parcels tethered to the project fall within the city's sphere of influence.

According to the California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions, sphere of influence refers to a planning boundary beyond a legal boundary designating the agency's imminent growth.

"That means that the city can choose to process a land use entitlement application through their staff, their City Council and annex the land into the city," Foss said.

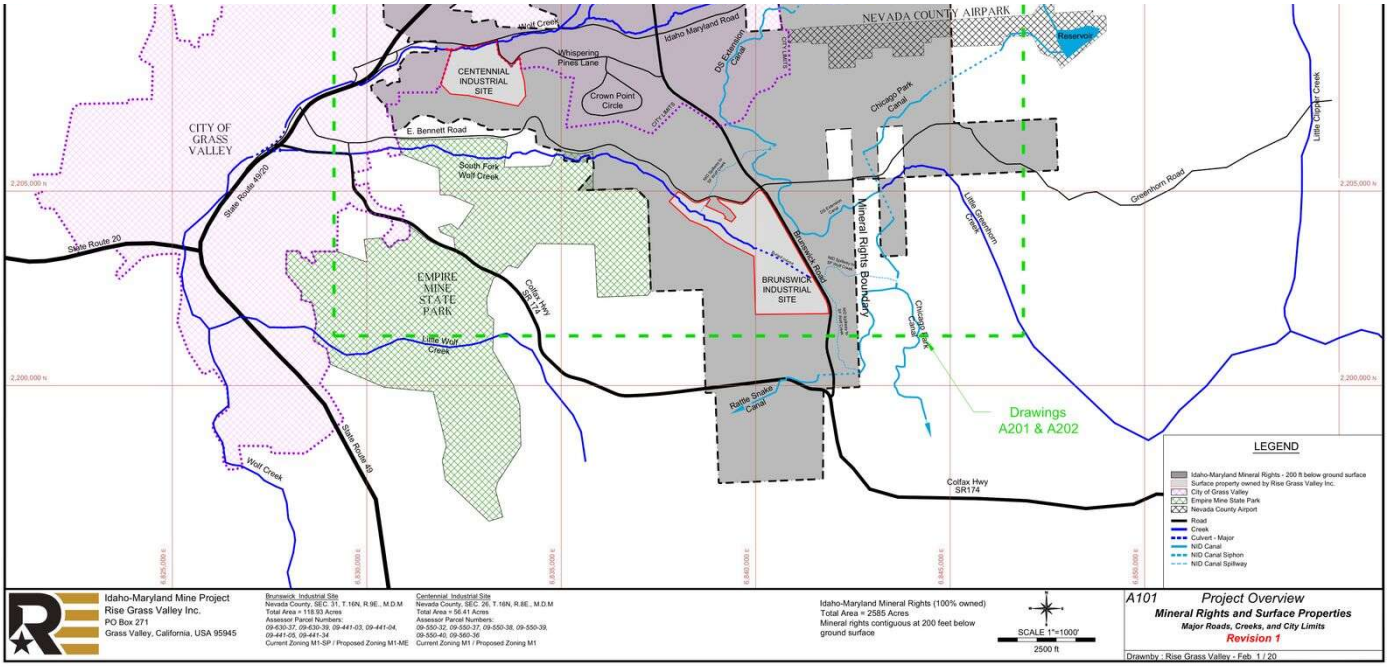
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Foss, who has worked for the county since 2005, said Grass Valley opted into its optional leadership role for the previous mine project. However, the city chose not to be the lead processing agency when Rise Gold began pursuing the project in 2017.

Foss said he was unsure why this time around the city declined the planning authority afforded to them, but noted the EmGold project involved "different components" and additional land.

Rise Gold purchased 93 acres of surface land and 2,585 acres of mineral rights from EmGold for $2 million in 2017. EmGold started selling the land in 2014 — 109 acres between 16 parcels contiguous to the Grass Valley city limits and another two parcels over 39 acres near the former New Brunswick Mine site, where a silo is still visible off East Bennett Road.

According to Rise Gold's project proposal, mine access and processing facilities will be located at the 119-acre New Brunswick site at the corner of Brunswick and East Bennett roads. Rise Gold's 56-acre Centennial site on Idaho Maryland Road, just two miles away, will be used to dispose of mine waste.



According to Rise Gold's project proposal, mine access and processing facilities will be located at the 119-acre New Brunswick site at the corner of Brunswick and East Bennett roads. If the project is approved, a treatment plant used to cleanse the water pumped out of the mine will join the tall concrete silos left over from the mine's "golden years."

Rise Gold's 56-acre Centennial site on Idaho Maryland Road, located just under two miles away just west of Centennial Drive, will be used to dispose of mine waste.

HISTORY

Grass Valley's Community Development Director Tom Last served on the Planning Commission from 2006 to 2008. Last said EmGold's original project proposal had the bulk of the mining activity taking place at the Centennial site — a region included in the city's near-term annexation plans. Before EmGold began selling its land piece by piece, the site totaled 101 acres.

"We were going to annex the property at the same time we were processing the mine application," Last said.

EmGold revised its original plan in 2008, Last said, adding the New Brunswick site onto the plan, so that the existing shaft could be used to aerate the mine and expedite mineral access.

Last said it was then that the county became involved in what was largely a city-run project.

"There was an agreement between two agencies," Last said. "It was a confusing process trying to get that worked out."

Last estimates EmGold spent $1 million dollars on Grass Valley-hired consultants — employed for their time and expertise — before abandoning the project altogether while still in its preliminary stages.

Economic, mining, planning and Environmental Impact Report consultants were not required, but the city wanted to ensure that experts were involved in every step of the city's decision making process.

The city conducted its own studies and surveys to ensure the financial viability of the project. Last said a public opinion survey conducted over a decade ago was optimistic.

"The economic study showed it was a feasible project, that it would generate revenue," Last said. "The results of the independent survey showed there was support for it, as long as environmental issues were resolved."

Last said Grass Valley received hundreds of comments during the public comment period designated for the Environmental Impact Report in January 2009. A final EIR never made it to the City Council, as EmGold did not like the first consultant Grass Valley chose to prepare the revised EIR.

"We hired another firm to do the draft and after we got those things in place, the economy started hitting the skids," Last said. "We never completed anything beyond the draft EIR."

Foss said even then that the EIR functions as a disclosure document, and does not signify the project's denial or approval.

Last said that had EmGold continued negotiations with the city of Grass Valley, the Planning Commission and the council would have had to decide whether to approve the project.

Last said had the city voted to approve the project, it would have included stipulations that generated additional revenues — "say, for every million dollars of gold brought out of the ground, the city would get $20,000."

"The production of gold is not a tax generator," Last explained. "It's a job generator."

Rise Gold's mine application is a "discretionary entitlement," so supervisors will make the final decision to approve or deny the permits required to reopen the mine. Foss said supervisors will have to present findings that support their decision to approve or deny the project.

"A Board of Supervisors can approve an EIR, indicating that it provided adequate disclosure of a project's potential impacts, and still approve or deny the project based on environmental impacts, consistency or inconsistency with county policies and/or zoning standards," Foss said. "The EIR informs the public and the decision-makers on the potential environmental impacts, but even if there are impacts to the environment, the decision-makers can adopt overriding findings that state the benefits of the project outweigh the impacts."

Foss said any decision made will be based on facts and findings related to environmental impacts and county land use policies.

Ralph Silberstein, Community Environmental Advocates Foundation member, said even if all was proven clear on the environmental front, county supervisors could very well deny the project on the basis on the minor zoning change required — between light and heavy industry.

"Even if the EIR report indicates there are no impacts at all — it's not gonna hurt anything or anybody — the county can still turn down the project," Silberstein. "The county has that discretion."

On the other hand, Silberstein said even if the EIR report finds there are significant impacts on traffic and county air quality, supervisors can override those factors by claiming that the jobs provided offset the negative consequences of the mine's reopening.

"The EIR report is non-binding, there's no teeth to it," Silberstein said.

Silberstein said if his advocacy group determines the report is inadequate, it may opt to sue the county.

CEA sued over the Dorsey Marketplace project, a legal action now headed to an appeals court.

"Rise Gold would have to pay the defendant, the county, as a matter of policy," Silberstein said. "There's an agreement to pay for legal costs."

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

Idaho-
Maryland
Mine

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Comment period ends for Idaho-Maryland Mine report

News FOLLOW NEWS | 1d ago

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The public comment period for the Idaho-Maryland Mine's draft environmental impact report is officially over.

Consultants are now charged with incorporating responses to all comments received during the period into the final EIR. According to the county website, a new public comment period begins and will last no less than 10 days before the report goes to the Planning Commission, which then will offer a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Per the California Environmental Quality Act, projects that pose potentially significant impacts to their community must have a report investigating those impacts thoroughly in a document subject to public review.

Rise Gold Corp. in 2017 purchased the mine's mineral rights — last exercised before the mine's closure in 1956 — and two parcels of land totaling 93 acres just outside Grass Valley's city limits in unincorporated Nevada County for $2 million. Supervisors approved a $381,194 maximum contract with Rise Gold in 2020, headed by a Canadian mining engineer Ben Mossman, to pay an independent consulting firm to draft the necessary report.

If approved, the project would restart underground mining and gold mineralization processing for the Idaho-Maryland Mine over an 80-year permit period for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during full operations.

Trending Articles

Nevada County Planning Director Brian Foss said the 60-day window guaranteed for public comment on Sacramento-based consultants Raney Planning and Management's report was extended to 91 days to compensate for regional power outages and internet disruptions that affected the documents' accessibility at the new year's start.

The 1,070-page report addresses the mine's tentative impact on aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, and air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

The report identifies noteworthy impacts to noise and traffic in the area. However, the mine's tentative effects on water availability, quality and purveyance has raised eyebrows among opponents, given the region's consecutive drought years.

WATER

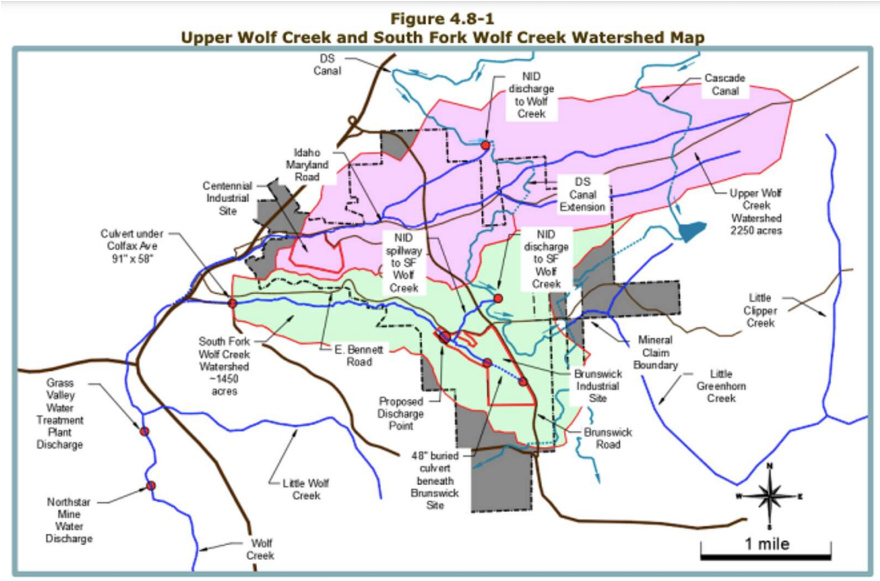
According to the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation — a community-based nonprofit that advocates for the environment, a sustainable economy and an open government in Nevada County — the first six months of mining operations requires "dewatering" the abandoned mine shafts by pumping 3.6 million gallons of water daily into South Fork Wolf Creek.

Mossman has said mine operations will actually add water to local surface-level waterways. The draft EIR indicates that the mine's dewatering process will likely affect the water columns — which change seasonally — of at least 12 nearby wells. According to Rise Gold's website, the company will connect 30 properties to the Nevada Irrigation District's potable water system "for peace of mind" before dewatering.

Ralph Silberstein heads the CEA and has advocated against the Idaho-Maryland Mine's reopening since Emgold's draft EIR was first discussed publicly over a decade ago.

Silberstein said there is no universal — or even countywide — standard to determine what makes an impact "significant" or related mitigation efforts adequate enough for a development project's approval. In the case of the mine, Silberstein said Nevada County officials are setting the environmental standards going forward.

"This is part of of the problem — thresholds are not set in stone," Silberstein said, adding that what the people and their elected authorities deem passable in the draft or final EIR will establish "what is right for the citizens of the community" down the line.



This map from Raney Planning and Management's 1,070-page report shows the surface-level waterways that the mine will take and contribute to. The mineral claim boundary, which encompasses both the Centennial and Brunswick industrial sites, is delineated by dotted lines. The proposed discharge point is in the South Fork Wolf Creek Watershed.

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

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JM **Jenny Mason** 3 HRS AGO

"The valley of Wolf Creek, from which our quiet village takes its name---a beautiful valley once green and meadow-like with the forest of tall pines on either side: what it is now, but a vast field of ditches and shafts, and piles of dirt, with sluices and toms, and windlasses and engines puffing and pumping covering its surface." Laments about damage from the mining, Grass Valley Telegraph, circa 1865.

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Community conversation: Business and Professional Women of Nevada County hold forum about Idaho-Maryland Mine

Community FOLLOW COMMUNITY | 18h ago



William Roller FOLLOW
wroller@theunion.com

The Idaho-Maryland Mine has the potential to significantly impact this community.

That's why a community conversation is needed, said Barbara Rivenes, board member of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation.

"What's at stake here?" Rivenes asked at a Wednesday Zoom forum of the Business and Professional Women of Nevada County. "Rise Gold wants to reopen a mine closed 70 years and reintroduce a heavily industrialized process into what is now an idyllic, rural, residential community."

However, Rivenes noted there are a projected 312 jobs connected to the mine, as well as short-term construction jobs. She questioned how much of that employment will be local hires, and what will happen once operations start and if management changes plans.

Contacted Thursday, Jarryd Gonzales, public relations and communications representative for Rise Gold, said a key benefit of a reopened mine will be hundreds of jobs at salaries twice the county average.

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"Rise Grass Valley will require 312 permanent full-time jobs to operate the mine," he said. "Of those, we estimate 213 to be recruited locally. With 162 filled through comprehensive training programs and trade apprenticeships."

Rivenes pointed to the recent release of the draft environmental impact report, which has an extended public comment period that ends April 4. That report states that, in addition to the scenic resources impact listed under aesthetics, there are two other impacts which are "significant and unavoidable" regardless of mitigation — "ambient noise levels" during construction of a potable water line on East Bennett Road; and traffic at the intersection of Highway 174 and Brunswick Road.

"We think their analysis is a long way from being done," Rivenes said. "We're working hard to make that clear to the powers to be. The Board of Supervisors will be the decision makers, and we're projecting a decision as early as later this year."

According to Gonzales, the report states there are no significant impacts to public health, water quality, or greenhouse gas emissions.

"Comprehensive mitigation measures proposed in the (report) are reasonable and achievable," he said. "A portion of the clean hydro-power generated in Nevada County will create jobs in our area rather being exported to other areas of the state."

Gonzales extolled county benefits derived from tax revenue from property and sales and use tax from Rise Grass Valley and its employees. Additionally, the mine's significant contribution to state and federal taxes lessens the county's burden on taxpayers fr outside the region.

William Roller is a staff writer with The Union. He can be reached at wroller@theunion.com

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FEATURED

County chambers overflow with voices for and against the mine project (PHOTO GALLERY)

Marianne Boll-See | Staff Writer
May 11, 2023

1 of 10



Both those for and against the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine were in attendance of Wednesday's f public commenters are still scheduled to give their reasons for or against the project's certification of the environmer

photos by Elias Funez/efunez@theunion.com

The Nevada County Planning Commission heard arguments for and against

the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine Project yesterday in the chambers of the Eric Rood Administration Center in Nevada City.

The chambers were filled to capacity from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and public comments will continue today as the Commission allows.

As of 5 p.m. on Wednesday, at least 365 people were signed up to speak during the public comment, according to officials from the county.

Concerned residents were seated outside of the Rood Center watching the meeting on monitors streaming the meeting live and in two of the overflow rooms on the second level of the Rood Center and in the center's former cafe as well.

Matt Kelley, Senior Planner and Nick Pappani, representing Raney Planning and Management presented the staff's analysis of Recommendation A and Recommendation B.

Kelly reviewed issues the project is consistent and inconsistent with the Nevada County General Plan policies, zoning codes, required variances for the height of some of the proposed buildings and amendments to maps.

Ben Mossman, president of Rise Grass Valley, Inc. made a presentation to the Commission stating that mining is part of the history of the area and will offer benefits for the future.

"The Idaho-Maryland mine was once the second gold producer by annual production in the entire United States," Mossman said. "Before it was forced to close in 1942, the mine employed 1,000 people and was producing on average 120,000 ounces of gold per year."

The mine is exceptional because of the high grade of the gold, according to Mossman.

“I support reopening the Idaho-Mayland mine because of the good paying jobs that Nevada County needs,” Pete Perez, resident of Grass Valley for 22 years, said. “I also believe that this state-of-the art mine... could be a world class example of how to mine cleanly, ethically and responsibly.”

Arguments in favor of the mine project stated that the mine project would improve the industrial site with trees that would shield the buildings from public view and buildings where much of the noise would be contained, according to Braiden Chadwick, council to Rise said.

Rise Grass Valley Inc. disagreed with some of the issues regarding the staff’s interpretation of the intensity of the project.

“The intensity issue is overblown,” Chadwick said.

People will be working in a building or underground so sound will be almost non-existent and trucking doesn’t run at night, according to Chadwick.

A variance would be necessary for the project to be approved regarding the size and scale of the buildings; however, Chadwick was able to point out five other examples where variances were allowed in the County.

“This isn’t your grandfather’s gold mine; our environmentally conscious and state-of-the-art gold mine has no significant impacts on water quality, wells or air quality and it will provide hundreds of good-paying jobs for Nevada County residents,” Jarryd Gonzales, representative for Rise Gold said.

The Planning Commission will choose from a “multiple choice” of recommendations which could even involve a combination of items in the initial recommendations, which was rather uncommon according to Supervisorial District IV, Mike Mastrodonato.

Speakers against the mine project gathered in the hundreds and urged the Commission to reject the project and the Environment Impact Report (EIR).

Failures in the EIR focused on air quality, soil contamination, water usage and contamination, traffic impacts were a few of the points made by individuals representing community groups against the mine project.

“There is overwhelming evidence on the record...that the EIR does not comply with CEQA,” Jillian Blanchard, Land Use attorney said. “The EIR fails to evaluate and mitigate significant impacts related to mine waste, air quality, biological and well impacts... It fails to adequately include the Centennial Site as part of the project.”

Two concerns from Jennifer Hansen, General Manager of the Nevada Irrigation District regarding well monitoring and the quality and quantity of local wells, was presented to the commissioners.

“Ground water greatly fluctuates from rain and snowmelt... we recommend a full three years of baseline monitoring,” Hansen said.

Climate change has been causing a decrease in groundwater levels, according to Hansen, also NID requests that the County require a payment of a security bond in the development agreement in the case that financial assurance if wells were impacted and needed to be connected to potable water.

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Deadline approaches: Public comment due Monday for Idaho-Maryland Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | 4h ago



Victoria Penate FOLLOW
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The public has until Monday to submit comments on the draft environmental impact report currently available on the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine project.

When the draft was released by county staff in January, the public comment period was originally set to last 60 days. It was extended in early February to last 90 days.

In an interview last month, Nevada County Planning Director Brian Foss explained that the extension had been approved based on the power outages and internet disruptions which affected the area into January due to the late-December snowstorm.

“We extended that in order to accommodate and allow people more time to find access to the document and more time to review it and provide their comments,” said Foss.

The document was prepared by Raney Planning and Management, a Sacramento-based firm which offers planning and environmental services in areas including housing, air quality, and land use, according to its website.

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CHOOSING A FIRM

Foss said that the county’s process for choosing Raney Planning and Management to prepare the EIR for this project followed standard procedure for this type of report.

“Essentially, we will send out (a request for proposals) to firms — environmental, CEQA firms in the region — and we’ll target firms that have experience with similar projects that we’re working on, good reputation, referrals, that they’re experts in the field,” he said, adding that firms typically have between 30 and 45 days to respond.

Proposals received — which, in this case, came from three firms — are then reviewed by county employees from multiple departments as well as the project applicant, according to Foss.

“However, it is strictly, 100% a county decision,” he said.

During that review, said Foss, the scoring criteria used to evaluate firms takes into account their experience with similar projects, staffing qualifications, approach and understanding of the project, and to some degree, budget and timeline.

“Based on the scores that are received, we will potentially do a follow-up interview with the top scoring firms and then select the top firm and take that contract to the Board of Supervisors for approval with the contract between that firm and the county directly,” said Foss. “And the applicant of the project pays for the amount of the contract between the county and the environmental consultant.”

Supervisors in 2020 approved a maximum contract cost of $381,194. Rise Grass Valley, the company seeking to reopen the mine, was

responsible for paying the cost, records show.

In an email, CEO Alison Lehman said that Raney Planning and Management's proposal stood out based on the firm's "thorough understanding, expertise, and approach to analyzing environmental issues like those related to the Idaho-Maryland Mine proposal."

"The draft EIR is an independent work product prepared by the consultant for the county at the developer's expense, which is a standard practice for the preparation of an EIR, and includes over 1,000 pages of analysis on the proposed mine," said Lehman.

Victoria Penate is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at vpenate@theunion.com

PUBLIC COMMENTS

County deadline for comments on draft EIR: 5 p.m. Monday

To submit:

Direct hard copy to Matt Kelley, senior planner Nevada County Planning Department, 950 Maidu Ave., Suite 170 Nevada City, CA 95959-7902

Or email Idaho.MMEIR@co.nevada.ca.us

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Digging deeper: CEA attacks mine environmental report

News FOLLOW NEWS | 17h ago



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
roneil@theunion.com

Opponents of the Idaho-Maryland Mine filed an 18-page critique of the draft environmental impact report with five days to spare before the comment period ends Monday.

The Community Environmental Advocates Foundation via MineWatch — made up of 18 nonprofits, Patagonia and Nevada County community members — itemized what it termed the report's failures through 29 key points.

Matt Kelley, senior planner for Nevada County's Community Development Agency, said he received the comments from CEA and its coalition MineWatch on Wednesday.

"Receiving comments on the adequacy of the draft EIR is part of the public process before a final EIR comes before the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors," Kelley said. "All comments submitted by April 4 at 5 p.m. on the adequacy of the draft EIR are reviewed and considered before final EIR is released."

Ralph Silberstein, with CEA, said Raney Planning & Management, the consultants hired to create the report, did not actually conduct any of the studies contained within the report. It just assembled it.

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"It's not Raney's science. It's not the county's science," Silberstein said, noting some of the technical studies are not technically "science" so much as they are assembling data — like in the case of traffic studies, for example.

Silberstein said the consultants were selected and paid for — albeit indirectly — by Rise Gold Corp., the company behind the mine project.

According to Jarryd Gonzales, spokesperson for Rise Gold, the company had to pay for the consultants as part of the project requirements.

"That's the law — for any EIR," Gonzales said. "Just because we pay for it doesn't mean we get to choose. It's not our process. Because we pay for it the implication is that it's stacked, but we have to pay for it. That's the way it is. Any applicant has to pay the fee."

Christy Hubbard, who lives near the mine, said she believes in the CEA Foundation and MineWatch's mission because of the community's need for a watchdog.

Hubbard said MineWatch's critiques were either created by or backed by four hired consultants of their own — Dave Chambers of the Center for Science in Public Participation, attorneys Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP of San Francisco, Baseline Environmental Consulting in Emeryville, and finally, acoustical consultant Salter.

"The corporation's goal is to make money," Silberstein said. "That's the difference between our side and their side. The community is the only tool that we have ... and there has to be someone in the community to watch what's going on — especially when a project this

potentially risky is going on."

CLEAN UP

The EIR assumes that the Centennial site of the mine has already been cleaned up, CEA states. Per the California Environmental Quality Act, the clean up from previous mining activity — which concluded in the 1950s — is required before Rise Gold's operations can begin.

The work required to accomplish the clean-up of the Centennial site — a 56-acre parcel located two miles away from the 119-acre New Brunswick site at the corner of Brunswick and East Bennett roads, where the bulk of the mining activity will take place — is not disclosed or evaluated at all in the EIR, CEA states.

Additionally, CEA states that the report assumes the construction required to reopen the mine would take place at once, as opposed to sequentially, rendering the construction time estimate in the report — 12 months for the project in full and 18 months for the water treatment facility alone — inconsistent.

The construction times are significant, Hubbard and Silberstein said, because they indicate how long neighbors will deal with related noise, as opposed to the blasts and rock upheaval that will inevitably follow should the mine project be approved.

Then there's the issue of the mine's tentative waste. CEA claims the consultants hired to explore the project inadequately describe the hazardous waste created by mining in the first place, fail to demonstrate that mine waste disposal via off-site sales would be viable and that processing and stockpiling may not be viable due to the necessary safeguard control of asbestos.

WATER QUALITY

According to CEA, the EIR repeatedly references a document outside of the 1,000-plus page draft to analyze the "insufficient quantity of drill core rock" necessary to determine the mine's true impact on water quality.

CEA noted that the samples taken were assessed by four different labs, and that chain of custody processes that track the movement of samples throughout their collection were not accounted for in the report.

CEA took issue with where water testing took place for the report.

"A more accurate sampling of mine water would be from the drains located along Wolf Creek rather than from the New Brunswick shaft, as described in the analysis of mine water flow, which shows water entering the shaft then flowing downward through extant mineworks to exit the drains at Wolf Creek," the comments state.

"It's a sum-total game," Silberstein said. "There are massive complications. ... it really begs a much bigger question for the community: How much disruption are we willing to put up with?"

AIR QUALITY, OTHER ITEMS

Concerning air quality, CEA states that the EIR's health risk assessment relies on meteorologic information from the Blue Canyon site, located off Highway 80, which bears little resemblance to Grass Valley.

The remainder of the points addressed by CEA include biological changes to the area, including how mine water discharges would overheat the south fork of Wolf Creek; and how the report relies on what it calls an arbitrary threshold for greenhouse gas emissions.

Silberstein and Hubbard said that although there are no universal, national or even countywide standards established for CEQA, they have been grateful to take part in the civic process.

Hubbard said CEA Foundation, created first to prevent the Idaho-Maryland Mine from reopening over a decade ago, and the MineWatch coalition, created specifically to combat Rise Gold, will continue their fight in a way that dignifies the Planning Commission, supervisors and the local community.

"We try to live and breathe a respectful, knowledge-based voice," Hubbard said.

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

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Don Rogers: Face down with mine card

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 7h ago



Don Rogers FOLLOW
drogers@theunion.com

The question at the first candidate forum for supervisors last week had to come, and so it finally did: What about the mine?

Let the dancing begin.

But hold on. This isn't what you might think. None of the candidates is afraid to take a position. That's not it at all. No cheesy politician stuff here. They would love to speak frankly. There is a popular answer.

The awful deal is this: Tip your hand as a candidate and you risk disqualifying your vote as a supervisor.

The decision about whether to approve the bid to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine fits under the heading of quasi-judicial. As such, each supervisor legally is supposed to bring an open mind to the proceedings.

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Oh boy. So the No. 1 question for voters, the only real one for so many, and they can't answer?

Yep. The wrinkle here is that the candidates with the most wisdom, knowledge and integrity can only smile and shake their heads. Can't tell you that.

Ones with less of a clue about the job will be less guarded. Sure, that's refreshing. But what's the use of knowing flat out when they can't participate in the decision?

The temptation to tip their hand is another test. Cheating is cheating. Cheat on this and you can bet the candidate has the capacity for other sleights of hand.

So it's a paradox, a conundrum. The best bet for voters looking for their will to be done about the mine is choosing the candidate with the best poker face on this deal.

OOPS, AND HUH?

I'm not sure where that puts Valentina Masterz, enthusiastic and a lot of fun. I've seen candidates like her win and do great jobs in positions like this, sometimes by sheer audacity unlocking solutions to stubborn problems. But just a little knowledge about your community would help, like, say, knowing what NID is or why flag-waving around a ballot collection box might be a problem.

So no surprise at her blurting out her feelings at candidate forums about the mine — "Hell no!" — without understanding the gaffe.

Maybe she'll recover over the course of the campaign season, though I think that card's been played. Her strong feelings wouldn't translate to a vote if she won a seat.

Her rivals in District 3, Patti Ingram Spencer and Lisa Swarthout, were way too savvy and experienced to jump for that bait at the Business Alliance forum last week and the League of Women Voters forum this week.

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They each took the opportunity last week to remind the audience they both had served on the Grass Valley City Council when a similar proposal to reopen the mine was working through the city. Emgold dropped its bid short of finishing the environmental review

process after seven years and sold to Rise Gold in 2017. The council never had to decide.

This week, both revealed a little more about their thought process. Was that a hint from the concerns each aired about environmental risks?

District 4 incumbent Sue Hoek stated the predicament plainly and with good humor at both forums. That is, she'd love to share her views but can't, and so she'll do the job of listening carefully to the proposal and the criticisms of it. Sorry. Gonna have to trust her judgment on this one.

Her competition, Calvin Clark, the leader of the supervisors recall effort, called for postponing a process that will stretch into next year in one forum and insinuated in the other that the board already has a secret deal with Rise Gold. Interesting enough takes, even if the former isn't going the happen and the latter just matches his apparent campaign theme.

CENTER STAGE

The mine is the biggest issue of the year and next year, too, for the county Board of Supervisors.

Wildfire preparedness and other effects of drought (and giant storms) are even more impactful for the residents they serve. Broadband is the greater economic opportunity. Post-pandemic healing probably is more crucial than we are thinking, cannabis less so, and housing — always housing — remains a familiar thorn no one seems able to reach, much less pull. I'm including homelessness here.

But the mine, just the thing the candidates can't talk much about, will remain front and center for the voting public. That's clear.

I have no special knowledge about anyone's thinking, but so far it looks like there's little in the way of a real mystery here. The mine owners have yet to put up a compelling reason for the county to approve their plan, and there's plenty to question with the environmental risks, lack of protective measures or public benefit, the CEO's history running a mine, and the impacts on direct neighbors.

I'm also curious which is fewer: mine supporters who will speak up, or valid signatures on that recall petition.

This has the look of a solid thumbs down, whether today's board were to take it up or next year's. Masterz likely has nothing to be concerned about there.

Don Rogers is the publisher of the Sierra Sun and The Union, based in Grass Valley. He can be reached at drogers@sierrasun.com or 530-477-4299

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Don Rogers: Mine's main ore is risk

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | May 19, 2022



Don Rogers FOLLOW
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If Rise Gold continues on its titanic quest, the county supervisors eventually will have to consider the iceberg.

I realized this recently while one of the opponents of the proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine, John Vaughan, took me through a critique of the company's sunny sales pitch about jobs and all those millions of dollars surely rippling outward from an operating mine.

The company's early pattern is to exaggerate benefits, as the opponents' is to take the bleakest view.

Meantime, the county awaits the results of its own economic study, due out anytime now. This will be the next step, the next run of the gantlet toward a decision, the next battle.

I wonder whether real flesh-and-blood local supporters will finally come out of hiding to buttress the strongest case for the mine. If a boxing match, Round 1 was nearly a knockout for opponents, who rose in real numbers to decry the draft environmental impact report's results with the county Planning Commission.

Trending Articles

But Rise still seems to be tottering along, and so the process continues as the CEO preps for perhaps his final criminal trial over his previous mine with the spill that went bankrupt and he abandoned in Canada. No jobs there in years.

UNCERTAINTY BENEATH

But what do icebergs have to do with the Idaho-Maryland Mine? Besides that their vast bulk runs below the surface?

My own greatest concern about this proposal has run vaguely on what the community would gain compared to the risks it would assume. I mean the real and quantifiable rather than leprechauns and hobgoblins in the fantasies and nightmares spun by PR literature and ignoramuses who refuse their homework.

The metaphor snapped into place for me on the 12th page of Vaughan's critique of the methodology and the assumptions baked into the software that Rise Gold and the county's consultants are both using to model the economic impact of an operating mine.

I'll leave to him and his cohorts the details of the critique they'll give the county and perhaps share in these pages, but a big part of the gist has to do with overlooking economic risks.

Sure enough, the risk/reward graphic on the last page was the classic for the seen and the unseen, that iceberg in the water, the economic risks Rise Gold's study ignores.

JUDGMENT

Risk even leaches into the races for two county supervisor seats.

The No. 1 question of this election is the very one that the most responsible and knowledgeable candidates should not answer: How would you vote on the mine?

Most basically, Rise Gold's proposal is a quasi-judicial proceeding. That is, the supervisors are compelled to act as judges and take in all the evidence and arguments without prejudging and only then decide whether to approve or reject the proposal.

A candidate expressing a position now would vastly elevate the risk of the county paying Rise Gold millions in damages following a "no" decision later if that candidate were to double down on foolishness and vote on the mine as a supervisor. Talking now effectively compromises a supervisor later. But it is an easy, popular campaign schtick.

OK, you might ask, then why can NID board members speak openly about wanting to build a whole new dam? Isn't that the same?

No. This is NID's own project, and the board isn't asked to weigh the merits of a third party's proposal. This falls into the familiar legislative work guiding what your own entity does or doesn't do. Of course, the path to building a Centennial Dam is long and would reach its own quasi-judicial reckoning with a higher body.

Dam or mine, the risk/reward iceberg confronts decision-makers. In the mine proposal's case, that's the county supervisors. What's demanded is a fair hearing.

WORTH IT?

Buoyant factors for the community's benefit are exclusively economic: jobs, tax revenue.

Risk factors span economic, environmental, the gold business, quality of monitoring, regulatory enforcement, ability to clean up accidents, those wells, the history of the CEO, the company itself, the odds of reality proving modeling wrong.

Some risks weigh heavier than others, of course, and elements such as heavy truck traffic around the mine, carbon emissions and impact on immediate neighbors are not risks but certainties.

There might be some argument about promises to clean up a nearly century-old tailings heap and establishing a fire station at the mine, but are those benefits or simply what's required? Which raises the question of what should be required of the mine owners to balance against the various risks inherent in the proposal.

Given that, the prospects look far from unsinkable and the reward dubious for the real impact on just the neighbors, never mind the sheer weight of all the risks. Yes, iceberg fits.

Don Rogers is the publisher of The Union, Lake Wildwood Independent, and Sierra Sun. He can be reached at drogers@theunion.com or 530-477-4299

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Don Rogers: Rise's messaging less than golden

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 23h ago



Don Rogers FOLLOW
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Rise Gold's PR is a disaster so far. Just sayin'.

Prepaid postcards with prewritten positive responses to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mind mailed to a few perceived friendlies? Sign here and send on to the county as if original?

Maybe the Nevada County Board of Supervisors is that gullible or jaded, I dunno.

Or the company is more interested in out-of-town investors and wholly unconcerned about the local population, counting more on this community's quiet apathy than overwrought protest.

Remaining politely reasonable while letting opponents punch themselves out with wild exaggerations is textbook public relations, by the way. Too bad Rise's flaks can't follow the script.

Trending Articles

The marketing-infused survey last summer was sleazy enough. The prepaid postcard scheme is straight out of LA. In baseball, we'd have to call this an 0-2 count.

Here is Ben Mossman's biggest whiff.

HISTORY HAUNTS

Reopening a gold mine is Sisyphean, for sure. History literally is against you. The legacy ain't pretty. Neither Grass Valley's nor Rise Gold's own.

We're still cleaning up from careless and poisonous mining, as well as recalcitrant mining companies, going back to the Gold Rush.

Mossman, the CEO of Rise Gold, still faces criminal proceedings in Canada from a mine his last company abandoned after allegedly flouting environmental regulations and leaving a toxic spill for the locals to deal with. He was fined $15,000 for minor offenses, which were set aside along with a lower court's acquittals, in a British Columbia Court of Appeal ruling in late 2020. New trial to come.

My point here is that the last thing Rise needs in a public relations strategy is flim-flam.

MEASURING UP

The science and ability to meet the regulatory standards are pretty much on the mine's side.

Discharge of water must be potable or the mine cannot operate. The mine has been dewatered twice before in its history into a stream whose flow largely is controlled. The volume of water involved is far from excessive. And what's in the mine is much deeper than the groundwater tapped today, separated from the surface by, ahem, hard rock.

Hardly anyone in Grass Valley would see or hear the big trucks almost entirely constrained to a few roads right around the mine itself. No tourist comes here for the wonders of Whispering Pines.

The mining work underground wouldn't disturb sensitive instruments on the surface, never mind human ears. Besides, the idea is to work below where miners already have gone.

Tailings from the Idaho-Maryland have sat at the surface untreated for 75 years and more; somehow the populace has survived and thrived. Treatment would at least seem to be an improvement, high as any tailings pile may grow.

What happens with the wells around the mine is more interesting. The draft environmental impact report identifies seven domestic wells along East Bennett as vulnerable to dewatering the mine, and Rise is arranging for NID to serve 30 or so households with water. Opponents, naturally, summon visions of hundreds and hundreds of wells drying up, though the geology doesn't support that claim. Still, lots of room for cracks in the study, right?

The mine's weakest point environmentally appears to be the effect on air quality in an area known for poor air, along with a growing realization about the existential dangers of greenhouse emissions. Even with meeting today's regulatory marks, which surely will strengthen.

Nonetheless, the mine looks well prepared to meet all the relevant standards it must meet to be able to operate.

Opponents may find themselves less than persuasive in hearings claiming environmental horrors that aren't remotely true.

ARE THEY SERIOUS?

But the core question here fuels real concern about risk vs. public benefit, the viability of the business itself, the credibility of the principals, how the inevitable problems in the future will be handled. Whether, even with everything in place, it's worth giving this group a green light.

Bottom line: Are these operators who can be counted on to do the right thing or not?

That's also the essential public relations challenge from the standpoint of the scientific high ground. Given that, then, why shade the language of survey questions you could ask straight up? Why the lazy, sleazy tactic with the postcards? Why overstate what already supports your cause in the draft environmental impact report?

After all, it's not only the message you need to get across, but the far more important meta message in all the messaging.

Rise needs more than anything to signal trustworthiness. Instead, their PR has doubled down on BS. Curious strategy.

Don Rogers is the publisher of The Union, Lake Wildwood Independent, and Sierra Sun. He can be reached at drogers@theunion.com or 530-477-4299

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Don Rogers: The mine's brightest promise

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 6h ago



Don Rogers FOLLOW
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A bunch of jobs created by a reopened Idaho-Maryland Mine would be a good thing all by itself.

Quibbling over the average pay, the number of positions, or where the people who take these jobs would come from misses the point.

Big new businesses in town have always drawn highly skilled employees from outside. Grass Valley Group and its offshoots. The hospital, the college, every professional firm. The Forest Service, the fire services, the courthouse, the county. The ski hills, the roofers, the schools. And yes, the logging outfits and the mines of yore.

They come from outside and then become part of the community. That's just how it works, at least at first, even with earnest commitments to try to hire local.

Western Nevada County, mecca for the gray-haired, would get a little younger with those 300 or so new jobs at the mine. There's also the ripple effect supporting those workers and their families, good for another 300 new jobs, maybe. And don't forget the construction work in the beginning, either.

Trending Articles

Three-hundred new mining jobs at an average of $94,000 each or $120,000 or $60,000, take your pick. Still adds up to more than today.

Given that, arguments that a reopened mine would have no positive economic impact via employment are, well, silly.

Score one for the mine.

JOB ONE

But even judging solely by the jobs — the No. 1 benefit supporters cite — won't make Rise Gold's proposal a great bet.

A job's no good if there's no place to work. A business that has to close becomes a job loser, a drag on the community instead of the promised boon, a worst possible outcome.

For a reopened gold mine, this means environmental regulations must be met, a complicated operation well managed, the business financed properly and able to handle contingencies. You know, like more wells compromised than anticipated, emissions exceeding limits, downturns in demand, promising veins playing out, basic cost overruns, and so on.

The environmental review underway now is only one of many steps before this proposal reaches the county supervisors for their crucial decision, and maybe among the easier hurdles by comparison.

The county has commissioned a study on the economic impacts of a reopened Idaho-Maryland, will take stock of the risks and potential benefits, consider protective measures such as bonding, and you know they'll look closely at Rise Gold as a business entity.

SHORT RUN

And here we find the venture's Achilles' heel through the prism of jobs: The track record of the company and its CEO, Ben Mossman. He's opened and run a mine before, so he has experience. He's created jobs like the ones promised at the Idaho-Maryland.

Mossman was president, CEO and manager of the Yellow Giant Mine, which began mining on remote Banks Island along the British Columbia coast in 2014. An employee in summer 2015 tipped authorities to a spill and other alleged issues. The mine's bond was not enough to pay for the cleanup on tribal land.

By January 2016, the mine was abandoned, the company bankrupt, and Mossman facing criminal charges for the spill and allegedly misleading investigators.

He still faces criminal proceedings after Canadian courts by turns acquitted and convicted him, along with levying a $15,000 fine for "minor offenses" — all of it set aside pending a new trial.

But this is yesterday's news. Some big rains, a different catchment system, a few bad-apple employees, a shrug. Not that big a deal and not his fault, apparently. As an environmental assessment officer for the Gitxaala First Nation observed, a "wild west mentality" prevailed at the isolated site.

Idaho-Maryland is a completely different operation and should be evaluated on its own merits, right? Why drag up the past from somewhere else when the future is what matters here?

Well, maybe that relates to the promise of jobs. Employment at the Yellow Giant Mine didn't last very long. Even ardent supporters of reopening the mine next to the city of Grass Valley will want to know why. They're not fools, after all.

Don Rogers is the publisher of The Union, Lake Wildwood Independent, and Sierra Sun. He can be reached at drogers@theunion.com or 530-477-4299

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Conversation FOLLOW LOG IN | SIGN UP

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RW **Ray Wheeling** 8 MIN AGO

Let us see.... We are building new housing by the hundreds along Brunswick. And now we have proponents of the mine that are fine with draining the entire underwater system in that area. Why is this a discussion? Ever hear of the drought?

REPLY 0 0

IV **IndePenndent Valley** 39 MIN AGO

Doesn't take long to get to the hyperbole and strawmen Don likes to fight. Haven't even finished it yet...and the first doozie...

No Don, literally no one anywhere is "argu[ing] that a reopened mine would have no positive economic impact via employment." Seriously. No one. That's, well, a silly thing to say.

And then to "score one for the mine" in a cute fake straw man event?

Score one for a publisher that seemingly can't debate actual arguments, requiring his own straw dummies to set up and knock down. Good work, Don. Hard job.

Glad you're taking the gloves off and now going from opponents as being liars to now just plain silly. Oof EDITED

REPLY 1 REPLY 0 1

DR **Don Rogers** M 4 MIN AGO

Reply to **IndePenndent Valley**

We all bring our own baggage to reading, and to writing, most definitely. I don't think you quite understood the opening or read beyond it, based on the comment, which seems to contain some straw of its own. I don't have an issue with opponents, only those prone to going beyond the evidence and into needless hyperbole. A more careful reader might see that, along with what this piece actually concludes.

I don't think you are reading to understand so much as to lash out, which is your privilege and that's fine. I'd encourage you to read more closely, however. Unless, of course, lashing out is more fun for you. But we actually agree more than you think, only from different perspectives.

REPLY 0 0

Add your reply

FL

Florence 2 HRS AGO

Nice to see something positive about the mine.

REPLY 0 0

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JC

Julie Carroll-Shea 2 HRS AGO

Fanciful arguments, Don. The "logging outfits and the mines of yore" are where they ought to stay: in the days of yore!

REPLY 0 0

KF

Kristopher Finstad 4 HRS AGO

Rise Gold is Canadian. It only benefits Canada as a commonwealth of the British soveriegn. Gold in the USA, should remain as property of the USA as a consideration to it being minted by the US Treasury Department and US Constitutional law. Rise Gold's assets managed have appeared to be poorly financed; still, it is reasonable to consider, that Canada's government would finance its operations. Opposing the mining operation protects a means to control inflation: should it ever happen, that again the US adopts a monetary policy neither paper driven nor Bitcoin driven but driven by gold or silver certificates. Rise Gold has a similarity to Canada's XL pipeline: exporting from the Gulf of Mexico, while contaminating 30% of the nation's drinking and irrigation water, at a higher rate than many pipelines. A point to consider is the role of Prince Charles, in the global hegemony of the World Economic Forum, and what as a reset: will benefit his kingdom. Acting locally means: recognizing the global significance of a USA, defeated--even by its allies.

REPLY 0 0

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Don Rogers: Truth's as hard to mine as gold

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | 20h ago



Don Rogers FOLLOW
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The debate over reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine feels a little like a liars' club.

No one is telling the strict truth about anything. Not the mine owners, not the CEA, not the rather wild-eyed opponents among the public, nor supporters, rare as spotted zebras in the Tahoe National Forest.

Visions arise of an oily foaming Wolf Creek, Mill Street barricades shoved aside by heavy diesel haulers roaring past the Del Oro, hundreds of wells draining as if bathtub plugs were pulled, tourists fleeing some denuded dystopia, explosions everywhere. Oh my.

Or, speaking of oily: Shiny-paper pronouncements like "The science is clear!" Postage-paid postcards with the we-need-jobs message conveniently prewritten for easiest return to the county. A used car salesman of a survey, such slick framing. Dear god. Yes, the Canadians did indeed hire an LA firm.

It's entertaining from a certain distance. It would be more entertaining if the stakes for the future weren't as high, involving a more than symbolic return to a way of life long abandoned in favor of a different gold rush for quality-of-life seekers and a whole lot of retirees.

Trending Articles

Eventually, the county supervisors will decide whether to give Rise Gold a shot, assuming California's environmental regulations — strictest in the nation — are not violated. Presumably, they'll want something in their reasoning besides tall tales and exaggeration.

What to do?

STOP SHADING

CEA and their cohorts could start by being as rigorously honest as they accuse Rise Gold of fudging.

Maybe begin with acknowledging some inconvenient truths:

▮ Hardly anyone would hear or see those big trucks as they contain their route to right around the mine. Hardly anyone would notice the Idaho-Maryland in full operation.

▮ The California standard for water quality discharged into Wolf Creek is potable. That is, you can drink the stuff. Otherwise the mine cannot operate. Hard stop.

▮ Likewise, actual noise and actual air quality standards must be met or the mine cannot operate.

▮ Somehow, poisonous tailings have sat on the surface untreated for 70 years and more. A condition of ownership of the mine is a promise to clean that up.

- There's already a gap between the top of the water flooding those mine tunnels and the bottom of where the vast majority of domestic wells draw water, independent of what's in the tunnels.

- The water that would be discharged into Wolf Creek would not be dumped to nowhere and wasted, but flow to a reservoir named Camp Far West. You might have heard of it.

- The treated water discharged into Wolf Creek would be cleaner than what most domestic wells tap now.

- The environmental impact report is not Rise Gold's but as close to an independent review as we'll see. Criticisms and other observations will add to it, and with the hearings are part of the overall process toward a final third party report.

Of course, there remains plenty else to consider. NID's general manager at last week's county Planning Commission hearing touched on some prudent points concerning the wells: Improve monitoring. Include steps to ensure that more potentially vulnerable domestic wells would be protected. Require bonding at a large enough amount to cover the costs.

These were all sensible and pragmatic recommendations delivered respectfully and free of rhetorical flourish or scorn. CEA and others might take note.

UPHILL BATTLE

Rise Gold, at least locally, has been surprisingly tone deaf, ham-handed, reactionary, doing next to nothing to build enthusiasm for their proposal. CEO Ben Mossman occasionally rises to the bait to call out exaggerations and outright falsehoods, but otherwise he has been unwilling or unable to put in the kind of effort it would take to sell the idea to a skeptical public.

It doesn't help that his previous experience running a mine in British Columbia ended with a spill left to the locals to clean up, abandonment, bankruptcy and criminal proceedings still pending. These are simply facts, ones Nevada County decision-makers need to understand while weighing a bigger proposal for a bigger mine than that one.

And given those elusive zebras in the forest, Mossman must do much better than a few slick mailings and too-obviously framed surveys in this community, as much as the prospects for jobs and the tax base indeed are attractive.

Mining's mishaps and misdeeds remain fresh memories around here, especially where they are still being cleaned up.

GOOD AS GOLD

You would not want me for a county supervisor, I know, but the thought experiment is useful. What would I be looking at? Well, my top priorities would be health and safety, and then economic benefit.

I would pay close attention to what lawyers call the "true facts," and try to separate out the noise. I'd assess possible gains and likely risks for the community. I'd weigh personal histories, financial wherewithal, how to best mitigate risk with bonds and monitoring, whether a venture is worth all of that.

I would consider community sentiment, as best I could tell, knowing NIMBYs tend to be loud but few. I'd consider the quality of their arguments, and mostly be disappointed in this case. I'd listen for independent supporters and be surprised there aren't hardly any. At least not with the gumption to speak up.

I'd think a lot about air quality independent of today's regulations, about carbon emissions and asbestos, about those neighbors around the mine, few as they are but deserving of full consideration. Approval would upend their peace most definitely. What wider public benefit balances that?

Neither the company nor the advocates seem as concerned about the strict truth as winning in this quasi-judicial process, stark positions staked out as if in a courtroom, a union negotiation, a campaign for the presidency. I would have to mine from this poor ore flakes and nuggets I could trust. I would take my time. We've only just begun, after all.

Don Rogers is the publisher of The Union, Lake Wildwood Independent, and Sierra Sun. He can be reached at drogers@theunion.com or 530-477-4299

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Don Rogers: Who owns 'the science' anyway?

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | January 20, 2022



Don Rogers FOLLOW
drogers@theunion.com

They're having none of it. That thick braid of results in common from the best science? The strict consistency in methodology, accuracy of measurement, studies conducted to proper standard and replicable? All the care taken?

No, the authorities be damned. The science of the agencies and universities, all their work, the official data, the research — all corrupt! Has to be.

The data doesn't comport with their gut, contains the wrong implications, contributes to decisions that just can't be right.

There must be other conclusions. Oh look, there are. Alternative science, which just happens to fit an ideology, a worldview, their politics.

Therefore — there is a logic to this — the apparent fringes hold the better answers, or at least more satisfying, what must be the real true truth, surely.

Trending Articles

Other factors trip up the mainstream, all those liars. Yeah, liars one and all. That's right. And who is to say which is the weaker, more flawed science anyway? Outliers have proven true in the end plenty of times.

Legitimate science may have built thriving civilizations, extended human lifetimes, made the species healthy and wealthy and to an infinitely greater degree than ever, safe.

But it's all gone wrong now. Why? Well, see for yourself. Here, check out this data (it's from the internet or a neighbor who heard something from a friend of a friend who might be a doctor or PhD or something). What are you, some kind of sheep? You actually believe the establishment?

They only want to control you, you know. Sell the masses out, enrich an evil elite. Their science has been faked. Why else would it not show what by all rights it should be showing?

You'd be excused for thinking I'm talking about the pandemic and our anti-mask, anti-vax neighbors. But I'm not. This is about the mine.

COOL VOICE OF SCIENCE

Staunch opponents of the bid to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine may have a harder case than they think relying on "the science."

They might as well be anti-vaxxers claiming massive water pollution, for instance. The standard for water discharge the mine will have to pass in order to operate is ... potable. The volume of discharge in Wolf Creek may sound impressive to a lay person, but is far less so in the context of watershed dynamics. The water is not that much of an issue in reality.

The crucial study assessing environmental risks — the Draft Environmental Impact Report, all 1,070 pages — provides a cool, perhaps dull evaluation of the proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine with today's techniques and to today's standards.

Critics will find holes and weaknesses in the plan, as they should. There are real concerns to think through and for the county supervisors to consider before making their big decision, maybe the biggest this body will make in a century.

I have confidence in the skeptics and even some advocates who will examine this and other documents with great care and tease out actual issues. I just hope their thoughtful feedback is not drowned in a torrent of inaccurate claims from those who won't bother studying anything but somehow just know anyway. Listen to them holler. Ignorance can be deafening. There's an old lawyer's saw about arguing when the facts are not on your side or you don't have command of them.

The water, the air, the soil and bedrock all test out favorably to county, state, federal regulation with the measures the mine would have to take. The noise from deep underground would be too slight to disturb sensitive instruments at the hospital directly above. There would indeed be more traffic around the mine, and construction of the surface infrastructure would be loud, too. This is what the study has found.

As for the wild-eyed emotional claims we've heard and read these past few years, well, they're pretty much baloney. That is, if you follow the science.

BY THE SWORD

This discussion fascinates me from the standpoint of people who — a bit smugly, I think — pride themselves on following "the science."

That's pretty easy when you just happen to agree with outcomes and actions. But what about when the science doesn't go your way? Here's the real test. The sword.

Actual science doesn't have an ideology or core value aside from quality of measurement. Actual science is a discipline, a method, a means of thinking more objectively about reality. It's not a slogan, shouted.

The loudest opponents making the wildest claims most unhinged from the data, the regulatory standards — the actual science — tend also to be the folks most appalled at the same sort of thinking that prevents, say, a loud minority from quite understanding how the pandemic would be a lot worse without the vaccines and a lot better if everyone got their shots.

You might conclude by now that I support the mine reopening. But that would be wrong, too.

There's plenty left to question and the county supervisors to consider. Some has to do with scientific questions, but more so in the risk analysis, quality of monitoring, ownership's background, community values today.

Ultimately, this will be a political decision, and perhaps mob outcry will carry the day. Fine, but then, that wouldn't be anything close to following the science. Let's at least be honest about that.

Don Rogers is the publisher of The Union, Lake Wildwood Independent, and Sierra Sun. He can be reached at drogers@theunion.com or 530-477-4299

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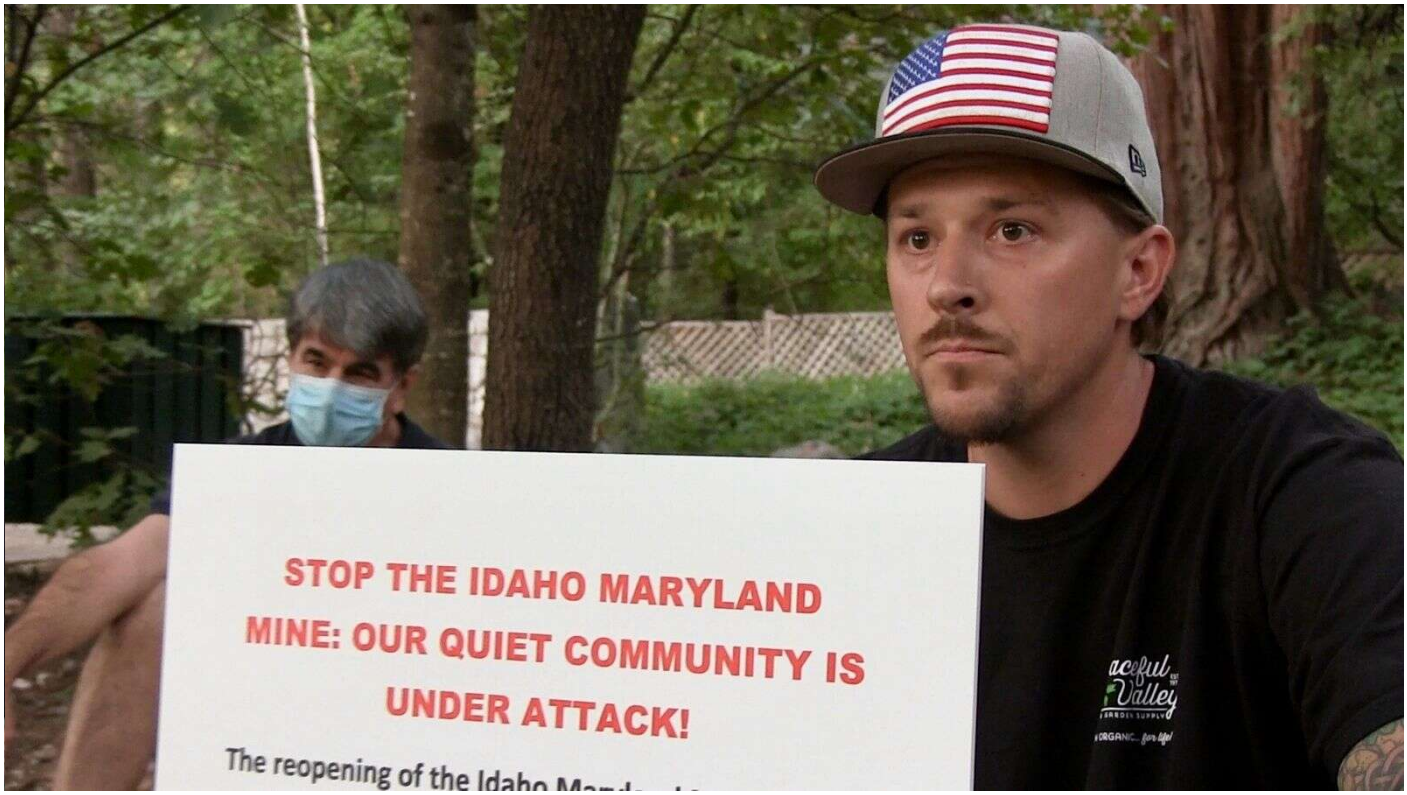
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Film about Idaho Maryland Mine to screen Thursday

Community FOLLOW COMMUNITY | February 23, 2021

Submitted by Jennifer Ekstrom



A citizen objects to the re-opening of the Idaho Maryland Mine in the film "Rise Beyond Gold," which will screen online at 6 p.m. tomorrow.

A local film, "Rise Beyond Gold," about the proposal to re-open Idaho Maryland Mine in Nevada County will be screened at 6 p.m. on Feb. 25. The online event will feature a panel discussion that includes characters and crew from the film. There will be an opportunity for an audience Q & A session. The Community Environmental Advocates Foundation is hosting the event, which can be attended via Zoom.

To attend, register at https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oaCo3c8iSqOsIbyr0tInCg.

Rise Beyond Gold tells the story of a community facing a junior mining corporation that wants to take the gold from under their property and leave a toxic legacy behind. The 13-minute film explores the environmental and social impacts the mine would cause. Rise Beyond Gold also raises critical questions for the world at large. Why do we desire gold, and considering the consequences, is it worth it?

A panel discussion will be moderated by Greg Thrush, community organizer at The Sierra Fund. Panelists include: Jennifer Ekstrom, filmmaker, Catalyst Communication Services; Menkin Nelson, film producer, Rise Beyond Gold; Ralph Silberstein, Community Environmental Advocates Foundation; Carrie Monohan, program director, The Sierra Fund; Christy Hubbard, impacted homeowner.

Created by Catalyst Communication Services, the film premiered at the flag ship Wild & Scenic Film Festival in January of 2021. After Thursday's program, the film will continue to be available for online viewing at no cost at Catalyst Communication Services at https://catalystcommunication.org. For more information, visit https://www.minewatchnc.org.

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George Boardman: Candidates can't dodge position on mine reopening

Columns FOLLOW COLUMNS | August 30, 2021

George Boardman | Columnist

She probably didn't know it when she recently declared her candidacy for the 3rd Supervisorial District, but Lisa Swarthout is the leading contender to get the job now that Supervisor Dan Miller has announced he will not seek a third term.

Miller told The Union columnist Lorraine Jewett that after 32 years of public service, it's time for him to spend more time with his wife. "If I seek another term, I might have to seek a new wife," he joked.

There is a distinct possibility the Board of Supervisors will have a female majority by the time the smoke clears in November 2022 if Supervisor Sue Hoek decides to seek re-election. Swarthout said she expects more people to enter the race — now more likely with Miller's exit — but nobody will have better name recognition in the district.

Swarthout claimed in her announcement that after nine years on the Grass Valley Planning Commission and 16 years on the City Council, she missed all of those tedious meetings.

"After seven months I realized I really miss my time as a public servant and feel that moving onto the Board of Supervisors is just a natural progression in my service to the community," she said in a press release in July.

Trending Articles

›

She also wrote that she declared her candidacy early because she wanted plenty of time to hear the concerns of voters, but then told The Union that marijuana and the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine are major issues for the district.

Impressed by the tax revenue Nevada City was collecting, she led the effort to get Grass Valley into the pot business during her last stint as mayor. Previously, no elected city official would even discuss the subject.

Swarthout hinted at some concern about how the industry is evolving in the county.

"Now is the time to look at the issues and process to see what is working and what is not," she said. "As elected officials we are expected to listen to the concerns of the people and figure out how to fix it so that it is working for all concerned."

Just six days later, Miller complained publicly about the pot scofflaws running roughshod over the county's zoning ordinance, planting pot wherever it suits them and not bothering to get legit.

He said he's been getting a lot of complaints from residents and is concerned about the environmental damage illegal grows are

causing.

"It's got to the point where maybe a moratorium on new growth permits is in order so we can get a handle on this," Miller said.

There are already an estimated 3,500 illegal grows in the county, so limiting new permits will be a Band-Aid at best. While some growers will never want to be legit, the high cost of entry, heavy taxation and mind-numbing operating requirements have caused many growers who would rather be legal to throw up their hands and say to hell with it.

Drones will be dispatched to find the biggest violators and the sheriff's Special Investigations Unit and other agencies are going after some of the most egregious despoilers of the environment. A conviction isn't exactly an express ticket to the Big House, but it's a start. It is also a problem that may have grown beyond the capacity of the county to control.

As we learned last November, Swarthout had issues with the supervisors over communications between the city and the folks in the Rood Center, and it would have been a refreshing change in local politics if Swarthout and Miller debated the issue in public. Then again, this is Nevada County, where people tend not to even name their opponents.

While pot is annoying to many residents and it never hurts to improve communications, the main issue that's likely to confront candidates in the district is the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. This could become the last major vote Miller has to cast before he leaves office.

Swarthout pointed out in an interview with The Union that she had to deal with Emgold Mining, another Canadian paper mining company that wanted to restart the Idaho-Maryland Mine back in the '00s. The city got tired of Emgold struggling to line up financing and dealing with items like the environmental impact report, and canceled the project application after four years.

Swarthout didn't offer an opinion on the Rise Gold effort.

Like everybody else, Miller has said he will withhold a decision until all of the reports are in, but told The San Francisco Chronicle he's willing to consider the proposal.

He pointed out to The Chronicle that since the demise of the timber industry, the county has pinned its hopes on tourism, then technology, then marijuana.

"We've been looking for that pot of gold that was going to reinvigorate our economy," he said. "We're still looking for something to help us out. We're certainly going to take a hard look at this project."

It's difficult to gauge local support for reopening of the mine. Many regular readers of The Union will say there is no way that's going to happen, but the opponents are always the ones who yell the loudest.

Rise Gold's survey showing support for the reopening is suspect because they paid for it, but there is a chance the survey is right. Opponents have ridiculed Rise's decision to survey just 100 people in each of the supervisorial districts, but they only have to get three supes to vote yes. Now that Grass Valley has punted the issue to the county, four of the five people who will vote on the reopening have no direct stake in the decision.

Whatever the real sentiment may be, Swarthout and anybody else who enters the race in District 3 won't be able to dodge the subject before next June's primary.

George Boardman lives in Nevada City. His column is published biweekly on Tuesdays by The Union. Write him at boredgeorgeman@gmail.com.

Observations from the center stripe: Flip-flop edition

LOCAL REPUBLICANS said a poll shows 90% of them want Assemblyman Kevin Kiley to replace Gavin Newsom as governor. Would that be the same Kevin Kiley they voted against when he opposed Brian Dahle for the vacated first state Senate seat?...THAT STATE Senate seat was vacated by Ted Gaines, who is also running for governor...ANOTHER SIGN that the end is near: I couldn't buy my granddaughter pink popcorn at the county fair. They don't make the stuff anymore...ENJOY THE gyrations while those who ran our 20-year misadventure in Afghanistan attempt to avoid responsibility...DECISIONS, DECISIONS: I can't decide if I want to start the fall season with an apple crisp macchiato or a pumpkin spice latte at Starbucks...HAS ANYBODY ever actually killed two birds with one stone?

https://www.theunion.com/news/rise-grass-valley-claiming-vested-rights-in-attempts-to-re-open-idaho-maryland-mine/article_37146400-41c4-11ee-989a-b75ee1349850.html

FEATURED

Rise Grass Valley claiming 'vested rights' in attempts to re-open Idaho Maryland Mine

Submitted to The Union
Aug 23, 2023

Rise Grass Valley plans to petition for recognition of vested rights to conduct mining operations at the Idaho Maryland Mine, according to a letter sent to Nevada County by its attorney Monday, August 21, 2023.

Rise Grass Valley, the applicant, plans to file a petition asserting vested rights by September 1, 2023.

“A vested right is a right to continue activity that existed before a zoning restriction became effective,” said County Counsel Katharine Elliott. “A vested rights finding for Rise Grass Valley would mean that the applicant has a legal right to mine on the Brunswick Industrial Site.”

The Board of Supervisors will hold a hearing on the petition in late October. This means the Board’s previously scheduled October 2-3 hearing on Rise Grass Valley’s application for a conditional use permit is canceled.

Instead of going first to the Planning Commission, the applicant has requested that its petition be heard by the Board of Supervisors and has agreed to waive any procedural rights or irregularities.

The Board of Supervisors will then hold a public meeting regarding the vested rights petition within the coming months.

The supervisors will make the final determination on whether the petition for vested rights is valid by reviewing the facts of the historical use of the mine property and the law.

If the Board approves the petition, the next step would be consideration of a reclamation plan, which would explain in detail how the applicant would operate the mine. In addition, Rise Grass Valley would need to provide a statement of responsibility and financial assurances that the applicant could cover potential damages.

If the Board denies the petition, the County will schedule a noticed public hearing to consider the original proposal to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine in early December.

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Idaho-Maryland Mine Final EIR released by County

Commission to decide on project no sooner than February

News FOLLOW NEWS | 22 hrs ago

Yesterday, the Nevada County Planning Department released the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Idaho-Maryland mine project proposal from Rise Gold Corporation in Grass Valley (RGV).

The Final EIR includes formal responses to public comments submitted regarding the Draft EIR. The Nevada County Planning Commission is slated to meet on the matter no sooner than Feb. 2023 according to officials.

Thursday evening, Dec. 15, a webinar was held to review the economic impacts of the mine and the report commissioned by Nevada County and authored by consultant Robert D Niehaus, Inc. (RDN). The webinar included an introduction, a project summary, the impact from project expenditures, the impact to property values and the economic impact of utilities and public services on the General Fund.

The RDN economic report will be used together with the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to help the Board of Supervisors make a decision about the Idaho-Maryland project which is expected no sooner than Feb. 2023

“To release a final EIR at this time is very troubling, just before the holidays, and we are asking for the Planning Commission meeting to be held in March so that the public can have enough time to review and comment,” Ralph Silberstein, President of the group Community Environmental Advocates said.

“We are going to talk with the county after the final EIR report is released tomorrow,” the presenter of the webinar, Ian Monsma, Program Manager at Robert D. Niehaus, Inc. said during Thursday evening’s online webinar.

“RGV’s mineral property tax accounts for a sizable portion of the impact to the County’s tax revenue. Mineral property taxes would be based on the amount of gold reserves that are available and economically viable, which is currently unknown. Given this uncertainty, RDN estimates that the tax revenue on mineral properties going to the County General Fund would be between $141,000 and $742,000 in the first year of full production. This value would decrease over time if mineral properties were reduced during operation without the discovery of additional reserves, according to the economic report.

“The proposed project would generate total annual output of $202.8 million in Nevada County. This includes the direct impact of an estimated $179.8 million in revenue by RGV and $23.0 million in increased economic activity at local businesses” such as local retail, wholesale suppliers, healthcare services sectors, restaurants and drinking places according to the economic report.

Over 25 questions were submitted to the presenter of the webinar in advance and one response from Monsma confirmed that the RDN economic report did not have access to the final EIR that was released hours after the webinar.

Some clarification about the jobs the mine would bring to Nevada County were discussed in reference to page 17 of the full report, “During full operation, the proposed project would employ 312 full-time workers with a total annual payroll of $38.1 million. RGV projects they would hire 213 of these workers locally and recruit 99 workers from outside the county”.

Clarifications were made during the webinar, such as the detail that “Full time jobs could include two part-time jobs that did not necessarily include benefits,” Monsma said.

Monsma confirmed that some costs were not included in the report such as the cost of mitigation if the quantity of nearby wells decreases or the quality of the water drops below acceptable levels and residents in the immediate area are effected because “it depends on the final EIR.”

When asked if the cost of clean up was included in the RDN report, Monsma’s response was that “RGV’s project expense estimates did not include expenses related to mine closure or clean up, so those expenses (and their associated economic impacts) are not included in our analysis.

“There would likely be a rise in costs for the sheriff’s department and county services” due to the increase of population, Monsma [illegible].

“Costs to the County not covered by mitigation are primarily associated with law enforcement and emergency services, which expect increases in costs related to heightened traffic on local roads and associated vehicle accidents,” the RDN report states.

Labor shortages that local businesses may experience may occur as positions at the Idaho-Maryland mine (IMM) are filled but it is likely that many workers will come from outside of the county.

"RGV projects the average compensation including wages and benefits for their 312 employees would be $122,000 per year. This includes employees that are hired locally and from outside the area. Based on the average compensation by job category, the 213 employees hired locally would have an average compensation of $117,000 per year and the 99 employees hired from outside the County would have an average compensation of $134,000 per year," according to page 18 of the RDN economic report.

The webinar also clarified the IMM's impact on property values. The report included a literature review, three case studies of similar communities with mines, and surveys sent to 362 realtors in which 75 responses were collected.

"The real estate case studies are not comperable to our area, when you see real photographs of the area – these locations have no houses around them which would impact the noise, dust and traffic. The examples from the Netherlands and Chile were almost insulting," Silberstein said.

"The results of this analysis are inconclusive regarding the magnitude and direction of impacts to nearby property values," page 69 of the RDN economic report states.

When asked why the report does not include the incidence and consequent costs (i.e. healthcare expenses and loss of work time) from illnesses relative to the mine's toxic and carcinogenic air emissions, Monsma replied, "It is outside of the scope of the study to determine what environmental impacts will or will not happen if the proposed project moves forward. This study necessarily relies on the findings of the environmental experts that evaluate the project which are detailed in the DEIR," released Friday as the final EIR.

The next steps involve a public hearing that has yet to be scheduled. Then the planning commission will make recommendations to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors (NVBOS) about the project who will review both the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and the economic impact report from Robert D Niehaus, Inc. (RDN) the independent market research and advanced data analysis group commissioned by Nevada County.

Comments made at the public hearing will be public record for consideration by the planning commission and the NCBOS.

The public can review the Final EIR at http://www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise.

Printed copies are available at the Nevada County Planning Department, the Madelyn Helling Library, and the Grass Valley Library.

> *To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com, or call 530-477-4256.*

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Idaho-Maryland Mine meeting set for next week

By navigaimport
Mar 14, 2022

Nevada County officials kept telling people they'd get plenty of chances to talk about the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

The next chance is coming up.

A special public meeting before the Nevada County Planning Commission is set for 9:30 a.m. March 24 in the Board of Supervisors chambers, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City. The commission will hear comments from public agencies and the public on the adequacy of the draft environmental impact report about the mine.

The EIR consulting firm will take the comments, and include them in a final EIR. The final EIR will be released for a public comment period as required by California law before any public hearings are held to consider the proposed project.

No date is set for the release of the final report.

Next week's meeting is one opportunity for people to deliver public comment. Comment also can also be emailed to Idaho.MMEIR@co.nevada.ca.us, or delivered to the Nevada County Planning Department, 950 Maidu Ave, Nevada City, CA 95959, attention Matt Kelley, by 5 p.m. April 4.

Next steps include another Planning Commission meeting, not yet scheduled, to consider the project and the final EIR. All comments received during the entire process will be part of the record for consideration by the Planning Commission.

That will be followed by a meeting before the Board of Supervisors to consider the proposed project, the EIR and the Planning Commission's recommendations, along with all public comment received throughout the process.

The Board of Supervisors will then take action on the proposed project.

William Roller is a staff writer with The Union. He can be reached at wroller@theunion.com

KNOW & GO

What: Planning Commission meeting about the Idaho-Maryland Mine

Where: Board of Supervisors chambers, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City

When: 9:30 a.m. March 24

MINING


THE IMPACT
IDAHO-MARYLAND MINE

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Impacts of Idaho-Maryland mine to be revealed soon

News FOLLOW NEWS | May 15, 2020

John Orona FOLLOW
jorona@theunion.com





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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Review the Rise Gold project plans at http://www.mynevadacounty.com/2881/Idaho-Maryland-Mine---Rise-Grass-Valley

In just a few months, Nevada County will decide whether its gold mining past will also be its future.

Last year Rise Gold Corp applied for permits allowing it to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine, and last month the Board of Supervisors continued the process by choosing a firm to prepare the project's draft environmental impact report, which hopes to bring to surface any community concerns.

According to a county staff report, the firm, Raney Planning & Management, was chosen in part due to its ability to address water and traffic impacts.

Previous attempts to revive the gold mine in the 1950s, 1980s and most recently in 2010 have all fell short due to financial complications and community pushback. The mine's previous owner, Emgold, was not able to produce an environmental impact report before Rise Gold purchased approximately 93 acres of surface land and about 2,750 acres of mineral rights of the mine for approximately $2 million in 2017.

Once the draft environmental impact report is completed, the firm will bring the report before the board and the public will have 45 days to comment on it before a final report is compiled, which will include responses to the public and board's comments. The final report will then go before the Planning Commission before being finalized by supervisors.

According to Rise Gold CEO Benjamin Mossman, the draft report may be available by September, with additional permitting processes anticipated to continue through January 2021.

PROJECT

Rise Gold will build processing and administration buildings on the site where the company will produce gold concentrates from the extracted rock using gravity and flotation concentration methods. The mine is expected to excavate around 1,000 tons per day.

The mine's shaft will be rebuilt and a second shaft will be constructed to be used as an escape and service shaft.

The company will need to dewater the mine before performing advanced exploration and mining the underground workings.

Water removed from the site would be treated through aeration followed by filtration through a manganese dioxide filter in a man-made pond on the site before an estimated 500-1,200 gallons per minute are discharged into Wolf Creek.

No cyanide or mercury would be used in the mineral processing.

Once operational, engineered fill mined at the Brunswick site, near Brunswick Road and Bennett Street, will be transported to the Centennial site and compacted to create a flat, developable area for industrial use. About 1.6 million tons of engineered fill over a five-year period are expected to be used for the Centennial site.

Much of the Centennial site, near Spring Hill Drive and Idaho-Maryland Drive, is either too unstable to build on or contaminated with arsenic from past mine tailings. According to Rise Gold, it is working with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to remediate the site using the engineered fill.

Mossman said the site would be mostly hidden from public view.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

According to Rise Gold, based on reports from prior attempts to reopen the mine and its environmental analysis, the company would be able mitigate the community's concerns, which have centered around water and air pollution, traffic and noise.

According to Rise Gold's technical reports, the traffic from hauling engineered fill will reach a maximum of 100 trips per day, and all construction and mining activities would fall below the significance threshold for greenhouse gas emissions. The reports say the most likely concern for noise — construction — would need to meet standards for significance.

The reports also state the project has the potential to discharge pollutant material into Wolf Creek, but compliance with waterboard regulations would make the impacts not significant.

The company plans to construct a pipeline serviced by the Nevada Irrigation District, which would supply about a half dozen property owners whose wells are in the area with potable water, a move it said is purely precautionary.

However, some residents say no amount of mitigation is enough for them to approve of the project.

"I don't think it's suitable for this area no matter what they're doing (to mitigate)," Nevada County resident Jim Wahler said. "It's an industry that doesn't belong in this community anymore."

Wahler said he's concerned about the environmental impacts, but doesn't believe the company would be able to do enough to make it worth the risk.

"All they're going to do is try to say pretty things to make it seem all right, but it's not," Wahler said. "I sure as heck hope that our Planning Commission wakes up, there's no benefit."

Others are concerned with Mossman's past business dealings.

PAST PROBLEMS

In 2018, Mossman was fined by the Provincial Court of British Columbia, Canada, for one violation of the Environmental Management Act and of one violation of the Fisheries Act. The fines were $7,500 each.

According to a release from the Canadian Environment and Climate Change office, in 2015 as CEO of mining company Banks Island Gold Limited, Mossman failed to notify regulatory officials about discharge of mine effluent into two fish-bearing bodies of water.

The company filed for bankruptcy in 2016. Mossman said the mine his company was exploring was closed down over land rights issues with First Nations people and not because of environmental issues.

9+

According to Mossman, the discharge was an isolated incident, the result of "a bypassing of a settling sump," meant to contain any sediments or debris.

"The Idaho-Maryland mine design incorporates containment, recirculation, and water treatment. All water pumped from the Idaho-Maryland mine would first go to the clay lined pond and then into the water treatment plant," Mossman said in an email. "Water discharge from the water treatment plant would be very clean water and heavily monitored by employees and state regulators."

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In the water: Rise Gold Corp. CEO speaks to water quality concerns

Idaho-Maryland Mine's EIR report to be issued in under two months

News FOLLOW NEWS | May 25, 2021



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
roneil@theunion.com

Ben Mossman, CEO of Rise Gold Corporation, is hopeful.

At the helm of Nevada-incorporated company that wants to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine, Mossman awaits the results of an environmental impact report, expected in a month or two.

Others wait for the report as well, like Ralph Silberstein of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation. Silberstein said he was part of the last team that interrupted the reopening of the mine — a four year-long community concern beginning in 2008.

Now, Silberstein said private and public stakeholders must hold Rise Gold Corp. accountable when it promises to deliver drinkable water — a promise it's made — and in particular, investigate what primary and secondary drinking water standards mean.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, national primary drinking water regulations are legally enforceable standards applied to public water systems.

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In contrast, secondary drinking water standards are "non-enforceable guidelines regulating contaminants that may cause cosmetic or aesthetic effects." Cosmetic effects are detailed as affecting skin or teeth color, and aesthetic effects refer to water's taste, odor, or color.

According to its website, the EPA recommends secondary standards, but does not require water systems to comply.

Silberstein said Rise Gold Corp.'s tentative promise to deliver "drinking water" to the people of Nevada County goes too far and contested the drinkability of water that meets the secondary standards altogether.

Jarryd Gonzales, the public relations representative for Rise Gold Corps., said if the Idaho-Maryland Mine is approved to reopen, it won't operate like "your grandfather's gold mine."

"It's perfect water quality that you could drink," Mossman said of the water that would come from the mine and would be discharged into Wolf Creek. "The limited threat general discharge permit — which we would apply to release the water under — has a huge list of allowable metals and chemicals that have to be complied with."

Mossman said California Water boards hold water to a higher standard than the EPA's primary or secondary specifications. The boards ultimately determine whether to issue the limited threat general discharge permit required to open the mine.

"They're even more stringent than the (EPA's) drinking water standards," Mossman said.

IS IT SAFE?

Mossman said the primary criteria for undrinkable water includes the presence of copper or arsenic.

"There's a secondary list of elements that could leave rust stains on your plumbing fixtures, but they aren't necessarily bad for you," Mossman said.

There are no elements of concern — namely arsenic or mercury — in the shaft water, Mossman said. Some arsenic was found in sand tailings contained by a berm at the mine's Centennial site, and Rise Gold Corps. is conducting a "voluntary" clean up under the direction of the state's Department of Toxic Substances.

Mossman said the existing water around the mine already meets primary drinking water standards, but the company's hydrologist did find levels of manganese and iron elevated past those secondary standards.

Mossman said the groundwater oxygen level is poor, which causes the iron and manganese to dissolve and react with the surroundings, producing rust or an odor. Iron and manganese can cause pipes to rust and emit a distinct odor, but have no known detrimental impacts to human health.

Andy Kopania, a hydrologist hired by Rise Gold Corp., said the surface water discharge standards used in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination permit are a chance to look at what naturally occurring minerals in the rock were dissolved into the ground water.

"The secondary drinking water standard refers to things that change the taste of water, but are not threatening to one's health," Kopania said. "It may make water have a musty odor."

Kopania said though unpleasant, water containing these naturally occurring minerals is not bad for one's health.

THE CLEANING PROCESS

According to Mossman, the processed water will, in fact, leave the mine in better condition than it entered.

Mossman said the water treatment plant affiliated with the mine will use a granulated activated carbon to precipitate iron and manganese into a solid and remove it.

"(The equipment) is designed to remove anything else that may come up," Mossman said. "It's a pretty simple process used all over California."

Mossman said the elevated levels of arsenic in the Centennial site's sand tailings may be treated with ammonia but when done so, will be part of an isolated clean up effort.

Barring the clean up, Mossman said mining does not require the use of chemicals the way a factory or wastewater treatment plant might.

"Just downstream is a sewage treatment plant and they're treating toilet waste," Mossman said. "That's not a concern in a mine where no bacteria is introduced into the water."

According to Mossman, the mine never shut down because of poor working conditions or obvious environmental issues.

The United States government closed the mines in 1942 because gold was not a useful material to mine at the time as opposed to copper, which was integral to the war effort at the time.

Mossman said when the mine opened back up, the government had fixed the price of gold.

"After 1956, the mine was no longer economically viable," Mossman said, adding that the closure was due to the fixed price of gold.

Mossman said his publicly traded company purchased the property in part to determine how much was left behind by early excavators.

PERMITTING

Mossman said he is hopeful about the permitting process because of the Emperor Gold Corp.'s approval in 1995.

According to Rise Gold Corp.'s website, despite the permit's approval, the mine didn't reopen because of insufficient funding and "poor market conditions."

Mossman said there's an existing permit to discharge water into Wolf Creek.

"They have a general discharge permit already in place," Mossman said. "You need a secondary permit to discharge water from California Regional Water Control Board."

Mossman, who moved to the region three years ago, said the board's standards are rigorous and trustworthy.

"Most mines through the country may not treat the water to this level," Mossman said, adding that California has high standards for drinking water compared to other states.

Mossman said the mine was not that toxic in its first iteration because of the nearby elements.

"There are very little metals that leech from the rock that could create a water quality problem," Mossman said.

"Because these are gold deposits in quartz veins, there are very little sulfides in the rock," the hydrologist said. "The pyrite is removed from the material and then shipped off site and the sulfide minerals are removed — those are the minerals that cause environmental issues."

Mossman said his company is awaiting approval of the use permit, which is contingent on the results of the environmental impact study, which will include water and air quality assessments.

The environmental impact report will be vetted by the county and is being conducted by a licensed hydrologist.

"We are well aware of environmental expectations of the county and the state," Mossman said. "We researched all that before we bought the property and have designed the project to eliminate concerns like that."

CEA's Silberstein said the environmental impact report, which Mossman hopes will be complete in "one to two months," requires a period of public comment and a consultant to answer those comments before it is presented to the county's Planning Commission, and then the Board of Supervisors.

"The Planning Commission just makes a recommendation," Silberstein said. "The Board of Supervisors votes to certify the EIR, which means they've accepted the EIR as being adequate."

CEA also was involved in a lawsuit against Dorsey Marketplace, a mixed commercial-residential development project with over 100,00 square feet of retail space and 172 apartments. That suit sought a coherent and cohesive environmental impact report. A Nevada County Superior Court judge dismissed the case earlier this month.

Silberstein said the county does not have to approve the mine's reopening, even if the EIR is certified.

"Whether they approve it is a second question," Silberstein said. "It might bother the neighbors, hurt the economy or be bad zoning — they have that right."

In the meantime, Silberstein said he is keeping his eyes out for "significant impacts" determined by the environmental report. If found, Silberstein said the county will need a good reason to override the report's conclusions and reopen the mine.

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

Rise Gold CEO Benjamin Mossman stands on the edge of a pond constructed on the site years ago for a logging process.
Elias Funez/efunez@theunion.com

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Independent report released on Idaho-Maryland Mine project

Webinar planned for Dec. 15

News FOLLOW NEWS | 12 hrs ago

Marianne Boll-See | Staff Writer



An independent study on the proposed re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine is scheduled for mid December and will be hosted by Robert D. Niehaus, the author of the independent report recently released by Nevada County.
Photo: Elias Funez file photo

This week Nevada County released the independent report addressing the economic impact of the proposed Idaho-Maryland mine project.

The report was prepared by Robert D. Niehaus, Inc., who conducted a study evaluating the costs and benefits of the proposed Nevada County project.

A webinar with Niehaus is scheduled for Dec. 15 at 6 p.m. and will include an overview of the purpose and findings of the 90-page report followed by questions and answers. Attendees were encouraged to submit questions in advance online.

“Potential costs include increased need for public services, while potential benefits include increased economic activity, employment, wages, and tax revenue,” the report said.

Rise Grass Valley, a subsidiary of Rise Gold Corp., would construct and operate the proposed project. The project would bring an estimated 312 jobs to the area.

“The county’s independent economic evaluation confirms the Idaho-Maryland Mine project will create hundreds of new high-quality local jobs and generate millions of dollars in new local taxes for public services,” Rise Gold spokesperson Jarryd Gonzales said.

6

Rise Gold CEO Benjamin Mossman holds a section of core sample containing chunks of gold. The sample was taken during exploratory drilling done off of East Bennett Road and prompted the company to pursue the proposed re-opening of the Idaho Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez file photo



The report found “no conclusive evidence to assert that the proposed project would have a significant impact on local property values after conducting rigorous research.” Case studies of similar communities with mines also were examined and local real estate agents were surveyed.

Three case studies of communities within a 2-5 mile radius of mines located in South Carolina, Tennessee and Amador were provided. Two out of the three cases showed a slight increase in property value.

Niehaus requested interviews with 24 real estate agencies; however, only eight out of the 24 agreed to an interview. The report cited that the “hesitancy to participate” for both businesses and real estate agencies alike was due to the “contentious nature” of the study.

The report states that the county will need to provide public services associated with the “increase of population.” Mitigation of costs that Rise Grass Valley would assume are still under approval.

“Costs to the county not covered by mitigation are primarily associated with law enforcement and emergency services, which expect increases in costs related to heightened traffic on local roads and associated vehicle accidents. The proposed project would reinitiate underground mining and gold mineralization processing for the Idaho-Maryland Mine over an 80-year permit period, with proposed operation occurring 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during full operation,” the report says.



A map showing Rise Gold’s land holding of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, in relation to the city of Grass Valley, was shown during a protest held in opposition of the proposed project last year.

Photo/Elias Funez file photo

The Brunswick Industrial Site, located immediately southwest of the East Bennett Road and Brunswick Road intersection, is located on approximately 119 acres.

During the first five years of operation, the proposed project would place engineered fill dirt at the Centennial Industrial Site located near the intersection of Centennial Drive and Idaho Maryland Round in Grass Valley.

According to officials, development is not currently permitted on the majority of this site due to unstable soils and contamination, but Rise Grass Valley is performing "voluntary cleanup" of the site. Cleanup efforts are a separate project and are not part of the proposed project, according to the description in the report by Niehaus.

Those interested in attending the webinar that would like to submit questions should use the following links:

Zoom webinar, accessible at: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89957351191?pwd=SDBZb2pnbVc0Q3pLYk9qc0VMaTVldz 09.

Find the independent report, "Economic Impact of the Proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine Project," at https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/3646/Economic-Impact-Report-of-the-Proposed-I

To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com, or call 530-477-4256.

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Input sought on Idaho-Maryland mine environmental impact report

News FOLLOW NEWS | August 4, 2020

John Orona FOLLOW
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PREVIOUS COVERAGE

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Dec. 9, 2019: Rise Gold attempts to reopen once lucrative Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine

May 15, 2020: Impacts of Idaho-Maryland mine to be revealed soon

Residents have less than two weeks to submit comments and concerns to help direct the scope of the draft environmental impact report for Rise Gold's proposed gold mining project at the historic Idaho-Maryland mine.

People can submit their comments by emailing Senior Planner Matt Kelley at matt.kelley@co.nevada.ca.us or by calling 530-265-1423 before 5 p.m. Aug. 17.

The comment period is meant to help steer the direction of the draft report and is not intended to provide answers about potential environmental impacts or the project's approval, Planning Director Brian Foss said at a scoping meeting.

The draft environmental impact report, estimated to be available to the public in late fall, will look at factors like how the project will impact aesthetics, air quality, traffic, wildfire risk, water quality, biological resources and public services.

Once the draft environmental impact report is completed, it will go before the Board of Supervisors, and the public will have 45 days to comment on it before a final report is compiled. The final report will include responses to the public and board's comments. It will then go before the Planning Commission before it's returned to supervisors for a vote.

Trending Articles

The project calls for Rise Gold to dewater the flooded mine, rebuild the existing mine shaft and construct a second one, build on-site facilities including office and warehouse space, construct a water treatment plant, and allows for mining 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The treatment facility aims to bring contaminants of concern, iron and magnesium, down from their highest sampled concentrations of 1.6 and 0.27 milligrams per liter, respectively, down to 0.3 and 0.05 milligrams per liter — which meet EPA standards for safe drinking water — before discharging treated water into the South Fork of Wolf Creek.

"We are concerned about the non-stop discharge of large amounts of water from the mine into the creek," Jonathan Keehn of the Wolf Creek Community Alliance said in a release. "South Wolf Creek should not be treated like a storm drain."

Rise Gold CEO Benjamin Mossman declined to comment on the preparation of the draft environmental impact report.

The report will specifically look at how the six-month initial dewatering process will affect surrounding wells, how discharge from the treatment plant will affect water quality, how the project would affect erosion and nearby faults, how construction and engineered fill hauling will affect traffic and pavement conditions, and will study the noise effects of construction, blasting, mining and water treatment.

The report will consider impacts cumulatively and will also evaluate project alternatives, including not moving forward with the project.

Once operational, engineered fill mined at the project's Brunswick site, near Brunswick Road and Bennett Street, will be transported to its Centennial site and compacted to create a flat, developable area for industrial use.

Much of the Centennial site, near Spring Hill and Idaho Maryland drives, is either too unstable to build on or contaminated with arsenic from past mine tailings. According to Rise Gold, it is working with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to remediate the site using the engineered fill.

To contact Staff Writer John Orona, email jorona@theunion.com or call 530-477-4229.

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FEATURED

Judgement day: Commission to make recommendations on Rise gold project

Marianne Boll-See
May 6, 2023



The Nevada County Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a hearing on Rise Grass Valley's proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine on May 10 and 11 as needed.

Elias Funez File Photo

Staff Writer

Nevada County officials are gearing up for one of the most anticipated public meetings in recent history when the Nevada County Planning Commission

will consider the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine by Rise Grass Valley Inc. during their scheduled hearing May 10 (and 11 if needed) at the Eric Rood Administrative Center in Nevada City.

Nevada County Planning staff released a report on the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine project in advance of the May 10 and 11 Planning Commission hearing with recommendations and action items for the commission to consider regarding Rise Grass Valley's plans.

The final conclusions of the 139 page staff report can be found on page 115 and provide options for the commission to either deny or approve based on findings.

County staff does recommend that the commission approve the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) required as part of the approval process in Recommendation A and B, but not the permit, zoning, variance allowances or other mitigation factors, according to staff's description in Recommendation A.

The staff's conclusions recommend that "the Board of Supervisors certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) as adequate for the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project, and that it has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act."

Options to rezone the site for mining or mineral extraction from light-industrial were rejected by staff in the report in Recommendation A.

"The project as proposed, can also be found to be inconsistent with several of the Nevada County General Plan Goals and Policies," the staff report states.

Some of those inconsistencies are in regard to approval of a variance that will allow for the construction of several structures up to a height of 165 feet. Also approval of a permit for the project is not recommended by the planning staff.

“The proposed project with 312 employees slated to work at the mine, 24 hours a day,7 days a week, would not be consistent with the ‘open, rural, lifestyle, pastoral character,’” within the General Plan Policy, the staff reports states.

If the EIR is approved, it could remain as a precedent for future mine developers, even if Rise Gold, Inc. gives up and goes away, according to Ralph Silberstein, president of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA).

“The staff’s recommendation to deny the project is a significant fact which has great influence on how the Commission will vote. This is a plus,” Silberstein said. “But the fact that both options in the staff report include certification of the EIR is a very bad idea. Only denying the project AND the EIR will defeat the mine for good.

The Planning Commission could pivot away from the staff’s recommendations and approve Rise Grass Valley, Inc. and the EIR, or reject both.

“We are pleased the Planning Commission Staff Report unequivocally recommends the Planning Commission certify the Environmental Impact Report,” Jarryd Gonzales, Rise Gold Spokesperson said. “Reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine has always been about more than creating hundreds of new good-paying jobs, it’s about building a mine that is environmentally conscious and the staff’s recommendation is validation of our vision of the

project. We thank the planning staff for their hard work and we look forward to the Planning Commission hearings in May."

The Union requested comment from Rise Gold CEO Benjamin Mossman, but was denied.

A large crowd is anticipated for the public hearing on May 10 and county staff have made May 11 available for the meeting if the allotted time frame for comments on May 10 is exceeded.

Everyone who would like to address Matt Kelley, Nevada County Senior Planner and the Commission should be prepared on May 10.

"All community members will be given the opportunity to address the Planning Commission. Each speaker will be given up to three minutes of public comment," according to the Nevada County website.

The public hearing on May 10 is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the board of supervisors' chambers at the Eric Rood Administrative Center in Nevada City and will focus on the staff's recommendations to the Planning Commission. The commission will then make a recommendation to the Board of supervisors regarding the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine, Rise Grass Valley project.

A Board of Supervisors public hearing will eventually be scheduled no sooner than August 2023 to consider the Planning Commission's recommendation according to county reports.

Matt Kelley, Nevada County Senior Planner and the Commission may reject or accept the recommendations from the staff, according to the process of

approval.

To provide public comment, attendees will be asked to get a number from staff outside the Supervisors' chambers. Public commenters will be provided their opportunity on a first come first serve basis beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Parking will be limited so public transportation is recommended.

To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com.

https://www.theunion.com/news/judgement-day-nevada-county-planning-commission-to-make-recommendations-on-idaho-maryland-mine/article_fadab0fa-eb99-11ed-91dd-0bea8490ba98.html

FEATURED

Judgement day: Nevada County Planning Commission to make recommendations on Idaho-Maryland Mine

Marianne Boll-See
May 6, 2023



The Nevada County Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a hearing on Rise Grass Valley's proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine on May 10 and 11 as needed.

Elias Funez File Photo

Staff Writer

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https://www.theunion.com/news/just-say-no-supervisors-asked-to-deny-mines-reopening-pause-to-code-compliance-evictions/article_9debcfec-9c5b-11ed-aec7-d35798288971.html

FEATURED

'Just say no': Supervisors asked to deny mine's reopening; 'Pause' to code-compliance evictions

Elias Funez | Managing Editor
Jan 25, 2023



The Nevada County Board of Supervisors listen to the public comments given during Tuesday's board meeting at the E from folks asking supervisors to oppose the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, to concerns regarding c

photos by Elias Funez | efunez@theunion.com

Tuesday's Nevada County Board of Supervisors meeting was one full of

accolades, presentations, and board approvals.

However, public comments given on topics ranging from homelessness to the possible reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine were front and center Tuesday morning.

“We will ask you to just say no, please do not certify this flawed EIR and do not approve the project,” Laurie Oberholtzer said to the members of the board in reference to upcoming decisions on the mine.

Olberholtzer, a current member of Community Environmental Advocates (CEA), is a former Nevada City mayor and planning commissioner, and warned of the lasting impacts that approval of the mine’s re-opening could cause.

“Do we want a flawed EIR in our records that can be used in our future by the next Canadian gold mining company that comes along?” Olberholtzer said.

Olberholtzer reminded the board that there are 6,500 people who have signed against the project along with 15 local and statewide groups.

“The bottom line is that the community overwhelmingly does not want the Idaho-Maryland mine to reopen,” Olberholtzer said. “The many environmental impacts associated with this project as well as the inconsistency with both Grass Valley’s and the county’s land use plans, provide ample justification for denying the project.”

Ralph Silberstein, also with the CEA, noted that the county’s final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), released late last year, omits plans to clean up the Centennial site, a historically contaminated 56-acre parcel off of

Whispering Pines and Centennial Drive in Grass Valley.

“Instead, Rise has included what it assumes are the base conditions that might occur,” Silberstein said of the proposed cleanup. “After it is cleaned up, Rise intends to dump mine waste there for about five years, but currently the cleanup is not done.”

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) states that the current conditions of a project must be assessed so that the environmental impacts and appropriate mitigations can occur.

“The EIR is left guessing as to what the two impacts of the mine might be on that site,” Silberstein said. “This final EIR is inadequate according to CEQA.”

Nevada County has previously stated that the topic of reopening the mine will come before the county’s planning commission no sooner than February of this year and eventually before the board of supervisors.

Response to code compliance evictions

Members of the community also lined up to speak on the topic of local code compliance evictions that have been highlighted by community activists spurned by the case surrounding Tanya Scarlett, who was reportedly forced by the county to remove four families living in non-compliant residences on her property in Nevada County.

Scarlett was on hand to speak directly to the board members and ask for a one year “pause” on low-priority forced relocations that could affect folks in her and her tenants’ similar situations.

“My case is an example of low-priority,” Scarlett said. “There was no imminent danger to the tenants or to me on the property, if there were, the county would not have allowed the tenants to stay for six months.

“Unpermitted RVs and trailers are being moved from one unpermitted space to another. When code compliance came to my property, they could have approached me as a property owner to say ‘how can we make this work?’ They didn’t do that, it was very punitive. I was told that I was creating a burden on the County, by housing people. I was creating space for people when there was no space for people to go.”

“I could have permitted one of those buildings but I was never given any direction on how to do that and frankly I was so traumatized by the whole experience that I gave up, and so did the tenants,” Scarlett said to the board members. “They are not doing well, they are not going to good housing situations, I don’t care what anybody says, they are doing poorly, mentally and physically, so we ask please, we can do better and we can work with you to create a solution that would ensure health and safety for everybody.”

While supervisors typically do not address public comments, Nevada County Board of Supervisors Chairman Ed Scofield did reassure the speakers that their concerns were being heard and that a meeting with the Coalition for Compassionate Governance was in the works.

“We are definitely listening to what is being said,” Scofield said to the Coalition for Compassionate Governance. “We will be working with you as best we can.”

To contact Managing Editor Elias Funez email efunez@theunion.com or call 530-477-4230.

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Local organization responds to mine draft report

CEA Foundation/MineWatch to request extension for public comments, hold community webinar

News FOLLOW NEWS | January 7, 2022



Victoria Penate FOLLOW
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Community Environmental Advocates Foundation and MineWatch, a campaign which the foundation sponsors, will submit a formal request to Nevada County asking that it extend the public comment period for the county's recently released draft Environmental Impact Report on the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, CEA Foundation president Ralph Silberstein said Friday.

Upon releasing the draft EIR on the county's website this week, as well as making the document available for review in a handful of locations, Nevada County staff stated in a news release that public comment on it was was invited for a 60-day period, which started Tuesday and will end March 4.

CEA Foundation has publicly opposed the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, with Silberstein stating in September that the only safe approach when it comes to the reopening the mine is to shut it down altogether.

In response to the draft EIR being released, MineWatch posted on its website earlier this week that the campaign and CEA Foundation's "allies have been working to analyze past technical studies and are now digging into this report." In addition, the campaign stated, it and CEA Foundation will be "asking for an extension to 90 days" to submit public comments.

"And one of the reasons is the project is massive," Silberstein said Friday, "There are hundreds of technical documents, thousands and thousands of pages, and it takes a long time to actually review those."

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Silberstein said that those reviewing the recently released technical documents have "a lot of catching up to do" as they review any changes from the versions of the documents which were released last year, adding that some are experiencing issues with accessing the draft EIR due to power outages.

"It's just a very complicated project, and it's too important to not give people an opportunity to actually understand what it means," he said.

Rise Grass Valley, which seeks to reopen the mine, has said the project's benefits outweigh the impacts.

"The results of the county's independent study and analysis of the project speak for themselves; there are no significant impacts to water quality, groundwater, air quality, or the natural environment," wrote Ben Mossman, president of Rise Grass Valley.

COMMUNITY WEBINAR

MineWatch will be holding a community webinar at 6 p.m. Jan. 27, inviting the public to "join coalition experts ... to learn about what's in the report and get inspiration for writing your own comments and making your voice heard by the supervisors."

Silberstein said the webinar's program had not been finalized as of Friday, and did not say at that time who will be speaking.

Following the release of the draft EIR, according to Silberstein, people involved with CEA Foundation and MineWatch have begun reviewing the updated technical documents with concern for whether particular areas of potential impact — such as wells, or air pollution — have been adequately addressed in the new versions.

He stated, however, that the documents to be reviewed are extensive and, at times, "very technical," meaning the effort is not one that can be completed overnight.

"So, we do have people in our group who have expertise in many of these areas, including hydrology, geology, chemistry, air and so forth," he said. "And so, we're very lucky to have so many skilled people supporting us, people who are concerned about the mine and its impact on the community."

Commenting on the contents of the draft EIR, Silberstein said, "I'd like to note that the document also states that the environmentally superior alternative would be to forgo the project entirely."

The draft EIR includes a section presenting four alternatives to the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine project, stating that an EIR "is required to identify the environmentally superior alternative from among the range of reasonable alternatives that are evaluated," as well as identify a second-place alternative if the "environmentally superior" choice is the "no project" alternative.

According to the document, the "No Project (No Build) Alternative would be the environmentally superior alternative," and the alternative identified as ranking second to this one is "Elimination of Centennial Industrial Site." The latter, the document states, would reduce the greatest number of project impacts while still achieving a number of the project's main objectives.

Asked about the goal of the upcoming webinar, Silberstein said, "We have thousands of concerned citizens who want to know what they can do to stop the mine, and so we plan to help them to understand the process and provide some guidance on how to review the document, and to answer questions."

Victoria Penate is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at vpenate@theunion.com

LEARN MORE

MineWatch community webinar — 6 p.m. on Jan. 27

For more info, including a link to register, visit:

http://www.minewatchnc.org/post/take-action-draft-environmental-impact-report

To view information released by the Nevada County Planning Department about the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, including the draft EIR, visit:

http://www.mynevadacounty.com/IMMRise

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Mine Meeting: Nevada County Planning Commission holds hearing on the Idaho-Maryland Mine (Video)

The Union staff
May 10, 2023



The Nevada County Planning Commission is getting ready to hold a hearing on the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Elias Funez / efunez@theunion.com

The Nevada County Planning Commission is getting ready to hold a hearing on the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Folks are beginning to line up.

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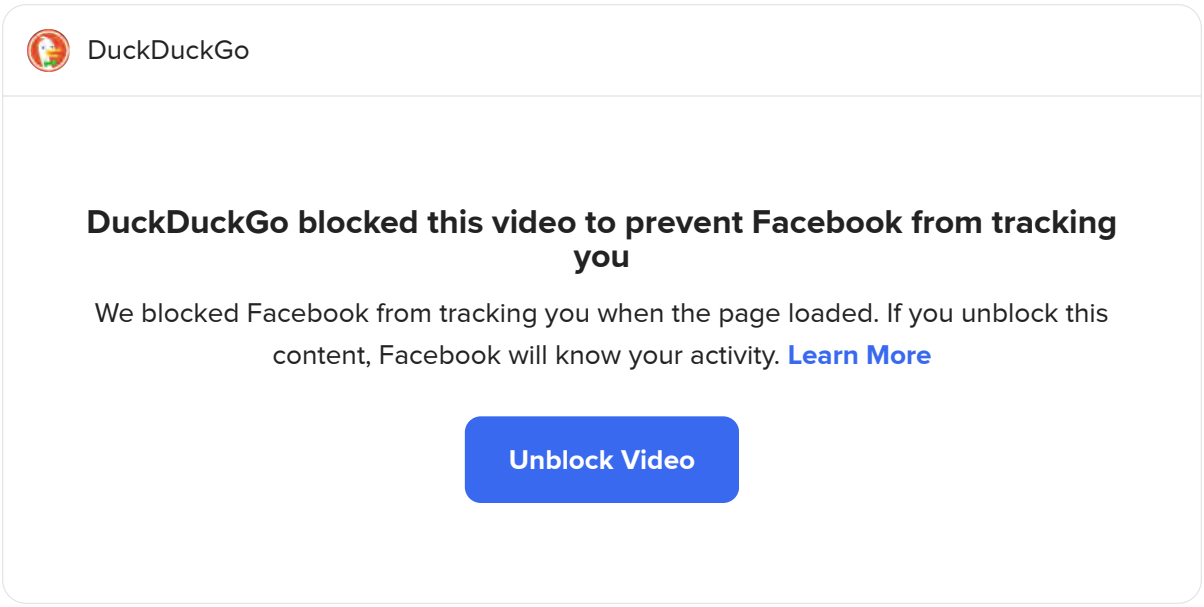
Mine Meeting: Nevada County Planning Commission holds hearing on the Idaho-Maryland Mine

The Union staff
May 10, 2023



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Elias Funez / efunez@theunion.com

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Check back for more on this developing story. Follow us on Twitter @TheUnion for live tweets as well.

Crowds showing up at the Rood Gov Center in Nevada City where the planning commission is set to hold a hearing on the proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine. Public comment expected to start after about 10 a.m. County's live feed here, https://t.co/XnPPdBimBD @TheUnion pic.twitter.com/panEhFJWIv

— Elias Funez (@Elias_Funez) May 10, 2023

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Mine the question: Candidates, attorneys weigh in on Idaho-Maryland Mine statements

News FOLLOW NEWS | May 18, 2022



William Roller FOLLOW
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Candid opinions in political campaigns may be a rare occurrence today, but one Nevada County supervisor candidate's outspokenness may prevent participating in a critical issue if elected, an attorney says.

Valentina Masterz, who is seeking the District 3 spot on the Board of Supervisors, has opposed the proposal for reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

During a League of Women Voters of Western Nevada County forum, Masterz said she opposes the mine, referencing Rise Gold's CEO Ben Mossman in her reasoning. She pointed to Mossman's history in Canada, where he faces legal action in connection to another mine.

"Would you let them come to Grass Valley, with that track record, throw a lot of money and promises at the county, in order to open their next ex-mine site in your city?" she states on her website. "Or would that be a nonstarter? The people in my district that I hear are all saying, 'no mine.'"

When contacted, Grass Valley City Attorney Michael Colantuono expressed reservations.

Trending Articles

"I advise candidates to be very careful on the campaign trail, before they make any promises regarding pending issues," he said.

He added that the mine issue will eventually become an agenda item presented before the Board of Supervisors.

"A court may decide that this official had already made up their mind before hearing or receiving any evidence," he said. "And then that elected official can be considered holding a bias before they were presented evidence and therefore cannot provide the applicant a fair hearing."

Gregg Lien, a California attorney with a private practice that's focused on land use and environmental law in the Sierra for 40 years, has a different take.

When contacted, he said, "Ms. Masterz says she questions the credibility of this applicant, and that kind of questioning should be something that is openly discussed. The reputation and trustworthiness of an applicant is directly relevant as to whether they will act diligently to reduce the impacts of the project to a less than significant level. Further, any mine project would require policy decisions to be made, and new ordinance standards may need to be adopted."

Based on his understanding of her statements, Lien said Masterz is asking appropriate questions and making a general statement as to policies she would endorse.

"I don't hear her saying she wouldn't follow the legal requirements to give a fair hearing to an applicant at a future date," he said. "As an advocate for environmental protections, I support a rigorous and comprehensive effort to identify significant impacts as well as

careful mitigation strategies. Applicants have the burden of proving their case. Until they do, a 'no mine' policy makes sense, environmentally, economically and legally."

OTHER CANDIDATES

Patti Ingram Spencer, running against Masterz and Lisa Swarthout for the District 3 seat, said in an email she would not be able to offer an opinion on the reopening of the mine until the public process has been completed.

"It would be unethical to do so," she said. "Every applicant has the right to have their project heard in a public forum with a decision made in public without prejudice or favor."

Ingram Spencer added that if Masterz were elected, she would most likely need to recuse herself from any decision on the mine because of her statements.

"As a (Grass Valley) City Council member, I might have been mayor at the time, the City Council removed a city planning commissioner for publishing letters to the editor stating his opinion on city projects that had not had due process in a public forum," Ingram Spencer said.

Swarthout, also a former Grass Valley mayor and council member, said in an email she couldn't take a public position on the mine.

"There is a rule called pre-dispositional bias," she said. "What it states is that if you campaign on an issue, or if you are elected and are going to hear the issue at a public meeting, you are required to give the issue a fair and impartial hearing. If you are biased one way or another, you can be asked to recuse yourself from voting on the issue."

Masterz, in an email, said, "I would like to remind everyone I have not mentioned any mine project by name. I would also like to know who's opinion it is and what, if any, law is referenced that would prevent a supervisor from representing the will of their constituents in her official duties. If the issue has anything to do with conflict of interest, but is just a rumor being spread by the newspaper or my opponents, I would like that to be clear in your reporting. I will say I've taken no money from any mining corporation to influence my vote and will not. I also have not taken any money from any organization opposed to any mine project in Nevada County and will not."

She continued: "The hypothetical scenario that is described on my website ... asks the question of we the people, would you want a foreign company with a history of causing criminal environmental damage to be approved of doing business here in Nevada County? My pledge is to continue to be listening to their answer. If that resonates with voters in my district, then I would be honored to have their vote."

Mossman is still facing legal action for two spills that occurred when he oversaw a previous mining operation, Banks Island, in Canada. Two convictions and a $15,000 fine for minor offenses were set aside, setting the stage for a new trial, reports state.

William Roller is a staff writer with The Union. He can be reached at wroller@theunion.com

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Mining for time: Public meeting, comment period extended for Idaho-Maryland Mine project

News FOLLOW NEWS | 1d ago

By Elizabeth White | Special to The Union



The PG&E laydown yard set up at the site of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, has been busy with crews dropping off thousands of pounds of damaged electrical infrastructure.

A special meeting of the Nevada County Planning Commission about the Idaho-Maryland Mine project has been postponed to 9:30 a.m. March 24.

The meeting will be at the Board of Supervisors chambers at the Eric Rood Administration Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City.

Additionally, the public comment period about the draft environmental impact report has been extended to 5 p.m. April 4 in order to allow the public a total of 91 days to submit comments, a Nevada County news release states.

According to Nevada County senior planner Matt Kelley, the extensions are due to the mass power outages experienced this winter.

“A lot of residents lost power and internet capabilities, so we looked at that and we had some requests from folks to consider an extension so we made the decision to extend the comment period mostly because of the winter storms that happened,” said Kelley.

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Jarryd Gonzales, spokesperson for Rise Grass Valley — which seeks to reopen the mine — said the company sympathizes with Nevada

County residents affected by the power outages during the winter storm, which caused the postponement.

“We support full public participation in the draft environmental impact report process, and we encourage every resident to read the document. The Idaho-Maryland Mine will provide tremendous economic benefits to Nevada County with minimal impacts,” Gonzales said.

Betsy Brunner, communications director for the South Yuba River Citizens League, stated that the organization is appreciative of the county’s decision to extend the comment period for the mining project.

“Per our letter sent last month requesting the extension, 60 days was too little to review the 1,070-page document with 40 technical appendices and provide substantive and meaningful comments. For a project that could have a dramatic impact on our community, being thorough and thoughtful is essential, and that takes time.” Brunner said.

The project itself would commence underground mining and gold mineralization processing for the Idaho-Maryland Mine, utilizing a permit lasting up to 80 years.

Following completion of mining and processing activities, the project sites would be reclaimed to open space and land suitable for future development.

To learn more about the project, review documents, view the basic project timeline and sign up for email, visit http://www.mynevadacounty.com/IMMRise.

Elizabeth White is a staff writer with the Sierra Sun, a sister publication of the Union. She can be reached at ewhite@sierrasun.com

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https://www.theunion.com/news/environment/mining-opposition-reopening-idaho-maryland-mine-protested/article_98bc82f6-dae2-515d-bf24-0584e8d985b6.html

Mining opposition: Reopening Idaho Maryland mine protested

Sep 17, 2020



About 60 protesters gathered along Brunswick Road in front of Rise Gold's access to the Idaho Maryland Mine Thursda

corporation’s plans to reopen the gold mine. The project’s environmental impact report scoping period, a discussion c
closed..

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Nevada County community weighs in on mine's economic report

Supervisors could vote on project in early 2023

News FOLLOW NEWS | 11 hrs ago

Submitted to The Union



Signs along East Bennett Road in Grass Valley alert passers by of the looming danger from the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine by Rise Grass Valley, a subsidiary of Rise Gold Corp.
Photo: File Photo

Nevada County Supervisors may soon consider whether or not to approve a controversial plan to reopen a historic gold mine in Grass Valley. To inform their decision, the Nevada County commissioned an Economic Impact Report studying the Idaho-Maryland Mine. The report was authored by consultant Robert D Niehaus, Inc. (RDN). A community webinar on Tuesday offered perspectives and insights from community experts on the report's findings.

The long-shuttered Idaho Maryland Mine is proposed to be reopened by Rise Gold Corp – a company headquartered in Canada. Nevada County was once the epicenter for gold mining. The big mines shut down in the 1950s, and mining is now less than ½% of the local economy. The county, particularly Grass Valley, is now considered a scenic and cultural destination.

For the last three years, businesses, residents and community leaders have expressed concerns about the potential economic impacts of the mine, including impacts on tourism, property values, tax revenue and high-tech companies.

"We are grateful to the county for commissioning an independent economic report, which provided a useful framework for assessing the impacts," said Ralph Silberstein, President of CEA Foundation. "It corrected some of Rise Gold's most outrageous claims. And yet, like the Draft EIR released earlier this year, the report relied heavily on information provided by the applicant."

During the webinar, Silberstein noted that RDN downgraded Rise Gold's local spending projections, adjusting initial claims of generating over $12.5M a year to just under $5M. Similarly, assertions about generating 300 "indirect" jobs were reduced to 163 jobs..

"Economic studies often present an incomplete picture," stated John Vaughan, CIO PRIDE Industries, retired. "In this case, the software model used is designed to showcase benefits and highlight revenues – it is specifically designed not to show economic risk and real cost. When used in combination with data provided by Rise Gold, many of the economic benefits were unrealistic."

IMPLAN, the software model utilized in the study, is widely used within the industry by project applicants to highlight the economic benefits of a project, but it has limitations. For instance, Vaughan asserted that Rise Gold's estimate of annual expenses is half the industry average, thus inflating the estimate of mineral property taxes that would be paid to the county. In addition, the cost of risk to the county for catastrophic events, health consequences, and other unintended outcomes was not included in the report.

"This report is in no way conclusive," stated Jim Steinmann, Founder of Steinmann Facility, Planning and Project Management. "Benefits to the community are substantially overstated, the costs of operations are understated, and the risks are ignored. For instance, over half the workers would likely be commuters sharing rental housing. Only a fraction of their spending would stay in the county."

Mining is a different kind of job compared to most other industries. With 12-hour shifts and one-week-on / one-week-off schedules, many workers live elsewhere, commuting in for half the month and spending far less money locally.

Steinmann asserted that commuting workers would comprise 58% of Rise Gold's workforce, rather than the 32% stated in the report. He also downgraded their local spending estimates from $61M to just over $15M. Steinmann has decades of project management experience on mining and industrial projects, including the development of economic impact reports.

Impacts on property values were also a hotly contested issue. Attendees were taken through an extraordinary visual journey comparing the neighborhoods around the three mines used in the real estate case study. "The case studies show us that this project is unprecedented," said Martin Webb, KVMR Radio Host and four-time business owner. "RDN identified three mines that were similar, but none were a good match for our properties, home values or the sheer number of homes in close proximity to the mine."

The Draft Environmental Impact Report states that dozens of long-term adverse impacts will remain, such as traffic, noise, and visual impacts. The RDN report acknowledges these impacts could make "the surrounding area a less desirable place to live or visit," translating to economic costs, including reduced property values and county tax revenues. The report, however, does not try to quantify these costs.

"A closer examination of the RDN Report leaves a lot of room for questioning their conclusions. Tuesday's panelists found that the numbers were overly optimistic, that the real estate estimates were a big miss, and that the possible economic benefits to the community would be overshadowed by a lot of downside risk." Silberstein concluded.

The Final Environmental Impact Report was released Friday, Dec. 16. That sets the controversial proposal up for consideration in early 2023. The environmental review process does not require the completion of an economic study, but the five-person Board of Supervisors will consider both reports when deliberating on the project in the new year.

A link to a recording of the webinar can be found at MineWatch December Meeting – Economic Report Review.

The county's economic report can be found at Economic-Impact-Report_Final. The final environmental report can be found at Final Environmental Impact Report. (nevadacounty.ca.gov)

For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: http://www.MineWatchNC.org ***

About CEA Foundation: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. http://www.cea-nc.org. CEA Foundation is the sponsor of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine. http://www.MineWatchNC.org

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Nevada County expects draft independent mine impact study in March

News FOLLOW NEWS | December 31, 2021



Victoria Penate FOLLOW
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Rise Grass Valley — a subsidiary of Rise Gold Corp. which has proposed the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine — asked in a letter earlier this month that local businesses "encourage the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to approve the project."

Rise Grass Valley President Ben Mossman wrote in the Dec. 13 letter that the company's plan to reopen the mine will spur the creation of over 600 new jobs in Nevada County — 312 of which would be people hired by Rise Grass Valley directly, while the rest are estimated to be created in the community "through local supplier spending on goods and services integral to the ongoing operation of the mine," the letter states — as well as expand the county's tax base and result in over $50 million per year in new local spending.

Mossman also wrote that the project "isn't only about jobs and the economy," listing a number of actions he says have been incorporated into the project proposal, including funds going toward the Ophir Hill Fire Protection District, a new Nevada Irrigation District water supply pipe and permanent connection for some homes near the mine to the district's supplies, and the creation of 31 acres of "flat usable industrial zoned land."

The letter asked local businesses, if they supported Rise Grass Valley's efforts, to fill out an attached "support card" and send it back to the company.

UPCOMING INDEPENDENT ECONOMIC STUDY

Nevada County supervisors gave their unanimous approval Dec. 14 to a contract with Robert D. Niehaus, Inc. (RDN), which is set to conduct an independent study regarding the potential economic impacts of the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine reopening.

Trending Articles

The county released a Request for Proposals in early September, inviting qualified firms to be considered to produce an independent analysis and report covering the following areas: property values, job creation, impact on the county's tax base, impact to other commercial operations in the county, and impact on several areas of service levels.

According to Desiree Belding, deputy purchasing agent with the county's Department of Information and General Services, the county received five proposals before its request closed Oct. 8.

Rise Grass Valley has shared an Applied Economics LLC report from March titled "Economic Impacts of the Idaho-Maryland Mine on Nevada County" on its website, alongside a September report prepared by real estate consultant RCLCO covering potential impact to the local housing market.

"It is fairly typical for the county to do their own internal test when there are things happening in their community," said Belding on the county having issued its request for proposals.

According to the contract, following a number of data collection and economic and fiscal analysis tasks, the firm will present a dr report mid-March and receive the county's comments on it through March 30.

A final report is expected April 13, with the firm to assist the county with public comments from April 14 to May 12, as well as attend a

public hearing April 27.

HOUSING MARKET REPORT

Dated Sept. 3, the housing market impacts study prepared for Rise Grass Valley by RCLCO states in its introduction that Rise engaged the real estate consulting firm to evaluate the potential impacts of the mine reopening on the local market, particularly home prices, in order to respond to recent questions and concerns, "with Realtors in the local market suggesting that home prices would experience a meaningful decline."

The firm's case study looks at the Haile Mine, a South Carolina open-pit gold mine opened in 2017; the Gordonsville-Cumberland Mines, two zinc mines reopened in 2017 in Tennessee; and the Lincoln Mine, reopened in Amador County in 2014 by Sutter Gold Mining. It describes these mines as "analogous," stating that the latter two sites' underground operations closely resemble those proposed for the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

In each of these cases, according to the study, home prices both in the mines' immediate surroundings and region were not found to have been impacted negatively, and instead saw higher annual price growth in the four years after the mine opened than it had in the four years prior.

The study clarifies within its key findings that it is important to note that external factors can also influence the price increases during these periods.

JOBS

A 2019 project description, prepared by Benchmark Resources for Rise Grass Valley, Inc. and submitted to the Nevada County's Community Development Planning Department, included a planned workforce for the project.

The description estimates a 52-person workforce during construction, followed by an initial underground mining period for which Rise anticipates hiring 121 workers. Full operations, the document states, will involve an estimated total workforce of 312 people.

The estimate breaks this down into categories, with the vast majority — 202 workers — in "underground mine," 64 in "mineral processing," and 36 in "management and technical staff." Fewer than five jobs each are listed under the areas assaying and construction; truck transport of engineered fill; and placement and compaction of engineered fill for the Centennial or Brunswick Industrial Sites.

According to the economic impact study commissioned by Rise Grass Valley, and completed by Applied Economics LLC in March, the 312-person workforce is intended to include 213 local hires and trainees.

Of these 213 local people, the study states, 162 would be trainees or entry level workers and 51 would be experienced hires. The other 99 workers "are assumed to be hired from outside the county."

Victoria Penate is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at vpenate@theunion.com

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Nevada County releases draft EIR for Idaho-Maryland Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | January 4, 2022

Submitted to The Union

From Nevada County:

Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and

Notice of Public Meeting to Provide Comments on the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project EIR

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A 60-DAY REVIEW PERIOD HAS BEGUN TO PROVIDE INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AND RESPOND TO THE ADEQUACY OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT PREPARED FOR THAT PROJECT KNOWN AS THE IDAHO-MARYLAND MINE PROJECT.

Read the draft EIR here.

Trending Articles

The Draft EIR (SCH #2020070378) for the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project is now available for review. Public comment on this document is invited for a 60-day period commencing on January 4, 2022 and ending on March 4, 2022. For more information, the Notice of Availability, Draft EIR and other project materials, are now available for public review and download on the Nevada County website at: http://www.mynevadacounty.com/IMMRise.

A printed copy of the Draft EIR is available for public review at the following locations during normal business hours:

Nevada County Planning Department, 950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 170, Nevada City, CA 95959

Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City, CA 95959

Grass Valley Library – Royce Branch, 207 Mill Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Bear River Library, 11130 Magnolia Road, Grass Valley, CA 95949

Doris Foley Library for Historical Research, 211 North Pine Street, Nevada City, CA 95959

Penn Valley Library, 11252 Pleasant Valley Road, Penn Valley, CA 95946

Truckee Library, 10031 Levon Avenue, Truckee, CA 96161

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Planning Department highly recommends scheduling an appointment ahead of time to review the Draft EIR.

A Special Public Meeting before the Nevada County Planning Commission will be held on February 23, 2022, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chambers at the Eric Rood Administration Center, 950 Maidu Avenue, First Floor, Nevada City, CA 95959 to receive comments from public agencies and the public on the adequacy of the Draft EIR. Future notice of public hearings will be

provided in accordance with Nevada County noticing requirements.

For information on how to participate in the Special Public Meeting, please see the Agenda, which will be available at least five (5) days before the meeting at: http://www.mynevadacounty.com/AgendaCenter/Planning-Commission-10

All comments on the Draft EIR, must be received in writing by the County of Nevada no later than 5:00 pm on March 4, 2022, to be considered.

Comments must be submitted in writing (email or hardcopy) and be directed to:

Matt Kelley

Senior Planner, Nevada County Planning Department

950 Maidu Avenue Suite 170

Nevada City, CA 95959-7902

or in email Idaho.MMEIR@co.nevada.ca.us

To learn more about the project, review documents, view the basic project timeline, sign up for email, please visit the County's website: http://www.mynevadacounty.com/IMMRise.

Rise Gold's statement on the draft EIR:

"The release of Nevada County's Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is a major milestone toward the Board of Supervisors' formal review and decision on approval of the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project.

"The results of the county's independent study and analysis of the project speak for themselves; there are no significant impacts to water quality, groundwater, air quality or the natural environment.

"Rise Grass Valley is proud of its state-of-the-art Idaho-Maryland Mine reopening project that will minimize air and greenhouse gas emissions and protect water quality while creating more than 600 good-paying jobs, increasing fire safety and boosting the Nevada County economy.

"The DEIR release and its science-backed results begin a comprehensive and transparent public review process. We look forward to discussing the project and its significant benefits to Nevada County in the near future."

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https://www.theunion.com/news/nevada-county-releases-staff-report-on-rise-grass-valley-s-vested-rights-petition-ahead-of/article_547f5918-8ef0-11ee-9f70-1beb01fb8118.html

FEATURED

Nevada County releases Staff Report on Rise Grass Valley's vested rights petition ahead of December 13 hearing

The Union staff reports
Nov 29, 2023

1 of 2



If the Nevada County Board of Supervisors denies Rise Grass Valley's vested rights petition, then a hearing with the Bo original project. If the supervisors approve their petition, then a detailed plan on how the mine will be operated will t the vested rights petition will be honored is set for Wed Dec. 13.

Elias Funez File Photo

Nevada County released the staff report today responding to Rise Grass Valley's Vested Rights Petition to conduct mining operations at the Idaho Maryland Mine.

The County released the staff report ahead of the upcoming Special Meeting of the Board of Supervisors scheduled for December 13. Staff are recommending that the Board make the following finding: 1) that mining operations on the subject property that the Petitioner is seeking a finding of vested rights were abandoned as early as 1956; and 2) neither the Petitioner nor any other party has a vested right to mine on the subject property. At the meeting, the Board will hear presentations from Planning Department staff and Rise Grass Valley, followed by public comment and Board deliberation.

"A vested right is a right to continue activity that existed before a zoning restriction became effective," said County Counsel Katharine Elliott. "Should the Board of Supervisors make a 'vested rights finding,' it would mean that Rise Grass Valley has a legal right to mine on the Brunswick Industrial Site."

The Board is expected to decide whether to find vested rights based on facts concerning the historical use of the Idaho Maryland Mine property currently owned by Rise Grass Valley and the applicable law on vested rights.

Community Environmental Advocates (CEA), one of the main local groups opposing the Idaho-Maryland Mine's proposed re-opening, emphasized that the County still has to provide a comprehensive analysis of the history or the mine and the legal aspects of the Vested Rights Petition to reach their recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Those recommendations would include a finding that the action to deny

vested rights does not require an EIR or Negative Declaration under CEQA, and that neither the Petitioner nor any other party has a vested right to mine at the site, as the mining use was abandoned, according to the staff report.

The proposed action would have to be consistent with the Surface Mining And Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) statutes and regulations and that the County has regulatory authority and responsibility as the SMARA lead agency whose would make the necessary decisions to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare regarding the project.

"We are pleased that the County has responded with a recommendation to deny Rise Gold its vested rights claim," CEA President Ralph Silberstein said. "But we would have been very surprised had they reached any other conclusion. The Rise claim is absurd and was a distraction, a waste of time for the County and the community."

Next Steps the Board Might Consider in Early 2024 Following Vested Rights Hearing

If the Board grants the Petition, the next step would be to review a reclamation plan outlining the measures Rise Grass Valley would take to restore the land affected by mining operations. The Board's review would be considered at a public meeting where relevant legal and environmental considerations would be addressed and time provided for public testimony on potential impacts, opinions in support or opposition, and other topics related to the mine.

If the Board denies the Petition, the County will schedule a noticed public hearing to resume consideration of Rise Grass Valley's application for a use

permit to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine. This public hearing will also provide an additional opportunity for public comment.

Interested residents are encouraged to subscribe for updates and view the project's planning process and timeline on the website at www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise.

Public Hearing Details:

• Wednesday, December 13, 9 a.m. If necessary, the hearing may be continued to Thursday, December 14, beginning at 9 a.m.

• Eric Rood Administrative Center, Board of Supervisor Chamber, First Floor, 950 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City.

• View live online on Nevada County's YouTube Channel.

Public Hearing Schedule:

• Presentations from the applicant and from County staff related to the history of the use at the site and the governing law on vested rights.

• Public comment. Members of the public who wish to address the Board of Supervisors should attend the December 13 meeting as there may not be a second day of hearings on December 14. Please see the "How to Participate" section below.

• Board questions and comments.

• Board deliberations. The Board can then make a final determination on whether the petition for vested rights should be granted.

How to Participate in Public Comment:

• Due to the limited nature of this hearing, those wishing to comment will have three minutes, and any comment must be limited to the historical uses of the site and factual evidence of activities that have occurred on or at the site.

• Because it is not relevant to this hearing, no public comment will be allowed regarding support or opposition to the mine, the Idaho Maryland Mine's Draft Environmental Impact Report, the use permit, the reclamation plan, and/or any other land use entitlement, and/or any other potential impacts of the mine, or any history pertaining to Rise Grass Valley or related businesses. All those comments should be reserved for either of the next hearings, as described under "Next steps" below.

• To provide public comment, receive a number from County staff outside the Supervisors' Chamber. Public comment numbers will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 8:30 am.

• Speakers will provide public comment to the Board of Supervisors in the Supervisors' Chamber in groups of ten.

Written Comment:

All written public comments should be received by 4 p.m. the day before the hearing (December 12) for it to become part of the public record.

• Email to clerkofboard@nevadacountyca.gov.

• Mailed to the Nevada County Clerk of the Board at 950 Maidu Ave, Suite 200, Nevada City, CA 95959.

• Submit eComment, available once the Agenda for the meeting is posted (December 8).

• Alternatively, as a last resort, you may submit printed and written copies of your comment directly to the Clerk of the Board at the Board of Supervisors' Public Hearing.

Parking and Transit:

• Carpooling is encouraged as parking is limited. In the afternoon, the parking lot will become more impacted as visitors arrive for Nevada City's Victorian Christmas and park at the Rood Center.

Food:

• Java John's Nevada County Café will be open from 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. to provide food and drinks for purchase.

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Nevada County supervisors OK Idaho-Maryland Mine study

News FOLLOW NEWS | December 14, 2021

Submitted to The Union

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved a contract to conduct an independent economic study on the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine project.

"The study will focus on the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project on our community," said CEO Alison Lehman in a news release. "By doing an independent study, our board will have all the information to make an informed decision, in addition to the information that comes from the environmental review process."

The proposed project is a combined application for a conditional use permit and reclamation plan to reinitiate underground mining and gold mineralization processing, and is currently in the environmental review process.

A draft environmental impact report hasn't yet been released.

The independent study will be prepared by Robert D. Niehaus, Inc. (RDN) and will focus on determining estimated direct, indirect, and induced impacts of the project, including those that would occur during the construction and operation phases of the project, as well as potential impacts to surrounding commercial businesses and residential property values. In addition, the study will estimate potential effects to emergency response service levels, county administrative services, public school enrollment, and the associated fiscal impacts to the county. RDN brings considerable analytical expertise, having completed over 700 projects focused on economic, financial, and market analysis over the past 38 years.

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The study, which will not exceed $80,000, is anticipated to take approximately five months to complete.

People can learn more about the environmental review process and subscribe for project updates at http://www.MyNevadaCounty.com/IdahoMarylandMine.

Source: Nevada County

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No state monitor for mine: Water quality board to rely on Rise Gold for regular reports, environmental assurances

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board that may issue limited threat discharge permit would rely on RiseGold for regular environmental reports

News FOLLOW NEWS | July 30, 2021



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
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The next stage of the possible reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine hinges on the release of a draft environmental impact report, started last year by Raney Planning & Management.

If that report states the Rise Gold Corp. project poses no "significant" risk to taxpayers, the company will move one step closer to receiving the limited threat general discharge permit from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board — a requirement to operate the mine.

The specific permit Rise Gold hopes to acquire would allow for 3.619 million gallons (5.6 cubic feet per second) of water to enter Wolf Creek every day.

According to the project's hydrology report, Rise Gold Corp. anticipates 1.224 million gallons (1.9 cubic feet per second) will be pumped to the surface from inside the mine in a settling pond on a daily basis. The report estimates the mine will consume 123,000 gallons of groundwater daily through water vapor used in ventilation, cemented paste backfill, dust control and due to gold concentrates being transferred off site. The rest — 1.101 million gallons of "underground mining service water" — will go to Wolf Creek.

Although mining requires blasting rock, which contains various elements, to extract precious metals and minerals, Rise Gold has promised to return the water to Nevada County residents in better condition than it entered.

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Water removed from the site would be treated through aeration followed by filtration through a manganese dioxide filter in a man-made pond on the site before an estimated 500-1,200 gallons per minute are discharged into Wolf Creek.

The company behind the mine's tentative reopening, and its CEO Ben Mossman, have committed to removing the arsenic in the sand tailings at the mine's Centennial site. According to Mossman, the state's Department of Toxic Substances will oversee the company's "voluntary" clean up, left over from older mining practices that ended in 1956.

Mossman said he trusts his hydrologists, but that the state's water control board takes measures to keep corporations like Rise Gold Corp. accountable.

NO STATE PAID HYDROLOGIST

John Baum, an assistant executive officer at the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, called his employer a regulatory agency that enforces the water quality laws of California. The water control board works with the identified dischargers at a site to ensure compliance with those laws.

Baum said the permits establish expectations for the company's self-monitoring and testing of those discharges to protect California at large.

"The permitting process requires that the discharger understand their site, the associated hydrology, and constituents within the water proposed or being discharged," Baum said. "The frequency, locations, and constituents to be sampled are tailored for each site."

Baum said the discharger may hire consultants to prepare documents for the permit application and to meet the requirements once the permit is issued. Those consultants must meet substantial qualifications expectations.

Ultimately, Baum said there is no state-paid hydrologist that will be monitor the mine on a regular basis.

"The discharger — and their contractor — developed documents that are then submitted to our technical staff for review to ensure compliance," Baum said. "If a discharger is out of compliance with the regulatory requirements, we start with warnings, but there are increasingly punitive actions we utilize to persuade them to obey."

Baum said his organization prefers to "cooperate" with dischargers, but will issue financial penalties "when the situation dictates doing so."

Baum said the water quality control board breaks mine sites into three categories: active, inactive/closed, and inactive/abandoned mines.

"There are likely hundreds of old, inactive and abandoned historical mine sites of all shapes and sizes in the region that aren't documented," Baum said when asked how many mines the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board oversees.

His staff knows of three active mines in Nevada County under permit: Hansen Brothers Enterprises Greenhorn Creek operation (sand and gravel), RidgeRock Quarry (crushed stone and aggregate), and the French Corral Mine (gold).

Baum said there are a number of other mines which are either inactive or legacy clean-up sites where the water board has a regulatory oversight role.

"Inactive sites may also be a cleanup site if water quality issues have been identified," Baum said.

The legacy clean-up sites are: Empire Mine State Historic Park, Idaho-Maryland Mine project, Lava Cap Mine, Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park, North Star Water Treatment Facility (for both the North Star Mine and the Drew Tunnel), Spanish Mine and the Spenceville Mine.

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

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Noise complaints stem from drill off East Bennett Drive, though Nevada County says it's in compliance (PHOTO GALLERY/VIDEO)

News FOLLOW NEWS | April 4, 2019



Alan Riquelmy FOLLOW
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The low hum rumbles from the East Bennett Road mining site and to the bedroom door of Heidi Zimmerman.

Holding a sound level meter, Zimmerman registers the decibel level of the noise. It jostles up and down the 50s, hitting the low 60s at one point, before Zimmerman closes the door.

"The hard part is, it never stops," Zimmerman said.

Living across from the Rise Gold Corporation site, Zimmerman no longer sleeps in her bedroom. She has a spot on the other side of her house, far from the noise she says never ends.

Problem is — a decibel level in the 50s is acceptable under Nevada County code around 9 a.m., when Zimmerman registered the noise levels earlier this week. Studies performed by a licensed acoustical engineer show the noise level at the drill falls within an appropriate range. Additionally, Rise Gold constructed a 24-foot wall around its drilling site to dampen the noise from reaching residents.

"Because of the zone of M1 — light industrial — it doesn't require any type of approval of exploratory drilling, because it's an allowed use," said Brian Foss, director of the county's Planning Department.

The drilling, which began around September, has yielded results, said Benjamin Mossman — CEO, president and director of Rise Gold.

Rise Gold Grass Valley, a subsidiary of Rise Gold Corp., owns the old mine underneath the area, along with some surface property. The drilling has brought samples to the surface from thousands of feet underground. One sample led Mossman to say there could be 64 ounces of gold per ton of rock. He was quick to add that specific sample was their best, and not necessarily indicative of gold levels throughout the area.

"0.2 would be good," Mossman said of the gold. "Sixty-four is incredibly high."

Rise Gold next plans to perform drilling in spots closer together. That should enable it to determine how many tons of rock have a certain grade of gold, which translates into possible revenue.

No decision has been made on whether the company will move toward reopening the mine.

"Those mines are known for having very good grades," Mossman said.

NOISE

Rise Gold knew people would worry about noise from the drill site.

"Before we even did the drilling, we knew that was a concern," Mossman said. "We constructed the wall. There's a lot of work being done on that sound issue before we even started drilling."

The wall dwarfs anyone standing next to it. Sound from the drill's engine is easily audible from East Bennett Road. It grows louder quickly when stepping around the wall and facing the drill.

According to Mossman, noise monitors installed at two points near the wall show that he's staying within county rules.

Noise studies appear to prove that. One study conducted in October by Bollard Acoustical Consultants, Inc., states the drill site was within compliance. Paul Bollard, president of the consulting firm, said a February report has similar findings.

"It's reducing noise at her residence," Bollard said of the insulating wall. "And it's reducing it quite substantially."

Zimmerman disagrees. She notes that her property is higher than the drill and wall. The noise passes over the 24-foot barrier to reach her bedroom door. She wants noise monitors at her home.

"It gets really tough when you're not sleeping," she said.

Bollard said the wall blocks line-of-sight from the drill to Zimmerman's home. That means noise is reduced.

"Would the levels be louder at her location?" Bollard posed. "Honestly, I don't think so."

Mossman said his company paid for new windows at Zimmerman's home to help dampen the noise. Zimmerman said Rise Gold paid for two windows, one of them a sliding window. However, she said they don't help the noise when she's outside or sleeping with an open window.

Foss, the county's top planner, said the studies show Rise Gold is within noise standards. He said his office has received complaints, though from one person only. He declined to name the person.

Zimmerman isn't the only one concerned about the noise.

Jim Hall said he lives about a mile away from the drill site and can feel and hear something from underneath his house. However, he hears nothing when stepping outside.

Hall said the noise began in mid-2017.

"My house rumbles on a low frequency," Hall said. "You feel it as much as you hear it."

Mossman said it's impossible someone a mile from the drill site could hear or feel anything.

GOLD

The Idaho-Maryland Mine was last open for business in 1956, Mossman said. Depending on what the exploratory drilling reveals, he might like to see it in operation again.

Rise Gold bought the property in 2017 from the BET Group for $2 million. Emgold Mining Corp. had leased the site from BET Group before the sale. Mossman said Emgold mined rock for ceramic tiles.

Mossman wants to find gold.

The exploratory drilling currently is in spots widely spaced apart, to determine if veins are continuous. Rise Gold next will drill in areas closer together.

The presence of gold, which existing samples show, isn't enough to reopen the mine.

Mossman said his company must determine how much revenue it can make. Then it would work out the cost of removing the gold from the ground.

Revenue must be able to repay the cost of opening the mine, an estimated $60 million to $100 million, Mossman said.

Exploratory drilling requires no permit in the light industrial zone. Mossman said reopening the mine would require a use permit from the county as well as compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

It takes any project several months to complete the environmental review process. Rise Gold would have to mitigate any impacts found by that review.

"This is an underground mine that's accessed by vertical shafts," Mossman said. "They're invisible to anyone on the surface. You wouldn't know it's there. The surface impacts are quite limited."

Mossman emphasized that no decision has occurred on seeking the permit necessary to open the mine. He won't start that until he's certain it's worthwhile.

Zimmerman, who's already filed complaints with county officials about noise from the drill, said she expects the community would balk at reopening the mine.

"My option is to have to move," she said.

Contact Alan Riquelmy at 530-477-4239 or at ariquelmy@theunion.com.

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Officials: Mine impact studies months away

Thousands of comments slow progress on economic, environmental impact reports

News FOLLOW NEWS | June 29, 2022



Alan Riquelmy FOLLOW
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An economic study on the Idaho-Maryland Mine is now expected within months, with the latest version of the environmental impact report following soon after.

County officials at Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting were quick to say that the study — now pushed to a deadline of June 30, 2023 — will be finished before that date. It's about 80% complete.

The county spent no additional money for the extension. It has a budget of $88,000.

The study, approved unanimously in December by supervisors, will focus on potential economic impacts of the mine's proposed opening.

"The economic analysis is an independent analysis," said Georgette Aronow, senior management analyst with the county.

Trending Articles

According to Aronow, the extension provides more flexibility.

Officials initially hoped the response to comments on the draft environmental impact report for the mine, a separate document required before supervisors vote on the mine's reopening, would be complete by this time.

However, the county received thousands of public comments, said Trisha Tillotson, Community Development Agency director.

"Currently, we're looking at late fall for bringing the EIR back," she said.

The draft economic study is expected this summer or early fall.

Braiden Chadwick — an attorney for Rise Gold, the company seeking to reopen the mine — said his client supports the economic study.

"These things need to be all brought forth and analyzed," he said.

However, he's concerned about the timeline.

Chadwick said he doesn't want the California Environmental Quality Act process — part of the EIR — to mesh with the economic report.

"The more the economic analysis is delayed, the more the county opens itself to criticism," he said.

Alan Riquelmy is the managing editor of The Union. He can be reached at ariquelmy@theunion.com

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On the watch: Opponents of Idaho-Maryland Mine seek signatures for petition

News FOLLOW NEWS | 21h ago



Victoria Penate FOLLOW
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Those opposed to the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine by Rise Grass Valley have stepped up their campaign. MineWatch representatives will be at various locations this Sunday, collecting signatures and passing out information.
Photo: Elias Funez

Janet Cinquegrana says she and her husband have agreed to sell their Grass Valley home and move, if the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine occurs.

Cinquegrana was among a group of MineWatch volunteers Friday afternoon who were at the entrance of Valentina's Bistro in Grass Valley, collecting signatures and speaking to people about opposition to the mine.

"Right now, it's a beautiful spot, but I have doubts that it will remain beautiful," she said on the mine's proposed reopening. In addition to holding environmental concerns, she said she is worried the mine's reopening could cause property values to drop.

"They should think about, right now, this is a tourist area — people come here to go to the little shops and everything," said Cinquegrana. "They don't want to do that if there's diesel trucks racing up and down, all the pollution, the air pollution and the water pollution, the noise."

Trucks will make up to 100 trips a day, averaging 50, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

Trending Articles

They will be transporting engineered fill, or barren rock and sand tailings, generated from tunneling underground. The proposed plans designate two routes for the trucks: one route between the Brunswick and Centennial sites, along Brunswick Road and Whispering Pines Lane; and one route between the Brunswick site and Highway 20/49, along Brunswick Road.

A MineWatch table is set up outside of Valentina's Bistro in Grass Valley for people wanting more information on how to oppose the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

On her motivation to volunteer with MineWatch, Nevada City resident Debbie Van Dusen said, "I actually came out here because I'm just — and we've heard this from a lot of people that have stopped at the table today — so surprised that we're even talking about this kind of environmental destruction and project right underneath Grass Valley."

Van Dusen said Friday that she supports the "no mine" effort primarily due to concerns about environmental damage. She also said that "everybody" she had talked to at the table that day had expressed they were also opposed to the mine's reopening, although some did not know much about the topic.

"People are wanting to get informed and learn more about it, and they may not have had the chance to do so before, which is why we're trying to be a little more public and be available to answer some questions and give people some answers," she said.

Ben Mossman — president of Rise Grass Valley, the company seeking to reopen the mine — has said in a statement that the draft environmental impact report was "a major milestone toward the Board of Supervisors' formal review and decision on approval of the Idaho-Maryland Mine project."

"The results of the county's independent study and analysis of the project speak for themselves; there are no significant impacts to water quality, groundwater, air quality, or the natural environment," wrote Mossman.

A public meeting on the mine's draft environmental impact report is set for 9:30 a.m. Thursday at the Eric Rood Administrative Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City. The meeting's purpose is to hear public comment regarding the draft EIR on the proposed project, which county staff released in January.

PETITION

The petition on which volunteers were collecting signatures Friday read, "Businesses, homeowners, and conservationists in Nevada County are joining together to protect our neighborhoods, our local economy, and quality of life from the Rise Gold proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine," adding that those signing urge the county Board of Supervisors to reject the proposal.

It is, according to Cinquegrana, not an "official petition" in that signers needed to be registered voters, but instead for the purpose of recording community support for the group's cause.

Traci Sheehan with the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, which sponsors MineWatch, said in an email Thursday that volunteers will be tabling again at various locations Sunday.

These will include Valentina's, as well as Flour Garden Bakery and Natural Selections in Grass Valley, and Robinson Plaza and Three Forks Bakery and Brewing in Nevada City.

According to a press release by the foundation, tabling will occur from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m, and is a part of a "week of action" which will conclude this coming Thursday — when the Nevada County Planning Commission is set to hold a meeting at the Eric Rood Administrative Center.

A "People Power Rally" opposing the mine's reopening is set to be held at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Brunswick gate of the Idaho-Maryland Mine, near Wood Rose Way, according to a release. Attendees are encouraged to bring "No Mine" signs and noisemakers.

Victoria Penate is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at vpenate@theunion.com

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Our View: A survey we'd trust

Our View FOLLOW OUR-VIEW | July 9, 2021

The Union Editorial Board

It's obvious this community has deep feelings about the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

It seems mining is fine as a history piece. Something you place on the mantelpiece and show the grandkids, but otherwise leave where it is, untouched. It's a museum display, an artifact from another time that stays in the past.

Except, of course, when it doesn't.

Rise Gold Corp. is serious about reopening the mine, which hasn't been in operation since 1957, nearly 65 years. It's been doing exploratory drilling for years. The question was always, can it get enough gold to the surface to make the cost worthwhile while adhering to all the relevant safety and environmental regulations, as well as be a good fit with the community at large.

With Rise Gold's recent survey touting a majority of people supporting the effort, with a bit of coaching or framing the questions, let's say, that last would seem to suggest a "yes."

Trending Articles

It's obvious the people behind the mine need community buy-in. You don't spend the money required to produce this survey for no good reason.

It's looks like the latest step in a public relations campaign to sway people in favor of the mine. It's already pointedly told the community in these pages that it's planning on creating 600 local jobs by reopening the mine. Projections call for 312 employees, two-thirds of them people who already live here. Local spending of $50 million a year would lead to 300 new indirect jobs.

Sounds great, right?

The problem, however, is that there are plenty of people here who won't be swayed by mere promises of jobs or growth. They also aren't convinced by this survey produced by the mine.

Lies, damned lies and statistics, after all. What might a survey paid for by opponents of the mine claim?

The road this community will take on this process branches in different directions. We must follow the right path to ensure we get the right result.

9+

And before all the information is gathered, we don't know what that result is, though most everyone has a role to play in helping determine it.

The draft environmental impact report on the mine should be released soon. It will have a period of time when people can comment on the report. This will be among the many chances for all of us to have our voices heard.

Grass Valley City Council member Hilary Hodge recently made a great point: Arguments against the mine aren't coming from the council's frequent fliers, the people who always have something to say. They're coming from people who usually don't appear in person or speak directly to their government.

That type of feedback has more individual impact than a survey provided by a company looking to develop. It's the type of direct communication that can change an elected official's vote in real time.

If past is prologue, then we can expect this process to drag on for months, possibly receive approval by the Board of Supervisors, and then get followed by litigation in an attempt to stop it.

But the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine isn't like just any other project. This mine hasn't been in operation for decades. It raises the possibility of environmental, noise, traffic and aesthetic problems, to list just a few.

People voicing their concerns or support to supervisors is good, but a vote of the people would be even better. No survey can compete with the will of the people expressed through a true referendum. Measure W — the ballot measure that would have banned outdoor marijuana grows, if passed — proves that.

Our local government could hold a non-binding vote on the issue. Spell out the promises Rise Gold would make — jobs provided, environmental concerns addressed — and let's see how the people truly feel.

That's a survey we all could trust.

The weekly Our View editorial represents the consensus opinion of The Union Editorial Board, a group of editors and writers from The Union, as well as informed community members. Contact the board at EditBoard@TheUnion.com

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Our View: Don’t dig yourself into a hole on Idaho Maryland Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | April 12, 2019

The Union Editorial Board

It’ll be a long haul to bring mining back to Nevada County.

That’s what Rise Gold Corporation likely would attempt if it determines there’s enough gold in the ground to make the venture profitable.

Exploratory drilling has been ongoing off East Bennett Road, not too far from its intersection with Brunswick Road, for several months. Gold is there, thousands of feet below the surface.

However, the mere presence of gold isn’t enough to pursue reopening the Idaho Maryland Mine, a facility that’s been closed since the 1950s. There must be enough gold to pay the costs of removing it from the earth.

And, of course, there must be community buy-in, which is in no way guaranteed. This is, after all, Nevada County.

Trending Articles

Officials have received noise complaints about the exploratory mining from at least one neighbor. Imagine what push back will emerge if Rise Gold tries to reopen the mine.

A proposal to bring three Dollar General stores to the county drew fierce opposition. The process took years, and resulted in the approval of two stores. The ongoing effort to create grow rules for cannabis cultivators remains ongoing after almost three years.

An attempt to bring mining to this area will make Dollar General seem like penny ante stuff.

Down beneath the noise complaints, buried under the possibility of a new business in our county is the wrath of NIMBYism. Try to build it and they will oppose. Look to Dollar General, Dorsey Marketplace and Higgins Marketplace if you need examples.

Despite these concerns, we enjoy significant protections in this state. Rise Gold would need a permit to reopen the mine (none is currently needed for the exploratory drilling). Additionally, the California Environmental Quality Act would kick in. That act brings with it months of study followed by a report detailing what mitigation Rise Gold would need to continue with its project.

Hiding under all this rubble is perhaps the motherlode: basic property rights. You get to use your property how you want. So do we. Zoning plays a role in those uses, as does any infringement of neighbor’s rights, but folks pretty much enjoy the freedom to use property as they see fit.

The Idaho Maryland Mine is no secret. The simplest searches reveal its existence. You’ll likely find mining in a document when signing numerous papers during a home purchase.

It’s here, much like the danger of wildfire. It’s on you to realize its possible impact when buying property.

Of course, you should fight against changes in your community you view as inappropriate. That’s your right.

And it’s everyone’s individual responsibility to get involved on the side they support. Positives exist to bringing mining back to this community, jobs not least among them. But the lure of good paying jobs can’t be enough to forego a probing look into the negatives mining could bring.

Education is key, and no one has all the information yet because Rise Gold hasn’t determined whether it’ll attempt to reopen the mine. There’s time to dig into the history of the mine and study what our community could gain from its reopening, as well as what problems — noise among them — would arise.

The alternative is to retreat into our respective camps and brood on supposition while ignoring any facts except those that support your view.

That’s digging a hole none of us will escape.

Our View is the consensus opinion of The Union Editorial Board, a group of editors and writers from The Union, as well as informed community members. Contact the board at EditBoard@TheUnion.com.

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Our View: Mining for public comment

Our View FOLLOW OUR-VIEW | January 14, 2022

The Union Editorial Board

Who's really going to read the 1,070-page pdf of the draft environmental impact report for the Idaho-Maryland Mine?

There will be a few, for sure. The diehards, those whose jobs revolve around the environment, and, of course, the people who run the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

The rest of us? That's a tall order. Real life gets in the way. This is why we have elected officials, isn't it? They're the ones who must deal with the minutiae. We've still got snow to shovel.

This is typically true of the multitude of items that cross the desks of the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars allocated and spent, and most of us will never know where it went.

That's not the case with the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Trending Articles

The mine is the issue of 2022. It's the emotionally charged agenda item that will keep people returning for public comment.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine is the new cannabis.

The draft EIR is an essential document required if the mine is to be reopened. Awaited for several months, it's required for any project of a certain size.

And the mine certainly qualifies.

In short, the EIR digs into environmental issues a reopened mine could affect, like aesthetics, noise and traffic. It also offers mitigation measures, or ways to lessen those impacts.

And in some cases, there are impacts that are "significant and unavoidable," no matter what is done.

Everyone isn't going to read an entire 1,070-page pdf, but certain areas provide key points for those interested to pinpoint and peruse.

Search the document, read the parts you're invested in, and strengthen your opinion. Or maybe even change it. Stranger things have happened.

Backing up an opinion on the mine with evidence is good. Acting on your thoughts is better. That's what the draft EIR process gives us — 60 days to submit public comment, and a Feb. 23 meeting of the Nevada County Planning Commission on the adequacy of the document.

9

Plastering Facebook with opinions about the mine blows off steam, but accomplishes nothing of substance. Each one of us can impact the impact report by submitting formal comments about it.

That's the opinion everyone should share — that we all get a voice in this process.

You can mail your thoughts to Matt Kelley, senior planner with the Nevada County Planning Department, at 950 Maidu Ave., Suite 170, Nevada City, CA 95959-7902; or email them to Idaho.MMEIR@co.nevada.ca.us.

The proposed reopening of this mine is a huge development for this county, and your input isn't just wanted, it's needed.

Take the water from down deep the mine plans to discharge into Wolf Creek. Toxic disaster in the making? Water one could drink?

According to the draft EIR, recent groundwater samplings showed "two constituents of concern, iron and manganese," above water quality board discharge standards. Additionally, low concentrations of arsenic and ammonia have been detected. These would have to be reduced or removed through a proposed water treatment plant.

"Based on current groundwater quality conditions, this level of treatment is sufficient to meet state discharge standards," the draft EIR states. The standard is potable. That's what the mine must meet in order to operate.

Treated water would be monitored at a spot decided by the state before it's discharged into Wolf Creek. But monitored by whom? The mine would be required to submit reports four times a year showing it's compliant.

This provides little comfort to the people near the mine, though more nuanced evaluation is called for here than some of the wilder claims we've heard over the past few years might suggest.

But what of the mine owner's concerns? Should the community care for Rise Gold, which has been cast in the role of the villain by many?

What about its right to use the property in a way that's allowed by law? The Idaho-Maryland Mine was a working mine. People then built homes around it. They understandably oppose a mine that closed in the 1950s resuming operations.

Who should win this argument, the property that came first or the homeowners who have invested their lives into this community? Or is there a compromise?

This process is still in its infancy. There are many more steps to go, with much more opportunity to have your voice heard.

However, that's no reason to wait. All of us have the chance now, during this stage, to speak.

So, gather what facts you can, learn more as they become available, and submit your comments.

As for that pdf, well, it's not going anywhere. And if you are going to form a case for or against, it might be a good idea to understand at least some of the facts and data contained in those pages.

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JB **Julie B** 18 DAYS AGO

For those interested, there's a 2019 YouTube video of Mossman's presentation at a metals investor forum in Toronto. In it, he explains why they targeted the United States (~2:12-2:58), why the process is easier in CA (~2:58-3:40), the dreamy (my word) permit situation in Nevada County (~3:41-3:58) and how "...you can see like there's not many places um in the world where you can permit a major water discharge from a mine in less than 9 months..." (4:25-4:33) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIxO06c_Igo

REPLY 3 0

9

IV **IndePenndent Valley** 18 DAYS AGO

The proposed use of the property is not allowed by current community rules, regulations, and zoning, so no...it's not allowed by law.

The draft EIR, if you read it, states that locally required setbacks would need to be IGNORED protecting Wolf Creeks floodplain, industrial zoning does not allow for this use and would need to be ignored/changed, required local setbacks from a nearby riparian area would need to be ignored, and the property's building height restrictions limit construction to 45 feet but this use would ignore that and build several skyscrapers in the trees of over 16 stories!

Anyway, the draft EIR shows this use isn't compatible with laws and regulations…whether it's regarding local industrial land use zoning, watercourse setbacks, and building height restrictions.

And the EIR shows it leaves 83 negative impacts of various kinds, as out of 85 impacts they analyzed, only two were deemed to have "No Impact". The rest all stay in some form, no matter how much is spent. That's one big significant impact.

In short, the proposed use isn't actually allowed, contra to whichever Editorial Board members signed off on that misstatement, since it would require the BOS to IGNORE our own rules and regulations designed to protect that property and our community. EDITED

REPLY 4 0

THE UNION

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Our View: No perfect process for mine

Our View FOLLOW OUR-VIEW | April 1, 2022

The Union Editorial Board

The remnants of Nevada County's mining history sit in our downtowns, decorations heralding back to a different time.

It has its place in the books. Few will deny that. We were a mining town. It happened, and now we've moved on.

Some folks at Rise Gold Corp. would argue with that.

That's the company that wants to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine and once again turn Grass Valley — and, really, western Nevada County — into a gold mining town.

Little surprise, many people are opposed to this plan and they're not shy about letting you know. They came out in force on March 24 at a meeting of the Nevada County Planning Commission, which listened for hours to people opposed to the mine. It's part of a lengthy process, and this won't be the last public hearing on the issue.

Trending Articles

There will always be people opposed to any project, with little argument backing them up. But we now have a document to shake when arguing to the decision makers about the mine. The draft environmental impact report, for good or ill, is a major source of information proponents and detractors can use when making their arguments.

And a baseline of facts about the mine is something we all need.

The Board of Supervisors will ultimately make a decision on whether the mine can reopen. The lengthy process, and virtual assurance of litigation at some point, means the current slate of supervisors might not have the final say.

That brings up a key aspect of this process — the people who make the decision. Do we want elected officials to follow the will of the majority on every issue, or make choices they feel are right? Are we looking for representatives to do what we want, or what they think is best?

And is the board going through the bureaucratic motions already knowing what it's going to do, or truly listening to the people and basing its decision on their views?

The mine needs supervisors to grant it special permission to operate on that land. This isn't a hurdle easily scaled by a few meetings and a checked box, along with a willing populace happy to see a reopened mine.

That definitely isn't the case.

What is abundantly clear is that there is a large, vocal number of people opposed to the mine, and an obvious lack of organized support for it. The oppositions unhappy with the plans to reopen the mine and with the perceived reputation of the company seeking to reopen it. They're pointing to issues of noise, traffic, pollution, water quality, jobs, and that perennial bogeyman of every project — aesthetics.

And they're right to point to these things. We all deserve answers, but we must accept them when received, not claim "fake news" when facts don't fit a particular narrative, and use lawsuits to extend the process into another decade. (Though that would be a near certainty with an approval.)

Many of these answers remain far in the future. There's still a final environmental impact report that must come out, and the county's economic impact report hasn't yet been released.

Will the facts within change anyone's mind? Isn't that what you'd hope for supervisors, if they felt different from you — that the facts would sway them to your side?

Sure, but only if the facts make them think your way, right?

Nevada County is a special place. We wouldn't live here otherwise. But it's not just home to us in the here and now. It's home to our past and the future, the latter of which our county supervisors have large sway over with the fate of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

What can we do, except have our voices heard in public comment and at the ballot box?

It's not a perfect process, but then again, neither is the process for reopening the mine.

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SG **Sara Greensfelder** 23 HRS AGO

Huh? It's really hard to figure out what you're trying to say here, Union editorial board. "We all deserve answers, but we must accept them when received, not claim "fake news" when facts don't fit a particular narrative, and use lawsuits to extend the process into another decade." Does this mean that you think the DEIR is all "facts"? Then why have a comment period and a public hearing that invites critique of a draft document? That's what this process is all about. My verdict on your editorial: fuzzy thinking and badly written.

REPLY 1 0

jezra 1 DAY AGO

if the county was serious about "good paying jobs", the supes would be fighting tooth and nail to get every scrap of State and Federal funding possible for broadband infrastructure, and spend those funds to initiate a rate-payer owned public broadband utility. Where would the people looking for those "good jobs" prefer to work; down in a mine or in the sunshine, handing fiber lines on utility poles?

REPLY 2 0

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JI **jimmymac777** 2 DAYS AGO

It's a wonder the company is even trying. There is a endless amount of retired out of town people here now or old hippies that don't work. And your paper loves to print the bad. Why show up to a meeting for that. Maybe you can bring up that not all of us want to grow pot or panhandle in between ebt payment's or that some of us would like our kid's to stay here and buy a house. What a shame that a company is trying to bring good jobs and bend over backward's for the county. To the mine owner's sorry and thank you for trying and good luck.

REPLY 1 REPLY 0 6

DM **dang mann** 2 DAYS AGO

Reply to **jimmymac777**

It's not only retired folks, it's not only old hippies, partner. It's folks all across the spectrum, liberal and conservative, that oppose this mine. It's not that we oppose good jobs. That's not why we oppose the mine. Show up at the next meeting and you will learn why we oppose this disaster

for our homes. Heck, you can share with us what it is that you think is wonderful about this project.

REPLY ^ 7 v 0

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Packed house: Hundreds of people attend Idaho-Maryland Mine meeting (VIDEO)

News FOLLOW NEWS | 5h ago



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
roneil@theunion.com



Ben Mossman, seated center, president of Rise Grass Valley and CEO of Rise Gold Corp., listens to the public comments during Thursday's Nevada County Planning Commission meeting. The majority of people spoke negatively about the draft environmental impact report on Rise Gold's plan to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

Consumer advocate and environmental activist Erin Brockovich's name was invoked at least three times Thursday during a meeting about the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Then there was the singing.

"Homes will lose value, wells will run dry," local musician Charles Price sang as he played guitar in a critique to the mine's draft environmental impact report. "They'll pollute our water, they'll pollute our sky."

Over 115 people filled the Board of Supervisors chambers, and overflow — over another 150 people — flanked the Eric Rood Administrative Center lobby's side doors. Parking extended to Highway 49.

The comments largely concerned the key points of the draft EIR, which has information about air, water, traffic, noise and aesthetic impacts of the project. Even so, some commenters claimed the true scope of the project was not covered in the massive report.

Trending Articles

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Community members sit and stand outside next to a speaker broadcasting Thursday's overflow Nevada County Planning Commission meeting regarding the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.
Photo: Elias Funez

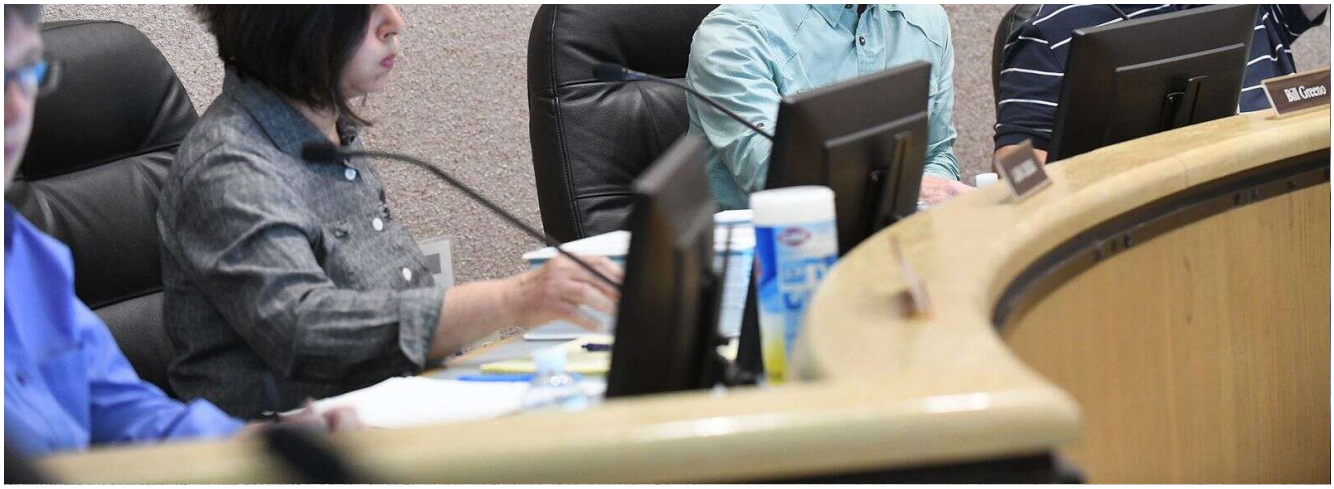
"COVID generated a workplace experiment," Price said of the marked increase in Bay Area interest in local housing options before his musical rendition. "I don't see this draft document addressing proposed mitigations in total on the county's overall quality of life."

Retired lawyer Larry Engel was one speaker who referenced famed attorney Brockovich.

"The draft references hexavalent chromium," Engel said. "That's how they killed Hinkley, California."

The Thursday meeting of the Nevada County Planning Commission was the most recent point in a timeline that will culminate in a decision by the Board of Supervisors on whether to approve the mine's reopening. That meeting hasn't yet been scheduled.

Nevada County Planning Commissioners, from left, Danny Milman, Laura Duncan, Bill Greeno, and Mike Mastrodonato listen to the public comment period during Thursday's meeting regarding the reopening of the mine. Commissioner Robert Ingram was not present.
Photo: Elias Funez



The public comment period for the mine ends April 4. The county's consultant will then craft a final EIR, and another round of public comment will begin.

OPPOSITION

Riki Colby claimed her well was one of many affected when Siskon Gold Corp. accidentally created a hole in an aquifer after hitting a fault line near its reopened mine on the San Juan Ridge in 1995.

"It was Labor Day weekend and it sound like an explosion that rocked the house," Colby said. "My well started having a problem on September 17. In the morning I had horrible drinking water, and by the afternoon I had no water at all."

Although the bedrock of the mines of the ridge and Gras Valley are different, the report failed to completely identify the risk, Colby said.



Hundreds showed up to the overflow Nevada County Planning Commission meeting regarding the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Photo: *Elias Funez*

"I was a well owner who turned on her tap and there was no water," Colby said. "We had an EIR that sounded a lot like this environmental report."

The Planning Commission noted that the implementation of the proposed project requires hurdling more bureaucracy — a discretionary application, a rezone application, an 80-year use permit, a reclamation plan and financial assurance cost estimate, to

name a few — before the impacts of the report would progress from hypothetical to actual.

Other public comments tried to widen the scope of the project.

Allison Nelson, who started Gold Country Avian Studies, said four special bird species migrate through the mine's property, but noted that one specifically — the willow flycatcher — is endangered.

https://fb.watch/bYWHhZEHMe/

Nelson urged the Planning Commission to consider the bird, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, in its final impact report.

WATER

Nevada Irrigation District CEO Jennifer Hanson said there are inconsistencies in the report's math, pointing to mitigation efforts for the 30 wells accounted for that could be affected by the mine's dewatering process.

Hanson said each dwelling could use up to 4 gallons per minute, but noted that the report said the client would pay for up to 400 gallons a day via mitigation efforts.

"Four gallons a minute is 576 gallons per day," Hanson said.

Hanson also said the commission should extend the mitigation measure to run with the parcel itself, as opposed to expiring at the property's sale.

Hanson said Rise Gold Corp., the entity trying to reopen the mine, should purchase a bond worth around $14 million to account for the assumptions and unknowns of hydrological modeling and the risk incurred to their neighbor's water supply.

Hanson said the district serves over 700 irrigation customers, on top of purveying potable water to most of Nevada County, and requested that a water quality mitigation measure be included in the next EIR that would require daily monitoring and public availability to data regarding discharged water.

NOISE

Michael Shea, of Cedar Ridge, said he took issue with the noise and vibration study because of the math alone.

Measurements taken during the day indicate ambient sound levels reach up to 51 decibels, Shea said.

"Right now, it's just forest back there," Shea said, "there's no mechanical activity, which means the noise could be coming from diesel haul trucks."

Shea said data shows five heavy duty machines running 500 feet from his yard moving a half-ton of rock every minute 24 hours a day would create less noise than ambient sounds from the roads during the day.

AIR

Dr. Jeff Kane said the region cannot afford any additional asbestos or dust exposure, given that the American Lung Association already gives the Grass Valley area an F grade for its air quality.

"We've long been considered Sacramento's tail pipe," Kane said, adding that regardless of whether wildfires reach the mine's property, they are expected to intensify in the coming years and will affect locals' breathing.

"Despite all mitigations, the mine will release 8.5 million pounds of substances known to be toxic and carcinogenic over the next 80 years," Kane claimed. "We can't take this."

According to anti-mine advocate Christy Hubbard, 500 people attended the meeting, even if they never made it inside.

"We counted almost 500 attending and 100 people who took numbers to comment," Hubbard said. "Sadly, people who had to take care of other life commitments had to bail on the speaking opportunity before it was their turn, so several were missing in the afternoon."

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

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The proposed project would reinitiate underground mining and gold mineralization processing for the Idaho-Maryland Mine over an 80-year permit period with gold mineralization processing and underground exploration and mining proposed to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during full operations.

The proposed project's surface components would be located within unincorporated, western Nevada County on approximately 175.64 acres, consisting of the Brunswick Industrial Site, the Centennial Industrial Site, and an approximately 0.3-acre portion of East Bennett Road for off-site improvements associated with a potable water pipeline easement.

The proposed project would also involve underground mining within an approximately 2,585-acre mineral rights boundary owned by the project applicant. The potable water pipeline easement would be located along East Bennett Road, and would be contained within the existing right-of-way.

The Centennial and Brunswick Industrial sites are located within unincorporated western Nevada County and are owned by Rise Grass Valley. The 119-acre Brunswick Industrial Site is located southwest of the intersection of East Bennett and Brunswick roads, and is accessible from Brunswick or East Bennett roads. The 56.41-acre Centennial Industrial Site is located southwest of the intersection of Idaho Maryland Road and Centennial Drive.

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FEATURED

Planning commission: No to the Idaho-Maryland mine

Elias Funez | Managing Editor
May 12, 2023

1 of 5



The chambers at the Rood Government Center in Nevada City erupts in cheers and signs of elation once the Nevada C deny the EIR and the proposed mining project by Rise Grass Valley to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Rise Grass Val comments made Thursday.

As the two day hearing regarding the proposed re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland gold mine wound down Thursday afternoon, Nevada County Planning Commissioner Terry McAteer cited the actions of one of Nevada County's first environmental thinkers, Lorenzo Sawyer.

Sawyer, who moved to Nevada City as a gold miner in 1850, left the work to become a lawyer after witnessing first hand the detrimental impacts of mining.

Sawyer was appointed to the 9th Circuit Court of appeals in San Francisco and in 1884, signed the Sawyer decision into law that stated the environmental effects of mining must not be placed upon neighboring property or community.

"Today we are faced with a similar situation which has the potential to infect our air with asbestos and exhaust fumes, impact the wells of our neighbors, discharge harmful elements into the water, destroy many acres of wetlands, add significant amounts of greenhouse gasses into our environment and return to our legacy of mining," Commissioner McAteer said to the crowd before initiating the vote to deny both the Final Environmental Impact Report and the use permit for the Rise Grass Valley project.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Danny Millman and the other three commissioners, Mike Mastrodonato, Bill Greeno, and Laura Duncan voted no as well.

The chambers at the Rood Center erupted in a raucous display of elation and approval once the no-vote was made by the commission.

“This is just a part of the process,” Commission Chair Bill Greeno said to the audience after the vote.

The project is still slated to go before the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, who the Planning Commission is advisory to, sometime in August according to county officials.

Of the 78 comments from members of the public given during Thursday’s hearing, 58 were in opposition to the mine’s re-opening, while 20 comments were made for it’s re-opening.

Folks ranging from 96 year old Anita Walt of Grass Valley, to 8 year old Grass Valley Charter School 3rd grader Bowman Rinne, spoke against the re-opening of the mine.

“The mine is very very close to my school,” Rinne said to the commissioners. “Mine’s are a dangerous operation on the environment, I would like adults to make choices on behalf of the environment, the plants, the animals and the community, not money.”

Don Daniels from Grass Valley’s District III, who comes from a legacy mining family, gave his take on mining to the commissioners and cited the need for good paying jobs and NIMBYism as a problem.

“I think there’s a lot of misguided people who have come here today and yesterday,” Daniels said to the commissioners of those opposed to the mine. “But I think putting a mine where a mine was, is a good idea, especially if it is

done properly," Daniels said.

Other public commenters called out those who spoke in favor of the mine as being those wanting to profit off of the plan by either working for Rise Gold or benefitting from the mine in some way.

"I can't help but point out, many of the folks who are speaking out professionally about the mine, are being paid to find the findings they are finding," District I resident Wade Laughter said to the commission. "Many of the folks who are speaking like myself, who are clearly in opposition to the EIR and the mine, are here because we care about this community, not because we want to make money off of it."

Nevada County District I resident Lorraine Webb gave a warning to Nevada County planning department if they were to proceed with the project.

"Whether it is approved or not, there will be enough monies from the people of this county to sue the County if we have to to point out the fact that this is an illegally inadequate EIR," Webb said.

"This community has a history, and I think Rise Gold must have known about that when they proposed this mine. We fought off mining that spot decades ago. A lot of people fought off ten dams on the South Yuba before we realized we needed permanent protection. Similarly with hardrock mining, we need to see that this community is not sold to the highest bidder. I would like to point out that this community will not allow this to happen and I want to spare the planning department from going through this again," Webb said.

Still Rise Grass Valley developers plan to push ahead with the project and

hope for approval from the Nevada County Board of Supervisors with some changes made.

“Based on today’s recommendation, we will consider improvements to our project that address the comments of the community,” Rise Grass Valley spokesperson Jarryd Gonzales said. “When we have new information to share, we will do so at the appropriate time.”

To contact Managing Editor Elias Funez, email efunez@theunion.com. Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See contributed to this report.

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Report delves into Idaho-Maryland Mine project

News FOLLOW NEWS | January 4, 2022



Victoria Penate FOLLOW
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The draft environmental impact report for the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine has been released. A special meeting with the county Planning Commission is set for Feb. 23, when people can make comments about the proposal.
Photo: Elias Funez

After months of waiting, it's finally here.

Nevada County staff this week released a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, stating in a news release that public agencies and the public will be able to give comments on the EIR's adequacy at a special public meeting before the Nevada County Planning Commission on Feb. 23.

The county has published the draft EIR on its website. According to the release, printed copies of the document are also available for public review at a handful of locations.

Nevada County senior planner Matt Kelley said last year that projects of any scale require some form of environmental review by law, and that the Idaho-Maryland Mine project required an EIR "because one or more impacts would be considered potentially significant, so therefore CEQA would be (enacted)."

A section of CEQA, or the California Environmental Quality Act, charges public agencies "with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible," according to the draft EIR.

"The basic requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts," the document states.

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The draft EIR was prepared by Sacramento-based firm Raney Planning and Management, and states that its purpose is to be "circulated for public and agency review and comment," followed by the county's preparation of a final EIR, which will include

responses to these comments. County officials must certify the final EIR prior to making project approval decisions, the document states.

According to the document, after a notice of preparation was circulated from July 17 to Aug. 17, 2020, comment letters were received from over 750 interested parties, including "representatives of public agencies and groups, as well as individual members of the general public," during that review period. The draft EIR summarizes the concerns brought up in these comment letters — which ranged within 13 areas, including aesthetics; agriculture, forestry, and other resources; air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy; hazards and hazardous materials; and transportation — and subsequently includes a chapter addressing each environmental issue area.

Once it became available, the draft EIR began a 60-day public comment period to end March 4, according to the county's news release.

Public comments must be received in writing by the county no later than 5 p.m. March 4, the release states, whether in hard copy or by email. These can be mailed to Kelley, or emailed to Idaho.MMEIR@co.nevada.ca.us.

The special meeting before the Nevada County Planning Commission on Feb. 23 to receive comments from public agencies and the public on the adequacy of the draft EIR will begin at 9:30 a.m. and take place in the county's Board of Supervisors chambers at the Eric Rood Administrative Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City, according to the release.

RISE GRASS VALLEY RESPONDS

Rise Gold's Ben Mossman shows his plans for reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine off Brunswick and East Bennett roads in Grass Valley. Nevada County has released a draft EIR for the project and has opened the public comment period.
Photo: Elias Funez

Ben Mossman, president of Rise Grass Valley, wrote in a statement Tuesday that the release of the draft EIR was "a major milestone toward the Board of Supervisors' formal review and decision on approval of the Idaho-Maryland Mine project."

"The results of the county's independent study and analysis of the project speak for themselves; there are no significant impacts to water quality, groundwater, air quality, or the natural environment," wrote Mossman.

Under each of the 13 included environmental issue areas, the draft EIR presents a number of particular impacts alongside their level of significance prior to mitigation, mitigation measures if applicable, and level of significance after mitigation.

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For example, under aesthetics, the potential to "substantially damage scenic resources" was found to be significant prior to mitigation. A number of elements were listed which should be included when the applicant submits a final landscape plan, and that impact's level of significance after mitigation was categorized as "significant and unavoidable." Another impact under aesthetics, that

the project would "create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area," was found to be "less than significant" prior to mitigation, and no mitigation measures were listed as required.

In the air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and energy category, two impacts — "conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan" and "expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations" — are categorized as "significant" prior to mitigation, have mitigation measures listed, and are considered "less than significant" after mitigation.

Six impacts in this category are listed as either "less than significant," or "less than cumulatively considerable" prior to mitigation, with no mitigation measures required, while another — the generation of greenhouse gas emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment — is listed as "cumulatively considerable" prior to listed mitigation measures and "less than cumulatively considerable" afterward.

The draft EIR states that, in addition to the scenic resources impact listed under aesthetics, there are two other impacts which are "significant and unavoidable" regardless of mitigation.

These two are related to a temporary increase in "ambient noise levels" during construction of a potable water line on East Bennett Road — with listed mitigation measures including things like advanced notification to residences and use of the quietest equipment capable of performing the job — and traffic at the intersection of Highway 174 and Brunswick Road.

Under mitigation measures, the draft EIR states that the project applicant "shall enter into a Traffic Mitigation Agreement" with the county regarding the Highway 174/Brunswick Road intersection, requiring the applicant to pay the project's "fair share contribution toward the improvements necessary to improve intersection operations to an acceptable level," and used the Caltrans methodology for assessing fair share to estimate that the percentage is 14.9%.

"The company believes that the project's substantial economic and community benefits significantly outweigh the three unavoidable impacts identified in the (draft EIR)," stated a Rise Gold Corp. news release Tuesday.

Rise Grass Valley asked local businesses in December to "encourage the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to approve the project," sending them a letter including information about the new jobs and local spending which the company expects the mine's reopening will create.

A number of local organizations, including environmental nonprofits, social justice activists, and river conservation groups, have publicly opposed the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Some organizations have signed a petition formally opposing the mine, including The Sierra Fund, Earth Justice Ministries, the South Yuba River Citizens League, and a range of other local entities.

"This mine is not the best choice for our community," Melinda Booth, executive director of SYRCL, has said.

Victoria Penate is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at vpenate@theunion.com

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LEARN MORE

To view information released by the Nevada County Planning Department about the Idaho-Maryland Mine project, including the draft EIR, visit:

http://www.mynevadacounty.com/IMMRise

PRINTED COPY AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AT:

Nevada County Planning Department, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City

Madelyn Helling Library, 980 Helling Way, Nevada City

Grass Valley Library – Royce Branch, 207 Mill St., Grass Valley

Bear River Library, 11130 Magnolia Road, Grass Valley

Doris Foley Library for Historical Research, 211 North Pine St., Nevada City

Penn Valley Library, 11252 Pleasant Valley Road, Penn Valley

Truckee Library, 10031 Levon Ave., Truckee

ADDRESSES FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Matt Kelley

Senior Planner, Nevada County Planning Department

950 Maidu Ave. Suite 170, Nevada City, CA 95959-7902

Or by email, at Idaho.MMEIR@co.nevada.ca.us

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Rise Gold attempts to reopen once lucrative Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | December 9, 2019

John Orona FOLLOW
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After two years of exploratory drilling at the flooded Idaho-Maryland Mine just east of the Grass Valley city limit, Rise Gold Corporation has submitted a permit application that would allow it to reopen what was once the second largest lode gold producer in the United States.

The mine produced 129,000 ounces of gold per year before being shut down by the U.S. government in 1942 to focus resources on the war effort. Previous attempts to revive the gold mine in the 1950s, 1980s and most recently in 2010 have all failed due to varying combinations of financial distress and community pushback.

“Everything that’s been designed has been designed for the purposes of minimizing the impacts of the project,” Rise Gold President Ben Mossman said. “Because of the historic permitting of the mine we were able to understand what the most important issues are to the community and how to mitigate those at the start of the design stage.”

The 93 acres of surface land and 2,800 acres of mineral rights that comprise the Idaho-Maryland Mine project were bought by Rise Gold after its previous owner spent nearly a decade trying to get the project past the permitting stage before ultimately failing to produce an environmental impact report that satisfied the community.

The permit application was filed after the company completed more than 67,000 feet of exploration core drilling which, according to Rise Gold, demonstrated a continuation of gold mineralization in both the Idaho and Brunswick gold veins below the historic mine level about a mile below the surface.

The company was allowed to do exploratory drilling due to the M1 zoning classification of the area but will need to have the area rezoned by the county, receive approval for its clean-up plan and obtain a use permit and variance before the planned deep underground mining and above ground gold processing can begin.

That process is expected to take at least a year and doesn’t include other permits that will need to be obtained by outside agencies such as the State Water Resources Control Board and the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District.

Grass Valley was the lead agency during the last attempt to reopen the mine. According to Nevada County Planning Director Brian Foss, Grass Valley had the option of taking the role of lead agency on the project because it is within its sphere of influence. It declined this time as it would have had to annex the project into the city,

NEXT STEPS

Once the county reviews the application it will hire a third party consultant to create a draft environmental impact report, the step the previous owner never completed following demands to address traffic, air quality, noise and water concerns.

While many technical and environmental documents were submitted along with the permit application and can be found on the county's website, the traffic, groundwater hydrology and air quality studies will not be available until January, Mossman said.

In 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency ranked the top 50 abandoned mines in California in terms of risk to residential areas, recreation areas and the environment.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine ranked as the most outstanding mine in need of abatement overall, first in waterborne residential exposure, second in direct residential exposure and second in waterborne ecological exposure. The ranking takes into account factors like mine size and proximity to schools when determining the potential impact.

According to Sierra Fund CEO Elizabeth Martin, the greenhouse gas emissions from transporting the proposed 1,000 tons of mined rock per day away from the site and the impact on local water wells are the biggest concerns with reopening the mine.

"There's an enormous amount of water underground and they have to move it aside to get to the gold, so that means what used to be your nice well down in this area is suddenly sucked dry because you have a pump somewhere down there literally sucking the water out," Martin said. "One could imagine what that would be like to have huge trucks full of material many times an hour driving through downtown Grass Valley. One can imagine the transportation impacts would likely be raised."

According to Rise Gold, it does not anticipate running into the same environmental challenges as previous owners because it won't have the ceramic manufacturing setup previously proposed which significantly contributed to air quality emissions.

The company also plans to construct a pipeline of potable water to supply to about two dozen residents along East Bennett Road whose wells may be affected by draining water from the mine, a move it said is purely precautionary.

Water removed from the site would be treated through aeration followed by filtration through a manganese dioxide filter in a man-made pond on the site before an estimated 500-1,200 gallons per minute are discharged into Wolf Creek.

If the mine is allowed to reopen, Rise Gold would renovate the existing Brunswick Shaft that towers over the property and extends 3,400 feet below the surface to move rocks out of the mine. They also plan to construct a second shaft extending 3,280 feet below the surface as well as several buildings to house the mineral processing plants and operational facilities.

The company expects the project would create 300 direct jobs and as many as 1,200 in total based on a 3.9 workforce multiplier for the mining industry.

No cyanide or mercury would be used in the mineral processing.

"It is too early to define the implications of the proposed reopening of the mine, because we simply do not have adequate information at this point in time," Board of Supervisors Chairman Richard Anderson said in an email. "On one hand, there may be local economic benefit. On the other, there may be significant environmental impact. The project-review process is intended to reveal these aspects so as to allow the board to make an informed decision."

To contact Staff Writer John Orona, email jorona@theunion.com or call 530-477-4229.

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Rise Gold CEO calls county 'naive' in dealings with Nisenan

Nisenan spokeswoman endures RiseGold CEO's criticism blast to the the past

News FOLLOW NEWS | 2h ago



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
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The CEO of Rise Gold Corp. inadvertently sent an email to a county employee calling the county "naive" in its dealings with the Nisenan.

Ben Mossman's comment was in response to an April 4 letter by attorney Frank Lawrence, who makes the argument that the consultant who wrote the draft environmental impact report for the Idaho-Maryland Mine failed to consult with the Nisenan.

The tribe is on the state's Native American Heritage Commission's Tribal Consultation List, making it entitled to "meaningful consultation," Lawrence states.

"The revised DEIR must propose meaningful mitigation for the badges and incidents of the genocide, the theft of Tribal ancestral lands, the theft and destruction of Tribal natural and cultural resources, and the destruction of the Tribe's traditional way of life," Lawrence states.

Mossman's reply wasn't intended for Lawrence, said Jarryd Gonzales, spokesperson for Rise Gold, in an email.

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"The county is so naive in trying to assist this group to gain status," Mossman stated, referring to the Nisenan in an email reply to county planner Matt Kelley and Lawrence. "Welcome to Canada."

"Rise Gold CEO was forwarded Mr. Frank Lawrence's April 4 comment letter by a team member. In error, Mr. Mossman sent a short reply that was not intended for Lawrence," Gonzales said.

"The comment letter accuses the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project of 'perpetuating genocide' and other crimes. The letter proposes an unlawful and never-ending approval process which the author purports to be supported by Nevada County Resolution No. 20-533. Lawrence seeks a result that would gain project opponents veto power over land-use issues rather than approval by elected representatives.

"While Mr. Mossman apologizes for the communications error, he disagrees with the comments and accusations in Mr. Lawrence's letter," Gonzales said.

NISENAN RESPONSE

Shelly Covert, tribe spokeswoman, said she's dedicated the past 15 years to connecting her family with resources they are entitled to through the nation's efforts at reparations for native, sovereign communities.

The Nisenan were the first tribe California settlers encountered west of the Washoe and were marginally integrated into the newly Westernized landscape. American-written treaties claiming the land were the coastal indigenous populations' first introduction to the

concept of land ownership, Covert said.

TIMELINE

Nisenan had relocated and condensed into the area of Cement Hill by the time treaties were on the table — the 1850s. Even then, the tribe was not given the 75 acres promised to its chief, Charley Cully, under the General Allotment Act of 1887 until President Woodrow Wilson's executive order in 1913.

Covert said unlike other designations meant for transplanted, or "homeless," indigenous peoples, the Nevada City Rancheria was created for the people already there. Their home remained until 1958 amid the "era of termination." According to Covert, 44 rancherias in the state of California were terminated, and their land rights rescinded.

The Nisenan's fight for federal recognition is ultimately about educating the public, Covert said, so Mossman's accusation of Nevada County's naivete is particularly hypocritical given Mossman's country of origin, Canada.

"What this gold company needs is a naive county so they can sell their science in neat-looking fliers," Covert said. "What he's encountering is a really diverse, strange little community here that is absolutely not naive. This is a place where people take ownership."

JOBS

Covert said the key word that strikes a chord in the heart of every American is "job."

Covert has plenty of concerns about the Idaho-Maryland Mine, but believes there are other opportunities the county can create that capitalize on the region's history without its continued erasure or exploitation.

"There are so many options — that aren't casinos — that could bring healthy jobs to the environment, but that 'job' word, it's not just Nevada County — people are scared and worried," Cover said.

Covert said one possible solution that she's investigating is the creation of a national heritage area, which would require an act of Congress and the state parks system's involvement.

"Lots of local experts can come to gather and be stakeholders," Covert said, adding that the tribe is just one aspect of Nevada County's identity as a cultural, historical and geographic hot spot.

Covert said a heritage area could create 200 jobs in the next five years that have nothing to do with mining.

"And guess who gets the money?" Covert said. "It stays local. Guess where it's not going? Canada."

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

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Don Rogers: The mine's brightest promise

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Rise Gold CEO on trial over regulatory allegations in Canada

News FOLLOW NEWS | 4h ago



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Ben Mossman

The CEO of Rise Gold Corp is currently on trial in a Canadian court on accusations of discharging waste, effluent and other substances into the environment.

CEO Ben Mossman and Dirk Meckert face 16 offenses under the British Columbia Environmental Management Act, nine under the Fisheries Act of Canada and four under the British Columbia Water Act. The trial in BC Provincial Court began June 20 and could last several months, due to limited court days, said Dan McLaughlin, communications counsel with the BC Prosecution Service, in an email.

“It’s going to be a few days here, a few days there,” he added.

Mossman and Meckert are required to attend the trial, McLaughlin said.

The trial is, in fact, a retrial that was ordered by the Summary Conviction Appeal Court after the men were acquitted in July 2018 of everything but two charges. Mossman’s two convictions and a $15,000 fine also were set aside, CBC reporting states.

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The BC Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's decision, McLaughlin said.

Previous reports state Mossman was the president, CEO and manager of Yellow Giant Mine in in northwestern British Columbia. Meckert was chief geologist and assistant mine manager.

The mine closed in 2015 after Environment and Climate Change Canada said waste from the mine was found in nearby woods and wetlands, CBC has reported.

"For Rise Gold and Rise Grass Valley, environmental compliance is a company priority, as is our commitment to environmental sustainability," said Jarryd Gonzales, a spokesman for Rise Gold, in an email. "What occurred in Canada seven years ago did not result in any environmental damage, according to the Canadian government's own reporting and could not happen at the Idaho-Maryland Mine due to the proposed detention ponds and water treatment plant.

He said the company would use state-of-art mining techniques and zero-emission equipment.

"We are proud of the environmentally conscious design and plan for the Idaho-Maryland Mine that will produce sustainable, green gold and will help to expand California's innovation economy in Nevada County," he added.

According to Gonzales, Mossman wasn't at the Yellow Giant Mine at the time of the alleged discharge, and ordered it be reported when he found out.

That appears to conflict at least somewhat with inspection and press reports in British Columbia at at the time that asserted the mine leaders did not report on spills or shut down the mine promptly.

McLaughlin declined to provide possible sentences if prosecutors secure a conviction, saying the issue is before a judge.

Rise Gold hopes to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine in Grass Valley. An environmental impact report is currently being developed, a necessary step in the process. A large number of public comments is delaying that document's completion.

Alan Riquelmy is the managing editor with The Union. He can be reached at ariquelmy@theunion.com or 530-477-4249

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H **Holly Rose** 2 HRS AGO

This sounds like a flyer supporting the mine. There's much more to it. You need to dig a little deeper, Alan. You might want to speak to people who where there, like the Gitxaala Nation, whose land this happened on.

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https://www.theunion.com/news/rise-gold-mine-project-set-for-county-planning-commission/article_4ce159a2-c9ae-11ed-a799-375fe06dc93a.html

FEATURED

Rise gold mine project set for County Planning Commission

Submitted to The Union
Mar 24, 2023



The Nevada County Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a hearing on Rise Grass Valley's proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine on May 10 and 11 as needed.

Elias Funez File Photo

The Nevada County Planning Department has scheduled the Planning Commission Public Hearing for the proposed Idaho Maryland Mine – Rise Grass Valley Project on May 10. The Public Hearing will continue on May 11 as needed.

The Planning Department will issue a formal Notice of Public Hearing for the Planning Commission Public Hearing in mid-April. Interested residents are encouraged to subscribe for updates on the project's planning process at www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise, including subscribing for notifications on how to submit a public comment for the upcoming May 10th Planning Commission Public Hearing.

Public Hearing Details

Wednesday, May 10, 2023, from 9 a.m. — 5 p.m. , and will continue to May 11, 2023, beginning at 9 a.m., as needed.

Eric Rood Administration Center Board of Supervisor Chambers, located at 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City.

Where to Find Project Documents

The public can review the Final EIR at www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise.

Printed copies are available at the Nevada County Planning Department, the Madelyn Helling Library, and the Grass Valley Library.

A project timeline that outlines the complete EIR process and next steps can be found at www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise.

Contact: Matt Kelley, Senior Planner 530-265-1423
matt.kelley@nevadacountyca.gov

https://www.theunion.com/news/rise-gold-seeks-to-side-step-requirements-for-mining-use-permit/article_2f318ace-4057-11ee-b562-2b8b7e33ff55.html

ENTERPRISE

Rise Gold seeks to side-step requirements for mining use permit

Submitted to The Union
Aug 22, 2023



Re-opening the Idaho Maryland Mine by Rise Grass Valley is a hot topic in Nevada County. The mining company now plans to attempt to circumvent the County's permitting process by claiming they have "vested rights" to mine.

Elias Funez File photo

At this year's May 11 public hearing for the Idaho-Maryland Mine, the Nevada County Planning Commission voted unanimously against the Mine's Use Permit and Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Now faced with the real possibility of a NO vote by the Board of Supervisors at the final hearings, Rise Gold is trying an unusual tactic aimed at forcing the County to let them reopen the mine.

In a maneuver that would circumvent the normal Use Permit requirements of Nevada County, Rise Gold has met with County representatives and announced that they intend to petition for "Vested Rights" to mine the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Katharine Elliott, County Counsel, stated at the Board meeting on Aug 8 that "...in meetings with Rise Gold recently, they have asserted that

they have a vested right to mine. A vested right is a legal principle that asserts that they have a legal right to mine on the Brunswick site. They have not yet filed the petition, but they have told me that they are planning to file that petition. Once they do that, we have a mandate to address

that and to take that first before the Planning Commission and then to the Board of Supervisors." (See Nevada County Board of Supervisors Meeting August 8, 2023 Part Two | YouTube)

Vested rights are rights held by entities that were already in operation prior to the establishment of the current, more restrictive regulations. A mine operating before the inception of the current Use Permit regulations can, in certain cases, establish vested rights and be exempted from those regulations.

If the County determines that Rise Gold meets the conditions for "Vested

Rights", the Use Permit that is currently headed for the Board of Supervisors for a final vote would not be required. In effect, Rise would be able to operate without having to comply with many of the conditions of approval and mitigations required under the current Use Permit application.

The granting of Vested Rights is a discretionary decision that would be made by the County. After Rise submits a petition for Vested Rights, draft documents would be available for review and Rise would present its case to the Planning Commission in a Public Hearing. The Board would subsequently take the Commission's recommendation and make the final decision.

The burden of proof is upon the applicant to demonstrate the vested rights claim. The most challenging requirement is to prove that mining activities have been ongoing continuously since before the current Use Permit requirements were enacted. In the case of the Idaho-Maryland

Mine, that means that Rise must prove that, after the mine shut down in 1956-57, some level of legal mining activity has persisted at the Idaho-Maryland Mine site over the 65 years since the shut-down.

This is not the first time the issue of Vested Rights has surfaced locally. Rise Gold's attorney, Braden Chadwick, petitioned for Vested Rights in 2010 while representing the Blue Lead Mine. In that case, the Blue Lead applicants made the claim that they didn't need a Use Permit because of vested rights, but a closer examination of the facts showed that photos submitted were from other mines and the evidence was unsupported. Because of this, the Planning Commission denied the request, and Blue Lead was required to obtain a normal Use Permit.

Currently, the Board of Supervisors is scheduled to make a decision on the Idaho-Maryland Mine Use Permit at public hearings on October 2nd and 3rd. This is the final step of a process that began in 2020. The final EIR for the project was released in December 2022. In response, over one thousand comments were submitted by citizens to the County expressing serious concerns about the risks of the mine and the inadequacy of the environmental report. In May 2023, the County Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the Board of Supervisors not certify the EIR and not grant the Use Permit.

In an unusual coincidence, Rise Gold CEO Benjamin Mossman is scheduled to be sentenced on pollution charges in Canada on September 26th, just one week before the Board of Supervisors' final vote. Mossman was found guilty in British Columbia for the environmental damage caused at the Yellow Giant Mine, which polluted tribal waters, went bankrupt and left Canadians with insufficient funds to clean up the damage. The sentencing could include prison time.

Ralph Silberstein, CEA Foundation President, stated "This maneuver to obtain vested rights at this stage of the approval process is very questionable. If Rise felt that they had vested rights, why spend years of time and millions of dollars to get to this point in the normal Use Permitting process? It seems very unlikely that Rise has a valid case. Perhaps they are simply seeking to delay the final hearings."

More information on the project can be found on the County project webpage. For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: www.MineWatchNC.org

About CEA Foundation: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. CEA Foundation is the leader of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine.

https://www.theunion.com/news/rise-gold-vested-rights-hearing-carries-over-to-a-second-day/article_a21ec9d4-9a1b-11ee-892e-cfc8290e8889.html

FEATURED

Rise Gold vested rights hearing carries over to a second day

Marianne Boll-See Staff Writer
Dec 14, 2023

1 of 10



The Nevada County Board of Supervisor's Chamber's were packed and overflow viewing rooms utilized during Wednes
Eric Rood Administrative Center in Nevada City where representatives from Rise Gold and Nevada County's planning a
Gold's 'vested rights' mining application. The meeting is expected to wrap up today at 9 a.m.

photos by Elias Funez | efunez@theunion.com

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors will make their final decision

regarding the vested rights petition submitted to Nevada County by Rise Gold Corporation (Rise) this morning beginning at 9 a.m. in the chambers of the Rood Administrative Center located in Nevada City.

A special meeting held yesterday was extended another day after dozens of public comments were made to the Board on the history and legal issues presented by the County and Rise Gold Corporation.

As the meeting carried on into the afternoon, Ed Scofield, Supervisor of District 2 and Chair of the Board announced that another day was needed before a final decision could be announced.

Today, Supervisors plan to hold a brief discussion, and then announce a final decision that will determine if the Rise Gold Corporation (Rise) has a vested right to mine the Idaho-Maryland Mine (IMM) in western Nevada County.

The IMM is an underground mine located within unincorporated western Nevada County on approximately 175 acres, consisting of the Brunswick and Centennial Sites.

The petition for vested rights submitted by Rise included evidence that IMM was in operation before, on, and after the vesting date, the date when the permit was required by the Ordinance 196.

“In 1954 Nevada County adopted Ordinance 196 as the first zoning ordinance regulating land use in the county... which required a use permit for most uses, including excavation within 1000 feet of a roadway,” according to Brian Foss, Planning Director of Nevada County.

The Board will also determine whether or not there was subsequent

abandonment of the IMM, according to Foss.

The Board's decision must adhere to the County's own ordinances including Ordinance 196, the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA), and relevant case law.

"Impartiality and lack of bias were the cornerstones of our investigation and review of the materials," Diane Kindermann, partner of the law firm Abbott and Kindermann who presented the staff report for the County said.

Kindermann reviewed timelines of operation and ownership of the IMM over the years along with a legal case that took place in Nevada County in 1996 titled Hansen Brothers Enterprises, Inc. v. Board of Supervisors of Nevada County that explained the rationale and legal standard for vested rights.

Christopher Powell, Senior Council at Hanson Bridgett spoke on behalf of Rise Gold Corp. pointed out numerous errors in the staff report presented by Kindermann.

Powell also presented evidence that there was no abandonment.

"Because gold prices were fixed and there was huge inflation after World War II, economic conditions caused the mine owners to sell surplus property, including mining equipment... However, the owners preserved the mineral rights, the easements and the core properties necessary to resume underground gold mining," Powell said. "These rights and properties are still intact."

Powell went on to say, "The history of owners such as the Ghidotti family, BET Group and now Rise have spent millions of dollars over the years and

investment to explore and develop the minerals on the property. Mining activities continued intermittently on the property including rock crushing exploration… It's factually incorrect to say there's been no mining for 70 years."

Powell also stated that the burden of proof to show that the mine was not abandoned does not fall on Rise, as Kindermann assumed.

"Reasonable doubt…is sometimes used as a legal standard when defending a defendant in a criminal case. That's not the case here," Powell said. "The County's burden of proof is clear and convincing evidence."

Powell asked the Board to uphold property rights protected under the U.S. Constitution and the California Constitution.

Robert H Katzenstein, a Grass Valley resident and business owner, stated during his public comment, that the Hansen Brothers legal case was not relative to the Rise petition because it was surface mining, not underground mining.

"Counsel seem to be pointing to the Hanson brothers petition, and I feel that this is a completely different scenario, it being surface mining, crushing of gravel versus de-watering and underground mining," Katzenstein said. "It's a ridiculous comparison so you should throw that out."

Katzenstein went on to say, "There's property owners vested rights when I bought my house in 2004. I thought of this community as a beautiful former gold mining community, but I did not buy it with the intention of vibrations, from explosives, hundreds of truckloads a day of material, driving down the

roads and polluting our air. So I think vested rights of property owners is a very, very important right."

In summary statements, Kindermann addressed some of the allegations that Powell listed as errors in the staff report.

Kindermann also stated that the petitioner, Rise Gold Corp., had not provided adequate evidence to the contrary that enables the County to make a finding on the scope of any vested right.

Powell acknowledged that many of the public comments were heartfelt concerns from the community regarding environmental impact, however Powell was clear that those arguments have nothing to do with the legal issues facing the Board in this hearing.

"It's important to note that the environmental laws still apply to this mine," Powell said. "I just want to provide a little comfort that this doesn't mean go out there like it is the wild wild West."

Powell stated that the Clean Water Act, The Clean Air Act, and numerous permits from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and maybe the Army Corps of Engineering will still need to be approved and that the public will have more opportunities to participate.

Powell's final words were that there not be a continuance, and that Supervisors do not discuss the petition with staff or with each other.

To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com.

https://www.theunion.com/news/rise-gold-s-ceo-found-guilty-on-13-counts-in-british-columbia-retrial/article_115a0afc-1d1c-11ee-91c5-9b9962eb049a.html

FEATURED

Rise Gold's CEO found guilty on 13 counts in British Columbia retrial

Lou Douros
Jul 7, 2023

1 of 6



An aerial view shows the Yellow Giant Mine site in British Columbia that was shut down in 2015 due to mine waste spil
Banks Island Gold, Benjamin Mossman, who is now trying to reopen the Idaho Maryland Gold Mine in Grass Valley, wa
substances into the environment above permitted amounts by a Canadian court.

Film stills from 'Shafted' courtesy Lou Douros

Special to The Union

On Friday, July 7, Judge David Patterson of the Provincial Court in Prince Rupert, British Columbia read his judgement after the re-trial of Benjamin Mossman, then CEO of Banks Island Gold. Mr. Mossman has been fighting charges of environmental crimes since 2015 after the Banks Island Gold Corp.'s Yellow Giant Mine was shut down by regulators in response to the discovery of mine waste spills into the sensitive environment of Banks Island. After declaring bankruptcy in British Columbia, Mr. Mossman left the Banks Island mine works behind, along with a long list of creditors, and bought the long idle Idaho-Maryland Mine property in Grass Valley, CA. Mossman has since established Rise Gold Corp. and has been raising capital and developing a plan to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Mine, causing intense debate and organized opposition from many residents of Nevada County who fear environmental degradation, air, water, and noise pollution, local well failures, and other concerns in their quiet foothills town.

The outcome of the trial in British Columbia may have an impact on the upcoming decisions by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to issue an 80-year use permit for the Idaho-Maryland Mine, one of the largest producing gold mines in U.S. history, but now surrounded by over thousands of homes and adjacent to active tourist destinations. That decision is expected in early October.

Dan McLaughlin, Communications Counsel for the BC Prosecution Service states that the offenses with which Mr. Mossman is charged in British Columbia are "related to allegations of the discharge of waste, effluent, and other deleterious substances into the environment in contravention of several

statutory regulations".

After a nearly yearlong trial, Judge Patterson found Ben Mossman guilty of 13 counts of discharging substances into the environment above permitted amounts. He was judged not guilty on 10 counts of failing to report environmental spills and dumping, discharging mine waste into the environment, and unauthorized works in and about a stream.

In his written judgement, Judge Patterson repeatedly stated that he had his suspicions about the charges on which Mossman was exonerated, but that the prosecution had failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Mossman was directly responsible for the environmental damage resulting from the well-documented spills. The judge stated that the testimony of the prosecution's primary witness, the mine's Environmental Manager and Site Biologist was flawed because of "her profound hostility, animosity, and negative attitude" towards Mr. Mossman and the trial process, as well as her less than satisfactory recollection of the events prior to the 2015 shutdown of the Yellow Giant Mine. The judge stated that he believed the evidentiary record on those charges was incomplete and required speculation on his part as to Mossman's direct involvement in the decisions which resulted in the environmental damage.

Mr. Mossman will be sentenced on the 13 counts for which he was found guilty on a date to be announced. It is as yet unknown whether the sentence will require jail time, fines, or both.

Lou Douros is a Nevada County documentary filmmaker in development of the unscripted narrative; "Shafted". He has spent the past 15 months attending every hearing of the Ben Mossman/Dirk Meckert trial via MS Teams weblink. Lou has lived in Grass Valley for 31 years where he and his wife, Melinda have raised their five children.

https://www.theunion.com/news/rise-grass-valley-files-petition-for-recognition-of-vested-rights-at-idaho-maryland-mine/article_0cd932ca-4c40-11ee-a7a1-73be5ebd244f.html

Rise Grass Valley files petition for recognition of vested rights at Idaho-Maryland Mine

Submitted by Nevada County
Sep 6, 2023

Rise Grass Valley filed a petition for recognition of vested rights to conduct mining operations at the Idaho Maryland Mine in Grass Valley.

The petition was submitted to the County on Friday, September 1.

“A vested right is a right to continue activity that existed before a zoning restriction became effective,” said County Counsel Katharine Elliott. “A vested rights finding for Rise Grass Valley would mean that the applicant has a legal right to mine on the Brunswick Industrial Site.”

The Board’s previously scheduled October 2-3 hearing on Rise Grass Valley’s application for a conditional use permit is canceled.

The Board of Supervisors will instead hold a hearing on the petition on Friday, October 27 at 9 a.m. in the Board Chambers at the Eric Rood Administrative Center located at 950 Maidu Avenue in Nevada City.

The hearing will include presentations from County staff and the applicant, questions from County Supervisors, and public comment.

The Board is expected to make a final determination on whether the petition for vested rights is valid.

The Board will make the determination by reviewing the facts of the historical use of the mine property and the law.

If the Board approves the petition, the next step would be consideration of a reclamation plan, which would explain in detail how the applicant would operate the mine. In addition, Rise Grass Valley would need to provide a statement of responsibility and financial assurances that the applicant could cover potential damages.

If the Board denies the petition, the County will schedule a noticed public hearing to consider the original proposal to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine in early December.

A copy of Rise Grass Valley's petition for recognition of vested rights is available for public review at the Community Development Agency located at 950 Maidu Avenue in Nevada City or online at www.nevadacountyca.gov/IMMRise.

https://www.theunion.com/news/local/rise-grass-valley-petition-for-vested-rights-hearing-rescheduled-to-december-13/article_f23a1d2c-5e45-11ee-928f-2b19e742fa61.html

FEATURED

Rise Grass Valley Petition for vested rights hearing rescheduled to December 13

Submitted to The Union
Sep 28, 2023



Courtesy photo

The Board of Supervisors has rescheduled a hearing to December 13 on Rise Grass Valley's petition for vested rights to conduct mining operations at the

Idaho Maryland Mine. The hearing was originally scheduled for October 27.

Due to the unprecedented volume of material provided to the County in the petition, and the responses that are expected to be submitted by the public, the Board rescheduled the hearing to provide County staff additional time to review and respond to Rise Grass Valley's petition.

"With over 2,000 pages submitted with the petition for recognition of vested rights, which far exceeds most other known petitions for vested rights, and after consultation with our outside counsel, it was clear that we needed additional time to review and analyze the petition," explained County Counsel Kit Elliott, adding that "the issues involved are unique and complex and staff want to make sure that all history is verified, and the legal analysis is complete before preparing the presentation before the Board of Supervisors."

A vested right is "a right to continue activity that existed before a zoning restriction became effective," Elliot said. "A vested rights finding for Rise Grass Valley would mean that the applicant has a legal right to mine on the Brunswick Industrial Site."

The hearing on the petition for vested rights will be held at 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, December 13 in the Board chambers, 950 Maidu Ave, Nevada City; with a second day added Thursday, December 14, beginning at 9:00 a.m. if necessary to accommodate public testimony and Board deliberation. A formal Public Hearing notice will be released as required prior to the public hearing in accordance with Nevada County Land Use and Development Code and California State Law.

The hearing will be limited to: 1) presentations from the applicant and from

County staff related to the history of the use at the site and the governing law on vested rights, 2) questions by the Board, and 3) public comment limited to the history of the use at the site. Public comment will be allowed prior to the close of the hearing.

After public comment, the Board will conduct its deliberations. The Board can then make a final determination on whether the petition for vested rights should be granted. The Board will make the determination based on facts confirming the historical use of the Idaho Maryland Mine property currently owned by Rise Grass Valley and the applicable law on vested rights.

If the Board grants the petition, the next step would be a consideration of a reclamation plan. The conduct of those hearings and legal and environmental considerations would be addressed at that time and would be subject to a noticed public hearing.

If the Board denies the petition, the County will schedule a noticed public hearing in early 2024 to continue the process on the original project application to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine.

A copy of Rise Grass Valley's petition for recognition of vested rights is available for public review at the Community Development Agency, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City or online at www.nevadacountyca.gov/IMMRise.

https://www.theunion.com/news/save-the-date-special-board-of-supervisors-meeting-scheduled-for-idaho-maryland-mine-project-on/article_9f001750-b18e-11ee-809a-5f42e6c40d28.html

FEATURED

Save the date: Special Board of Supervisors meeting scheduled for Idaho Maryland Mine project on February 15, 2024

Submitted to The Union
Jan 13, 2024



The decision whether or not to allow Rise Grass Valley to re-open the Idaho Maryland gold mine will now come before the Nevada County Board of Supervisors on Feb. 15.

Elias Funez File Photo

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors has scheduled a Special Meeting on February 15 to hold a noticed public hearing and take final action on the proposed Idaho Maryland Mine – Rise Grass Valley Project. The meeting may

continue to February 16 if needed.

This Special Board Meeting follows the May 10-11, 2023, Planning Commission Public Hearing, where the Commission recommended that Supervisors deny the project and the Final Environmental Impact Report.

At this upcoming meeting, the Board of Supervisors will hear presentations from staff and the applicant as well as take public comment. The Board is expected to ask questions of the staff and the applicant before entering deliberations on whether to approve or deny the application to reopen the Idaho Maryland Mine – Rise Grass Valley.

The Clerk of the Board will issue a formal Notice of Public Hearing for the Special Meeting of the Board of Supervisors at least 10 days before the meeting.

Interested residents are encouraged to subscribe for updates and notifications on the proposal at www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise.

Public Hearing Details

Thursday, February 15, 2024, from 9 am to 5 pm, and may continue to Friday, February 16, 2024, beginning at 9 am, if needed.

Eric Rood Administration Center Board of Supervisor Chambers, located at 950 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City.

Where to Find Project Documents

The public can review the project-related documents and Final EIR at

www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise.

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Seeking comment: Rise Grass Valley submits postcards showing local support of Idaho-Maryland Mine

Initial batch of support received

News FOLLOW NEWS | 2h ago



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
roneil@theunion.com

Rise Grass Valley, which seeks to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine, has submitted 562 postcards from Nevada County residents in support of the project.

Rise Grass Valley's spokesperson, Jarryd Gonzales, said the comments, which represent 621 locals and businesses, is the first of three batches the company plans to submit to county supervisors.

Matt Kelley, senior planner in Nevada County's Planning Department dedicated to the project's oversight, said the comments "would be noted as received."

Gonzales said Rise Grass Valley sent out letters with prepaid postage to "a subset" of Nevada County residents to provide more opportunity for public input. He didn't specify if the replies came from anyone in the immediate vicinity of the two proposed mine sites.

"We haven't really looked at that because it's a countywide issue," Gonzales said. "Every single ... supervisor will take a vote on this from District 1 to District 5, from Grass Valley to Truckee.

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"I think that this kind of shows this broad support that our poll and our survey suggested months ago," he added.

According to the project proposal, mine access and processing facilities will be at the 119-acre New Brunswick site, at the corner of Brunswick and East Bennett roads. The 56-acre Centennial site on Idaho Maryland Road, two miles away, will be used to dispose of mine waste.

OPPOSITION

Josie Crawford, executive director of the Wolf Creek Community Alliance, said she was unperturbed by the company's press release about the comments or claims of widespread support for the mine's reopening because of the strength of the opposition established early on.

"The side that is opposed to the mine opening submitted over 700 letters on the (notice of preparation) before the draft EIR was released," Crawford said, adding, "that was early on in the game, so I suspect we're going to have far more than that."

Crawford also noted that the letters opposing the mine and offering critiques to the draft environmental impact report will be more specific than the postcards that are differentiated by a handwritten signature and listed address.

Kelley said each comment and commenter is logged in the project's final report.

"How those comments influence the decisions — that's not up to me, that's up to decision makers," Kelley said.

Ralph Silberstein, a representative from the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, said his team is working with internal and independent experts to provide detailed criticism before the draft EIR's comment period ends April. 4.

"Yes, we've hired experts and we have in-house experts," Silberstein said. "We've hired experts to review the groundwater issues, the air and the noise issues."

Silberstein described the draft EIR as a document that is over 3-feet thick, adding that he is grateful for the public comment period's extension so that the public has time to digest and respond to the assessment.

Silberstein said the county's Planning Department is hosting a public hearing on the project on March 24.

"I encourage people to attend to learn more about the project," Silberstein said.

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

READING THE REPORT

People can make an appointment to view the Idaho-Maryland Mine draft environmental impact report at the Madelyn Helling, Grass Valley, Penn Valley, and Truckee libraries.

Appointments are in-library and in two-hour increments. Community members have access to the bound report and a computer to view the auxiliary documents.

To schedule an appointment, contact:

Truckee Library: 530-582-7819

Grass Valley Library: 530-470-269

Madelyn Helling Library: 530-265-7078

Penn Valley Library: 530-388-8830

6

INSIDE COVERAGE ON YOUR LOCAL ATHLETES

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Sitting on a gold mine: New owner exploring underground at Idaho-Maryland Mine

News FOLLOW NEWS | November 13, 2017



Matthew Pera FOLLOW
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Core samples from recent drilling efforts are on display at Rise Gold Corp's Grass Valley office.
Matthew Pera / mpera@theunion.com |

Rise Gold Corp has begun exploratory drilling at western Nevada County's Idaho-Maryland Mine in an effort to determine how much gold remains at the site.

Drilling began last month. But Ben Mossman, Rise Gold's chief executive officer, said the company isn't reopening the site for gold mining — at least not yet.

Rise is an "exploration company," he said, focused on proving the existence of mineral resources.

"Right now, we're drilling," he said. "And based on the results, hopefully we'll be able to raise more money to do more drilling."

> "Right now, we're drilling. And based on the results, hopefully we'll be able to raise more money to do more drilling." Ben MossmanRise Gold CEO

Idaho-Maryland was the second-largest gold mine in the country before it was shut down by the federal government in 1942, according to Mossman.

Rise, a U.S.-based company which has its head office in Canada, bought the property for $2 million from the BET Group in January, which had previously leased the site to Emgold Mining Corp. The purchase included about 93 acres of surface land and 2,750 acres of mineral rights.

"You can't buy anything like this," Mossman said. "There is nothing like this for sale."

According to the company's website, Rise "believes there is significant potential for additional gold resources left unmined in the existing workings and ... below the historic mine workings."

EXPLORING, 'THE BIGGEST HURDLE'

The property, in Nevada County's jurisdiction and in Grass Valley's sphere of influence, is zoned light industrial. Tom Last, Grass Valley's development director, said when projects are proposed in the city's sphere, property owners are required to first submit applications to the city. If Grass Valley isn't interested in annexing a parcel at the time of a project, he said, the city would pass the application along to the county.

According to the county's zoning ordinance, mineral exploration is allowed on light industrial parcels without a permit. Brian Foss, director of the county's planning department, said Mossman contacted him prior to drilling to let the county know of Rise Gold's plans.

Restarting mining operations at Idaho-Maryland would require an extensive permitting process, which Mossman said would be difficult, but not impossible. He said it definitely wouldn't be the most challenging part of the project.

"The exploration is the biggest hurdle ... but this could be one of the highest-grade deposits in the world," he said.

Rise is aware of many of the environmental concerns expressed by community members when Emgold was attempting to revive the mine, Mossman said.

"There are solutions to those things," he said.

Emgold, which tried to revive the mine beginning in 2005, stopped listing it as a current project to its investors in January 2014. Emgold tried unsuccessfully to capitalize on what it estimated at 472,000 ounces of gold in the mine.

HISTORY LESSON PUT TO WORK

Original maps and business documents left over from when the mine was in operation by the Idaho Maryland Mining Co. were included in the sale of the property, Mossman said, which give Rise a good basis for beginning the exploration process.

"If those (documents) hadn't been kept, the property would be useless," he said.

Over the past six months, Mossman and his team has been scanning the old maps of the mine and converting them into three-dimensional, digital renderings. The modern maps give Rise Gold a better idea of where to start exploratory drilling with a limited budget, he said.

Rise hired a private security company to patrol the area and clean up a handful of homeless camps that had been on the property when the company purchased it, according to Mossman.

For now, he said, the company's goal is "to be silent," and, as much as possible, not disturb neighbors with the sound of drilling.

To contact Staff Writer Matthew Pera, email mpera@theunion.com or call 530-477-4231.

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Survey says: Opinion and research group behind Rise Gold survey defends its work

News FOLLOW NEWS | June 25, 2021



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
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Rise Gold, the company that hopes to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine after its closure over a half century ago, released results this week of a privately conducted public opinion survey that states the majority of Nevada County residents support the business endeavor.

CEO Ben Mossman and Jarryd Gonzales, a public relations representative for the company, said they believe that the numerous opinion pieces published by The Union newspaper as well as the negative public comments at local government meetings offer a microphone to a minority opposition.

"There's a silent majority," Mossman said, referring to locals he said support the business venture.

Mossman said Rise Gold hired J Wallin Opinion and Research company to find out what how Nevada County residents who do not show up to public meetings or contribute to the newspaper feel about the potential reopening of the mine.

"Of course, people who don't like (the idea of reopening the mine) matter and their concerns should be addressed, but they are the minority," said Justin Wallin, the research company's CEO. "This is a development project, a mining project, a natural part of progressive California and it's got a clear majority backing it."

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Wallin said the survey's final takeaways — 59% in strong support of the mine's reopening and 34% against — show that the county's populace is overwhelmingly in favor of the mining project.

"It's not close," Wallin said. "It's a big difference."

Wallin said elected officials often deal with just the angry, discontent constituents, creating a false image of how the community as a whole feels about particular issues.

"The loudest voice in the room is not the voice that represents everyone else," Wallin said.

Interviewers contacted 500 Nevada County residents — 100 from each supervisor district — in accordance with the county's demographic breakdown by age, race and political party to complete the survey, Wallin said. The survey was conducted by real people who took the time to connect and check in with residents about issues beyond the mine itself, even rescheduling interviews when

participants were willing.

The survey was composed of three separate series of questions, broken up by the intermittent general ask: "Do you strongly support or oppose reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine?" The first asked participants to prioritize their community concerns overall and the second series asked "more or less likely to support" questions after offering background information on tentative mine operations.

The final series of questions introduced "the opposition's" opinion by pairing pro- and con- statements from local residents and seeing how those comments would influence public opinion.

Wallin said including language used by "the opposition" is one way to ensure the accuracy of polling results.

"We test those arguments," Wallin explained. "It doesn't matter if the opposition's opinion is based on facts. We test it."

Wallin said including language used by both sides of a survey pertaining to a specific issue is one way to avoid "push polling," a concept described by the American Association for Public Opinion Research as political telemarketing or "telephone calls disguised as research that aim to persuade large numbers of voters and affect election outcomes, rather than measure opinions."

"A push poll is not a poll at all," Wallin said. "It's trying to communicate a message through the guise of being a poll."

PUBLIC OPINION

Wallin said interviewing 500 Nevada County residents will not impact public opinion at large.

Wallin paid the county for the voter information used to conduct outreach for survey participants. He said if that public information is not used for the correct purpose, his company could face a hefty fine but said he has faced accusations before of push polling from people who did not like his surveys' outcomes.

According to his company's website, Wallin is a "marketing concept" strategist. He's contributed to the BBC, CNN and Fox News and conducted research for government entities like Health and Human Services and private companies including Shell.

"I sometimes am not the greatest person in the world, but I'm good at what I do and recognized for it," Wallin said, asserting his professional legitimacy.

Wallin said he has lost clients in the past because the data his company collected did not contain the message they wanted to hear.

Some people aren't convinced of the survey's accuracy.

Grass Valley Councilwoman Hilary Hodge said even if she believed that a 500-person survey was an accurate scientific sample for a 90,000-person community, the survey's outcome "does not pass a smell test" for her.

Hodge said she has not decided personally whether or not the mine should reopen, but asserted that there is ample quantitative evidence already pointing in the opposite direction of Rise Gold's survey's conclusions.

"I don't have an opinion on this one way or the other," Hodge said. "I want any decision that's made regarding the mine to be well researched, well thought out and informed as it possibly can be before any vote is made. I also know that the overwhelming public comment is against."

Hodge said the proof is in the council meeting minutes, all available online.

She said although some community members have been anti-mine for decades, she observed new names expressing serious concerns on the topic.

"In politics we have frequent fliers," Hodge explained, "people who love to comment at every meeting. The names that come across our desk are not names I've seen before, they don't belong to some sort of contingency that likes to write letters."

Hodge said there is a new cross-section of democratically engaged individuals who feel concerned about rural quality of life, the natural beauty of the Nevada County community and the preciousness of water — particularly as the region faces drought, fire danger and climate change.

Hodge said Nevada County's most valuable resource is water — not gold.

Rise Gold pointed to Grady Wilson, a local, when asked for people who support the effort to reopen the mine.

Wilson said he thought more people supported the mine before the survey came out, so was unsurprised by the survey's results.

Wilson, who supports the mine because his grandfather was a miner, said he is interested in giving Rise Gold the chance to prove itself.

"That's a world-class mine they're trying to develop," Wilson said. "I believe if people want to spend the money to open it, it's a heavily regulated industry and they don't use the practices they used to, we could give them the chance."

Rise Gold's stock ended the trading day Friday at 52 cents, a rise of 8 cents from the day's open.

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

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The long haul: Reports focus on Idaho-Maryland Mine's impact to roads, noise, property values

News FOLLOW NEWS | September 3, 2021

By Shira Moolten | Special to The Union

If the Idaho-Maryland Mine reopens, haul trucks will become a familiar sight on Grass Valley roadways for the next 20 years, according to project plans submitted by Rise Gold Corp. to Nevada County.

The trucks will make up to 100 trips a day, averaging 50, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

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The Centennial site, where engineered fill will be used as part of a restoration project, is expected to take five years to complete, during which time the trucks will be divided between the two routes. For the next 15 years, the number of trucks on the road will not decrease, but will move entirely to the Highway 20/49 route.

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presented by the mine's Centennial route, the delay increases to 148.4 seconds.

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The report is set to come out this summer or fall, though the exact date has yet to be determined, according to Matt Kelley, senior planner for Nevada County and the county's project contact for the mine.

Right now, Rise Gold plans to pay about $257,000 in fees to cover their share of road improvement and traffic signalization, which include the Nevada County Local Traffic Mitigation Fee, the Regional Transportation Mitigation Fee, the Grass Valley Transportation Impact Fee, and a Caltrans fee, Gonzales said.

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The noise generated by the trucks will be "less than significant," according to a large-scale noise study conducted by Bollard Acoustical Consultants. Using inputs based on the maximum of 100 round trips per day, the consultants found some increases in decibel levels measured at the nearest residences to the truck routes, but determined they were below the threshold of significance.

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Such an effect could be a game changer for those who would otherwise support the reopening of the mine. "Even very conservative pro-business people don't want their property values to be diminished," Martin said.

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The environmental impact of haul trucks can be sizable. According to a 2019 study on mining and emissions, haul trucks make up 30% to 50% of their mines' total energy use. Large mine haul trucks currently in use emit a combined 68 million tons of CO2 per year, about the total greenhouse gas emissions of Finland or New Zealand.

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Second: the trucks, and the subsequent ramifications for traffic, road quality, and property values.

Third: the engineered fill itself, and what it's composed of. It could be "safe" rock, but it could also contain arsenic, mercury, or other toxic materials. Research has shown that mercury levels remain heightened decades later in areas where gold mines once operated.

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Shira Moolten is a freelancer for The Union

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The planned truck routes.

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The long haul: Reports focus on Idaho-Maryland Mine's impact to roads, noise, property values

News FOLLOW NEWS | September 3, 2021

By Shira Moolten | Special to The Union

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https://www.theunion.com/news/understanding-the-gaps-local-well-owners-organize-in-advance-of-may-meeting-on-proposed-mine/article_fa623840-d58d-11ed-9f1a-df1f3d3429ca.html

FEATURED

Understanding the gaps: Local well owners organize in advance of May meeting on proposed mine reopening

Marianne Boll-See
Apr 8, 2023

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Ralph Silberstein (from left) president of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA) explains how gro
years because of the variations of dry or wet years needed to create a baseline for comparison. Gary Pierazzi, spokesp
Certified General Appraiser and Christy Hubbard point out the gaps in the FEIR on the Idaho-Maryland Mine project in
could be affected by the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Marianne Boll-See/mboll-see@theunion.com

Staff Writer

Grass Valley property owners whose home or business is located above the site of the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine owned by Rise Gold Corporation, gathered on Thursday evening to organize and sign a group letter from the Wells Coalition to present to the Nevada County Planning Commission.

Christy Hubbard, spokesperson for the Wells Coalition, urged the audience of more than 50 well owners to sign a letter stating that the protections from Rise Gold Corporation offered to well owners in the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Idaho-Maryland Mine are unacceptable.

The letters are addressed to Matt Kelly, Nevada County Planning Department and will be submitted to Kelly at the May 10 and 11 scheduled meeting. Two days are scheduled for this meeting because of the high number of individuals planning to speak during public comment.

“We had 500 people at the last meeting. We need 1,000 on May 10th,” Hubbard said. “This is very real. Personal stories matter and the county needs to hear them.”

The protections and mitigation offered to well owners by the Rise Gold Corporation is too little, too late, and too insufficient, according to Hubbard.

“The County included additional conditions of approval, such as a domestic well program, in response to requests and concerns from the community,” Jarryd Gonzales, Spokesperson for Rise Gold Corporation said in response to well owners concerns.

“The thorough and independent analysis provides peace of mind for well

owners and it counters the falsehoods and fear-mongering of CEA and MineWatch, who have discounted science and expert analysis throughout this process," Gonzales said.

Hubbard discounted Rise Gold's promises, saying there are no plans for protections other than the 30 homes on East Bennett Road.

"They have no plan and no money or independent liaison between the mine operator, well owner and NID," Christy Hubbard, spokesperson for the Wells Coalition said.

The authority to decide what mitigation and monitoring would occur, lies in the hands of Rise Gold Corporation, according to Hubbard. There are 378 property owners that qualify for the supplemental domestic well monitoring programs would have to opt in "by request" leaving the final decision up to Rise Gold Corporation

Also, NID asked for a $14 million bond to cover costs if wells fail, but the FEIR dismissed it, insisting NID needs nothing. That means no bond, no water supply assessment, no design plans, and no easements, according to Hubbard.

According to the FEIR in reference to NID's comments, "a bond for construction of water supply infrastructure in this area is not necessary because no significant impacts to domestic water wells are predicted," as stated on page 2-336 of the FEIR.

"Moreover, the well monitoring program, required as mitigation for the project would provide early warning of any potential dewatering impacts to

the Greenhorn, Woodrose and Beaver Lane areas, allowing the mine operator to provide replacement water prior to impacts, or to slow or halt dewatering to prevent any impact prior to water supply being connected," the FEIR said.

The Wells Coalition is collaborating with the CEA Foundation to inform residents of the risks to the quality and quantity of their well water over time, according to Ralph Silberstein, president of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA).

Gonzales referenced a response to the CEA from the county on the well/baseline issue highlighted on page 2-951 of the FEIR.

"The DEIR concludes that the proposed mining operations could result in adverse effects to seven domestic water supply wells in the East Bennett area during the life of the mining operation…the project would address this by installing a potable water supply line in East Bennett Road and providing individual well owners with a connection to the potable water line," the FEIR said. "The predictions include the use of a 100% safety factor, multiple sensitively scenarios, which have been peer reviewed by the county's independent expert consultant. However, the DEIR acknowledges that without the implementation of a groundwater monitoring plan and well mitigation plan, the project could result in a significant impact to groundwater supplies."

The claims made by Nevada County' Final Environmental Report (FEIR), authored by an independent consultant, Robert D. Niehaus (RDN), regarding the Idaho-Maryland Mine, are based on flawed groundwater analysis that expert reviewers say has serious deficiencies, according to Silberstein.

“Nevada County hired its own independent experts to conduct a scientific analysis that carefully examined the possible environmental impacts of the project and addressed every single question from the community in the Final EIR — and it has concluded there are no significant impacts on the environment, including groundwater,” Gonzales said.

Several issues of concern, including easements required for NID hookup, limitations on the quantity of water NID could provide in the future, and the inability to sell a property with a compromised source of water, were discussed by a panel of four Wells Coalition members.

“Lenders are concerned about wells and water sources... you will have to disclose that you don’t have a potable water source. You’re going to have to explain what that water truck is doing in your driveway,” Daniel Ketcham, SRA, MAI, SR/WA designated member Appraisal Institute and International Right of Way Association, Certified General Appraiser in California said.

The FEIR submitted to Nevada County by Rise Gold states, “If water supply to a property is disrupted for an appreciable amount of time (greater than a day) a temporary water supply will immediately be provided to the property using water tanks.”

Members of the audience shared recent examples of sellers looking to sell their properties near the mine, but can’t get anyone to even look at it with Rise Gold’s proposed mitigations impacting the water source.

The Nevada County Planning Commission is slated to make a decision on the proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine on May 10th at 9 a.m. and May 11th if needed, in the Nevada County Board of Supervisors chambers

located at 950 Maidu Avenue in Nevada City.

To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com.

https://www.theunion.com/news/vested-rights-for-idaho-maryland-mine-denied-by-supervisors/article_5fbb61be-9ada-11ee-b0f2-9f82b4e6a4fe.html

FEATURED

Vested rights for Idaho-Maryland Mine denied by supervisors

Marianne Boll-See Staff Writer
Dec 15, 2023

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Nevada County District 3 Supervisor Lisa Swarthout (right) speaks on Rise Gold's vested rights' petition during day tw
Building in Nevada City. The board unanimously voted not to grant the petition for vested rights to mine and reopen t
Elias Funez | efunez@theunion.com

The petition for vested rights to mine the Idaho-Maryland Mine (IMM) in

Grass Valley submitted by Rise Gold Corporation was denied by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors during the second day of discussion and deliberation within the Chambers of the Rood Administrative Center in Nevada City Thursday.

No public comments were heard Thursday, though the day prior approximately 40 individuals spoke.

Vested rights was defined by case law, specifically a legal case that took place in Nevada County in 1996 titled 'Hansen Brothers Enterprises, Inc. v. Board of Supervisors of Nevada County.'

In 1954 the first zoning ordinance regulating land use was adopted, and Rise Gold Corp. claimed that the Idaho-Maryland Mine (IMM) was in operation before Ordinance 196 was effective and has been in operation intermittently for the past 70 years.

"It's really simple. Was there a vested right? The answer is yes, in 1954," Christopher Powell, Senior Council at Hanson Bridgett representing Rise Gold said. "And number two, is there clear and convincing evidence of abandonment?"

The staff report findings did not acknowledge enough evidence of the continuous mining operation required by County code and the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) regulations.

"Under the test for abandonment, these are failures to act," Diane Kindermann, partner of Abbott and Kindermann and counsel for the County said. "Looking at everything, it leads to the conclusion that there was neither

the intent to continue to mine; in fact, there was the intent to abandon."

A timeline of operation and ownership also determined abandonment, according to Kindermann.

Ordinance 196 was adopted in 1954; in 1956 all mining ceased and 72 miles of tunnels were allowed to fill with water; in 1957 all equipment was sold off in auction; in 1958 new owners sought out a use permit to convert the site to a lumber mill; 1960 Sum-Gold bought 70 acres and began to subdivide the land as residential properties.

The current zoning and regulatory processes apply no matter what the reasons for the IMM to shut down over the years, according to Hardy Bullock, Supervisor for District 5.

"In my mind, no mining activity has taken place since the early 50s. There's clear and convincing evidence in my mind, not just on the Centennial and Brunswick, but the property as a whole," Hardy said.

Hardy went on to say, "Mining activity, in my mind, is excavation, blasting, tunneling, removing, processing, or the sale of mine products of any kind... That's what mining is. In my mind, mining is not subdividing mine land into parcels for sale as residential developments. Mining is not selling the land for industrial purposes. Mining is not sawmill or wood products."

The intermittent closure of the IMM due to the drop in the value of gold after World War II was not a thorough argument from Rise Gold in the mind of Hardy either.

Once an industry is unable to make a profit, it's not the responsibility of the

County or community at a later point to resurrect that industry, according to Hardy.

“It’s up to private business and capitalist motives,” Hardy said. “When they feel it’s appropriate, it’s a burden to meet whatever current regulatory framework there is. That’s why land use decisions as well as our Constitution… progressive, community, economics, and environmental values change over time.”

Several of the Supervisors agreed that they were basing their decisions on the evidence before them.

“We’re not judges. This is quasi judicial,” Hardy said.

“I am doing the best of my ability, and I believe my colleagues are too,” Heidi Hall, Supervisor for District 1 said.

The IMM proposal for vested rights lies within District 3 which Supervisors Lisa Swarthout represents.

Swarthout stated her decision on the vested rights, recognizing next steps that Rise Gold Corp. may choose to make.

“You talk about the economics of why the gold mine shut down, and that it hadn’t been opened because of the economy and the cost of the price of gold. But when you go back and you look at the history of the price of gold in the early 1980s I believe gold was over $2,000 an ounce,” Swarthout said.

Swarthout went on to say, “I feel like if there had been a vested right here, somebody would have come in and done the work and re-opened the mine.

The decision that we make today certainly isn't the finality of your possibility of opening the mine since you do have an application in front of us for a use permit. I don't believe this is the last bite at the apple for actually opening the mine."

Rise Gold Corp. still has a use permit to pursue for the IMM, so the possibilities for this and other mines to become operational are still in the works.

Rise Gold Corp. is a publicly listed exploration company, and owns the Idaho-Maryland and has interest in other mineral properties.

Members of MineWatch Nevada County stated that this legal attempt for vested rights is likely designed to set a precedent for other ventures where mines that have been abandoned may be reopened.

"Today tells a precautionary tale for all communities with mineral properties," Christy Hubbard said. "We need stronger protections for residential communities."

Ralph Silberstein, President of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) commented on the inevitability that the County will now be sued by Rise Gold Corp., and a Resolution drafted and made public on the second day of the hearing is preparing for that lawsuit.

"We're pleased that the Council did the right thing, and turned down this vested rights petition, and weren't intimidated by the threat of a bunch of high powered lawyers from the East Coast threatening to sue," Silberstein said.

Megan Wold, Cooper and Kirk out of Washington D.C. advised Rise Gold,

especially on the issues of the U.S. Constitution and the Fifth Amendment which refers to private property rights among other things.

Abandonment of vested rights is comparable to other constitutional rights, according to Wold.

“We require affirmative evidence of abandonment before we think someone has abandoned a Constitutional rights,” Wold said.

For example, just because someone is silent, it does not mean they have abandoned their Constitutional right to free speech.

“Another example is a criminal defendant’s speedy trial right. For example, if they are going to give up their right to a speedy trial, they often do so in order to have more time to prepare for proceedings, they do that in writing, and they do it in front of a judge. That’s the kind of formality that we require before someone abandons an invested right,” Wold said.

Addressing the comments that times have changed, Wold expanded on the idea stating that times have changed and mining regulations have changed to match those changes.

The IMM proposed project would still have to obey and function within a number of state agencies, federal agencies, other approvals, and environmental restrictions, according to Wold.

Several basic disagreements were acknowledged between the County and Rise Gold’s council, and these were noted in the Resolution that was drafted and presented at the end of the meeting.

“The Board of Supervisors were against our vested rights. We feel those rights are memorialized in California under the U.S. Constitution, and we will continue to try to assert those rights,” Rise Gold’s new President and CEO Joseph Mullin said following the decision. “So while we are discouraged by [by the decision] we’re going to see what our next steps are legally.”

Mullin also mentioned pursuing the conditional use permit case that could still be put back into play as an option.

“It’s frustrating to know that no matter what we say, it’s going to be argued in court,” Ed Scofield, Chair Supervisor representing District 2 said.

Scofield went on to say, “It does not mean you can’t mine, it simply means they have to get a use permit, and yes, that use permit is going to be very difficult because of what mining represents and the location of where it is and it’s proximity to the City of Grass Valley.”

To contact Staff Writer Marianne Boll-See, email mboll-see@theunion.com.

https://www.theunion.com/news/vested-rights-hearing-for-rise-gold-proposal-to-examine-historical-fact/article_ab3740de-987f-11ee-bd84-0749116a2236.html

FEATURED

Vested rights hearing for Rise Gold proposal to examine historical fact

Marianne Boll-See Staff Writer
Dec 12, 2023



In June Nevada County Planning Commissioner Terry McAteer and other commissioners spoke during the two-day hearing on the proposed reopening of the Idaho Maryland Mine by Rise Gold Corp. This week it is up the Board of Supervisors to determine if Rise Gold Corporation holds any legal vested rights for mining.

Elias Funez/efunez@theunion.com

This week the Nevada County Board of Supervisors will conduct a special hearing on Rise Gold Corporation's petition for vested rights to conduct

mining operations at the Idaho-Maryland Mine site.

On Wednesday, December 13 beginning at 9 a.m. in the chambers of the Eric Rood Center in Nevada City the Board of Supervisors will determine the existence and scope of vested mining rights for the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

“A vested right is a right to continue activity that existed before a zoning restriction became effective,” County Counsel Katharine Elliott said. “Should the Board of Supervisors make a ‘vested rights finding,’ it would mean that Rise Grass Valley has a legal right to mine on the Brunswick Industrial Site.”

In a recent press release from Rise Gold Corporation, California legal principles and not the discretion of the Board of Supervisors is in focus.

“The Supervisors’ decision is not discretionary; they must apply the relevant legal principles as determined by the California Supreme Court to the historical facts,” according to Rise Gold’s new CEO Joe Mullin.

Mullin from Rise Gold went on to say, “It is indisputable that mining was occurring at the IM Mine in 1954, and the Company submitted 2,000 pages of exhibits to show that each of the predecessor owners of the mine either attempted to reopen it or marketed the property for sale as a mine to demonstrate that there was never an intent to abandon the right to mine.”

Community Environmental Advocates (CEA), one of the local groups opposing the Idaho-Maryland Mine’s proposed re-opening, emphasized that the County still has to provide a comprehensive analysis of the history or the mine and the legal aspects of the Vested Rights Petition to reach their recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, according to Elliott.

MineWatch, a local group opposing Rise Gold's proposal, has a legal team who are preparing a response to Rise Gold's vested rights claim, according to Ralph Silberstein, President of the Community Environmental Advocates (CEA) Foundation.

"Rulings on vested rights are established by case law, meaning the determinations of similar cases," according to Silberstein at a community meeting back in September 2023.

The general guidelines for vested rights, as applied to mining, are that the mine must be continuously operating after new regulations are implemented, according to Silberstein.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine (IMM) was not continuously operating.

Historically, the Idaho-Maryland Mine may have had vested rights as of 1954 when they were still operating, and then the Idaho-Maryland Mine shut down in 1956.

"No mining was done after 1956. The mine was re-flooded, the surface properties were sold, all equipment auctioned off by 1957, and the company soon went bankrupt," Silberstein said.

In conclusion, vesting for the Idaho-Maryland Mine died by 1958, according to Silberstein.

"That's it. They're done. They don't have vested rights," Silberstein said. "That's the whole argument."

Staff are recommending that the Board determine whether or not the mining

operations on the Brunswick Industrial site were abandoned as early as 1956, and if Rise Grass Valley nor any other party has a vested right to mine on the subject property, according to the staff report.

At the meeting, the Board will hear presentations from Planning Department staff and Rise Grass Valley, followed by public comment and Board deliberation.

If the Board grants the petition, the next step would be to review a reclamation plan outlining the measures Rise Gold would take to restore the land affected by mining operations.

If the Board denies the petition, the County will schedule a public hearing to resume consideration of Rise Gold's application for a use permit to reopen the Idaho- Maryland Mine. This public hearing will also provide an additional opportunity for public comment.

How to participate

Those wishing to comment will have three minutes, and any comment must be limited to the historical uses of the site and factual evidence of activities that have occurred on or at the site.

Directions written on the Nevada County website clearly direct public comment to stay on topic.

"Those wishing to comment will have three minutes, and any comment must be limited to the historical uses of the site and factual evidence of activities that have occurred on or at the site," according to the website.

No public comments will be allowed that are not relevant to the subject of the hearing.

No public comment will be allowed regarding arguments for or against the mine, the Idaho Maryland Mine's Draft Environmental Impact Report, the use permit, the reclamation plan, and/or any other land use entitlement, and/or any other potential impacts of the mine, or any history pertaining to Rise Grass Valley or related businesses.

All those comments should be reserved for future hearings; Wednesday's hearing will focus on the issue of vested rights.

To provide public comment, receive a number from County staff outside the Supervisors' Chamber. Public comment numbers will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 8:30 am.

Speakers will provide public comment to the Board of Supervisors in the Supervisors' Chamber in groups of ten.

All written public comments should be received by 4 p.m. the day before the hearing, December 12, for it to become part of the public record.

Comments may also be submitted by email to clerkofboard@nevadacountyca.gov or mailed to the Nevada County Clerk of the Board at 950 Maidu Ave, Suite 200, Nevada City, CA 95959.

The public hearing may or may not be continued to December 14 beginning at 9 a.m. depending on how many members of the public wish to address the Board.

THE UNION

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Well underground: NID board poses questions about possible impacts to water wells

News FOLLOW NEWS | 16h ago



Rebecca O'Neil FOLLOW
roneil@theunion.com



Eric Gibbons points to where his 700-foot deep residential well is located outside of his rural Grass Valley home. He is concerned that Rise Grass Valley's plans to dewater and reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine will also dewater his well.
Photo: Elias Funez

The general manager of the Nevada Irrigation District told the board it had one duty — to determine if NID's current and future capacity could provide for the water needs of 31 additional customers.

Those 31 would-be customers need NID water because of the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine. County consultants have determined that the mine would lead to mitigation efforts for those people.

On Wednesday, they got the approval needed from the NID board, but not before some questions were asked.

Division 4 Director Laura Peters, whose background is in civil engineering, said the potential impacts of the project are relatively mild given a 1996 draft environmental impact report from EmGold, a company that unsuccessfully tried to reopen the mine.

Peters asked how county consultants determined the Idaho-Maryland Mine would require mitigation efforts to only 31 wells, given that a report conducted 25 years before indicates over 100 wells would tentatively need to be replaced by new NID connections if the mine were to be reopened.

Houmao Liu, a Itasca hydrogeologist who helped design the model used to determine where mitigation efforts would be necessary, said even experts expect certain uncertainties in ground flow water models. Liu said the unknowns increase when trying to quantify the impact of climate change.

Eric Gibbons' rural Grass Valley water well was one of many that a previous environmental impact report showed would be dewatered if the Idaho-Maryland Mine were reopened. An EIR out for the current efforts to reopen the mine does not show Gibbons' well is in jeopardy, which he says makes no sense.
Photo: Elias Funez

Liu said the previous model used by EmGold-related consultants was two dimensional, and that this time experts used a 3D groundwater flow model that is approved by Nevada's Environmental Protection Agency.

Peters said she is sensitive to differences between the physical contours of the project — of the land use, available technology and infrastructure — but noted that climate change was not on anyone's radar in the 90s.

Nick Pappani, Raney Planning & Management's vice president and a hired consultant for the county, said thinking of available groundwater as contained by a vertical water column is a useful image to employ when considering well mitigation efforts.

Pappani said seven to 12 domestic wells in the East Bennett area could be impacted by a 10% reduction, but that the threshold for significant impact actually ranges from 20% to 40%, if regular seasonal fluctuations are taken into account.

The Idaho-Maryland Mine draft environmental impact report is available for the public to read and make comments on. The end of the comment period is April 4.
Photo: Elias Funez

Some of the wells could be deepened, Pappani said, but Rise Grass Valley — the company seeking to reopen the mine — may need NID to lay new pipes to reach residences with limited mitigation options.

Pappani said Rise Grass Valley expanded its mitigation efforts beyond the minimal requirements.

"The applicant has committed to serving a greater number of wells around (the seven identified)," Pappani said.

9+

Page 4.8-3 of the Idaho-Maryland Mine's draft environmental impact report. The draft EIR notes that the Idaho-Maryland Mine project sites are located within two watershed area, the Centennial Industrial Site in the Upper Wolf Creek watershed and the Brunswick Industrial Site located in the South Fork Wolf Creek Watershed, which is upstream of a culvert where the creek passes underneath part of the city of Grass Valley.

District 5 Director Rich Johansen said the tests go "against everything his grandparents taught him," given that water availability varies greatly if one draws water from a well for 30 minutes or four hours.

Other meeting attendees questioned the language used by consultants, and asked if NID would identify the mine as a "net water producer' if it were to author the report.

"Rise Gold's claim that they will be a 'net water producer' by pumping groundwater is false and misleading," said Keiko Mertz, with the South Yuba River Citizens League, adding moments later, "Well users who can no longer access groundwater will become dependent on our already limited supply of water."

Rebecca O'Neil is a staff writer with The Union. She can be reached at roneil@theunion.com

Eric Gibbons' rural Grass Valley home and others possibly affected by the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine may have to be supplied by Nevada Irrigation District water if his well, and the ground beneath him, becomes dewatered.
Photo: Elias Funez

SECTION TITLE

I. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine

III. News Articles

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

YubaNet.com

CEA: Businesses urge County Supervisors to reject Mine proposal

150 local business leaders sign on to letter

by Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
8 hours ago

Grass Valley, CA – 150 business leaders from Nevada County submitted a letter to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. The letter includes businesses located in downtown Grass Valley and from diverse sectors in the County including tourism, agriculture, and real estate. In addition, nearly 100 business owners also signed a petition to the Board of Supervisors, for a total of 250 businesses opposed to re-opening the mine.

The long-shuttered Idaho Maryland Mine is proposed to be re-opened by Rise Gold Corp – a company headquartered in Canada. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released in January. In response, many hundreds of comments were submitted by citizens to the County expressing serious concerns about the risks of the mine and the inadequacy of the report. The County Board of Supervisors could consider this issue as early as 2023 after a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) is issued.

The letter states:

“Mining is our past, not our future. During the past 50 years, Nevada County has worked diligently to attract people and investments that contribute to and renew its economic vitality through promising and sustainable enterprises which align with the aspirations of its residents.

That is what continues to make this County an attractive place to live, to make a living, and to start new business ventures."

Residents and businesses have expressed concerns about the potential economic impacts of the mine, including impact on tourism, property values, and tax revenue, and high-tech companies.

Many businesses offered quotes expressing their opposition to the Mine. "This mine is on track to have a potentially significant impact on our regional flora and fauna, water quality, and even local culture," stated Fable Coffee. "Rise Gold's ethical practices are questionable; we simply do not know enough to say this is safe – but we know enough to say that this community is not ready to open Idaho-Maryland Mine. There are better, more innovative, and more regionally respectful ways to enhance our economy."

Nevada County's agricultural sector is growing. With over 350 farms, tourists flock to farmers markets, and local farm-to-fork restaurants to experience fresh food grown by local farmers and prepared by local chefs.

"Grass Valley and Nevada County are known for our local farms and businesses," said Mike Pasner, Owner of Indian Springs Organic Farms. "We need to invest in our already existing sustainable businesses."

Nevada County was once the epicenter for gold mining. The big mines shut down in the 1950s, and mining is now less than ½% of the local economy. The County, particularly Grass Valley, is now considered a scenic and cultural destination.

Residents contend that the few jobs that might be gained are offset by big risks to tourism, high-tech businesses, private wells, and 10's of millions lost in property values.

"Real estate values and the quality of life in Nevada County will suffer

permanent and irreparable harm if the mine is allowed to operate," stated Charles Brock, Real Estate Broker. "I have read the Draft EIR for this proposed project, and there are many unanswered and unmitigable issues which, in my opinion, will destroy the fabric of life as we know it in Nevada County."

The letter outlined key economic points and concerns, including:

The County could do better by continuing to invest in existing industries and new enterprises that address current priorities in the Sierra, like watershed and forest management.

Other industries can produce far better economic growth numbers than mining, including eight industries Nevada County already has today.

An economic study commissioned by the City of Grass Valley during Emgold's attempt to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Mine in 2008 concluded that Nevada County would be better off economically if it pursued other opportunities than mining.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released in January and while it is not required to include an analysis of the economic impacts, Nevada County has commissioned an independent economic impact report. The letter also urged the County to include consideration of a non-Mine alternative in their Economic Study. Because the DEIR will most likely have to be recirculated, the study is expected to be released after potential changes in the project description have been assessed.

The public can view pictures of several businesses opposed to the Mine on the website www.MineWatchNC.org or on the MineWatchNC Instagram account at minewatchnc

For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: www.MineWatchNC.org

About CEA Foundation: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. www.cea-nc.org/ *CEA Foundation is the sponsor of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine.* *www.MineWatchNC.org*, https://www.cea-nc.org/

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BriarPatch Food Co-op

We're gearing up for Passover with some of our favorite recipes. 🍴 Matzo brei is frequently eaten as a breakfast food during Passover, when matzo is plentiful. But many people make the dish all year round. And no wonder. It’s so simple and good, can be prepared sweet or savory, and kids love it! ❤️ Be sure to join us for our event Peace, Love & Matzo

CEA Foundation: “Significant flaws in the DEIR for the proposed reopening of Idaho-Maryland Mine”

“This DEIR is riddled with errors, omissions, and legal flaws”, said Ralph Silberstein, President of CEA Foundation

by Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
14 hours ago Updated 3 hours ago

Grass Valley, CA – March 30, 2022 – CEA Foundation and its MineWatch coalition members delivered comments to Nevada County’s Planning Commission on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed reopening of Idaho-Maryland Mine today. Experts, volunteers, and legal minds reviewed the DEIR’s 1,000+ pages to provide a comprehensive review of the technical studies, impact assessments and proposed mitigations provided in the DEIR.

Once the center of the famed California gold rush, at stake is a community that has transformed into a scenic and cultural magnet

for families, retirees, and tourists from across the western United States. If approved, this mine would be opened under the community’s feet.

“Mining is our past, not our future”, said retired capital planner, Paul Schwartz. “Today’s economic engine is recreation based, but we’re also facing historic drought and fire risk. Protecting precious resources like water, air quality, and our peaceful rural setting is job number one.”

“This DEIR is riddled with errors, omissions, and legal flaws”, said Ralph Silberstein, President of CEA Foundation. “The County will have to make significant changes and recirculate the draft. We’ll see many more impacts listed as significant and unavoidable. Beyond the EIR, our Supervisors will be faced with making the final decision. In the long run, it will very simply come down to whether the mine is good for our community.”

The applicant, Rise Gold, was responsible for delivering the vast majority of the technical studies used by the County’s hired consultant to determine the impacts. “Surprisingly, the studies lacked key information one would normally expect and were often internally inconsistent.”, said Silberstein.

Dewatering the mine is a key concern. “Groundwater modeling in fractured rock systems is considered unreliable even when everything is done right,” said Silberstein. According to experts, Rise Gold’s model has fundamental flaws in the initial start point of the model and baseline data assumptions – all of which throw off the entire analysis. The result is a DEIR that concludes that groundwater levels would drop a maximum of 10 feet and no more than 30 local wells would be a risk. Experts, however, recognize the extremely high degree of uncertainty involved. Comments submitted to the County by the community and the Nevada Irrigation District (NID) include requests to expand the potential area of impact, provide a comprehensive groundwater monitoring

program, and post a $14 million bond.

Dealing with mine waste is another major concern. “Looking at the rock core sample analysis, it is abundantly clear that asbestos will be a gnarly problem that will require comprehensive management. Mining operations don’t get to just haul and dump rock like the days of old,” said Silberstein. “Air and water quality regulations will significantly restrict throughput and the costs will be exorbitant.” Experts found the plans to mitigate fugitive dust to be inadequate. They also found no credible evidence that the mine tailings could be effectively sold to 3rd parties for fill or offsite construction.

Climate change has increased forest fires and parched lands, resulting in the newest Federal and State greenhouse gas reduction goals. The DEIR used a threshold of 10,000 metric tons per year for greenhouse gas emissions but failed to include some elements that puts the project over that limit and makes it a significant impact. In the long run however, the limit defined in the DEIR is likely to be found irrelevant. Recent changes mean the County’s threshold must be established at “net zero”.

Following is a quick list of additional gaps in the draft:

- Cleanup of the toxic, pre-superfund Centennial site that would be used to dump mine waste is not included in the DEIR but is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- Missing construction time estimates throw off the entire analysis of noise, traffic, and air.
- The DEIR incorrectly assesses nighttime noise and underestimates the noise of dumping mine waste near established residential neighborhoods.
- Air traffic hazards and aesthetic impacts need to be studied further due the likelihood of a massive fog plume that could be created by warm, saturated air ventilation.

- Blasting plans don’t follow U.S. mining guidelines that restrict blasting during evening hours.
- The plan doesn’t demonstrate that the impact on biological and aquatic resources would be less than significant.
- Meteorological data used to assess the health risk of airborne pollutants doesn’t fit Grass Valley’s profile or accurately reflect local conditions.

Rise Gold appears to be spending a lot of money ‘marketing’ to our community claiming nothing but net-positives and declaring “the Science is Clear”, but the reality is completely different. This DEIR reveals significant flaws in the analysis. Nevada County residents and the Supervisors who will be making the final decision deserve an accurate environmental report that shows the full extent of the impacts the mine project would have on our community.

View the CEA Foundation and coalition comments here: www.minewatchnc.org/post/deir-comments-mar2022

For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: www.MineWatchNC.org

About CEA Foundation: Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) performs research, education, and advocacy to promote responsible land use and environmental protection policies in Nevada County. www.cea-nc.org. CEA Foundation is the sponsor of MineWatch, a campaign that brings together a coalition of nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses opposed to the mine. www.MineWatchNC.org

YubaNet.com

CEA: Planning Commission recommends NO to Gold Mine

Community Opponents Celebrate

by Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
3 hours ago

Nevada City, CA – The Nevada County Planning Commission, before an overflow crowd, unanimously denied recommending approval to the Board of Supervisors of the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine and opted not to recommend certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). The final decision will be made by the Board of Supervisors later this Summer.



Opponents of the gold mine project.

The decision came after two days of hearings, with over 900 people in attendance. Over 350 people signed up to speak to the Commission. The crowd flowed into the outdoor area surrounding the County Administration Center, where the hearing could be followed by outdoor speakers provided by the county. Food trucks provided lunch, and music lightened the tension. Those attending were overwhelmingly opposed to the mine, many holding what has become a common sight around the county – bright yellow "No Mine" signs.

The Commission's decision was met with applause and cheers.

Ralph Silberstein, president of Community Environmental Advocates Foundation, the group that coordinated the MineWatch campaign, was relieved: "On behalf of CEA Foundation, I want to thank the Planning Commission for their diligence and patience in addressing this complex and controversial project. But even more, I want to thank the MineWatch team, our coalition partners, thousands of our supporters, and the community at large for their dedication and efforts leading up to the hearings. We can make a difference! We will move on to the Board of Supervisors vote, hoping that they will take the advice of their Commission and the overwhelming majority of their constituents."

The MineWatch campaign includes **26 state, regional, and local organizations** that are concerned about the environmental and economic impacts of the mine reopening. Speakers at the Planning Commission meeting summarized the large-scale public participation during the three years of project review by presenting to the Commission petitions with 5,500 plus signatures, over 1000 letters and postcards, a notebook filled with guest editorials, and unveiled a photo collage of hundreds of No Mine activists.

During public comments, opponents outlined concerns over the environmental impacts of the mine which would operate for up to 80 years, producing 1,000 tons of mine waste rock per day with unknown asbestos content, pumping thousands of gallons daily from limited groundwater supplies affecting over 300 residential wells, generating 100 truck trips a day on local roads, and releasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions the equivalent of that from the energy use of 5,575 homes.

Christy Hubbard with the Wells Coalition responded to the vote: "Wells owners are deeply grateful to the Commissioners, including our District 3 Commissioner Terry McAteer, for listening so closely to our concerns. We also want to thank NID for setting the record straight on the enormous complexities involved in providing assurances to so many homes. Without water, our properties are worthless. Well owners were weeping tears of joy after the decision."

During the hearing, residents spanning ages and livelihoods made it clear that Grass Valley is no longer a gold-mining town.

High school student Josh Thiem, a Ghidotti High School Student and leader in the Sunrise Movement, led a group of students who (with permission) left school to participate in the hearing. In his comments before the Commission, he said: "Think not for you, but for me and all the generations after me. It matters not for the people in this room but for all the people after us." After the hearing, he concluded: "I strongly believe that the County will vote against the FEIR. It sends a message to us that we can take action and be heard."

Former County Supervisor Peter Van Zant and a leader of the environmental community's participation in the 1995 General Plan Update, commented on General Plan issues: "I'm grateful that the Planning Staff recommended denial of the mine based on its being inconsistent with the General Plan's requirement that projects maintain the County's 'rural character and quality of life."

Don Rivenes, speaking for CEA Foundation/MineWatch, and a leader in Nevada County Action Now, noted: "…. The mine's 9,000 tons/year of emissions should be considered significant and unmitigated. The EIR should have established a net zero threshold for GHG emissions from the proposed project."

Lauren Tackbarry represented the Sierra Club, Sierra Nevada Group: "…Simply put, this community deserves better, and we refuse to go back in time to reopen a mine that would cause irreversible damage to the foothills."

Deni Silberstein echoed a concern heard throughout the hearing – the hazardous waste potential of mine waste (tailings) which would be produced by the mine: "… the mine waste has not been classified as Group C by the Water Board. Yet, only Group C mine waste is safe enough to be sold – or stored – without restrictions. So it is not even known whether the waste can be dumped at the Brunswick and Centennial sites, let alone whether or not it can be sold off-site."

Many area realtors joined in urging the Commissioners to consider impacts on property values and the local economy. The Nevada County Association of Realtors (NCAOR) presented results from a recent survey of realtors. The poll included 162 survey answers, with 87% of survey participants believing that property values will be negatively impacted. In addition, realtors cautioned about the devaluation of residents' properties and the impact on property taxes, estimating that the loss to the County could be significant. Residents echoed their sentiments, explaining that they were already having trouble selling their homes. One realtor presented a letter signed by 150 businesses and 100 realtors opposed to the project.

Proponents of the mine touted job creation. Opponents disagreed. George Olive, Board President of the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), reminded us to prioritize projects that are constructive, progressive,

and future-oriented. Restoration projects that are forward-looking “make life better,” provide sustainable jobs and bring in millions of dollars to our region.

“We hope to work together with the union members who testified to continue to add jobs in the growing restoration economy. SYRCL’s restoration work last year supported nearly 70 skilled equipment operator positions,” said Aaron Zettler-Mann, Interim Executive Director and Science Director.

“CEA Foundation supports good jobs in the county and sympathizes with those hoping for mine jobs, but not jobs at the expense of our health and safety, and having adverse effects upon other thriving elements of the economy that are more sustainable,” added Ralph Silberstein.

The Final EIR

Throughout the two days, opponents continuously brought up the concern that even if the mine were denied, a county-certified EIR could be relied on by any future mine proposal on this site.

Jillian Blanchard, a CEA Foundation supporter and a land use attorney, advised the Commission during the hearing: “The next applicant will claim that the County is bound by this FEIR’s analysis and mitigation. And you, Commissioners, will have your hands tied by a legally deficient document.”

The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) drew attention to a number of failings in the final EIR. “Inadequate sampling, poor computer modeling, and baseless assumptions about aggregate sales and the failure to address the related water quality concerns mean the final EIR is inadequate. There is no market for their mine waste, the restoration economy is here and growing, and the environmental impacts of the project will be significant,” said Zettler-Mann. “SYRCL applauds the County Planning Commission for its final recommendation and looks forward to continuing to build a more resilient future for Nevada County residents absent destructive gold mines.”

Gary Pierazzi, one of the last speakers at the end of day 2, reminded the Commission: “With the three proposals to reopen this mine over the last 30 years, I and many in the community have spent 20 of those years fighting to protect our wells from the mine. We don’t want to have to re-live this constant burden. This FEIR does not protect us, and certifying it would have come back to bite us.”

Commissioners unanimous

Commissioner Terence McAteer questioned consultants on many inadequacies of the report. Among them was the erasure of an earthquake fault line that ran directly under the mine workings. McAteer’s concern was

confirmed when an actual earthquake occurred just 20 minutes later. Alarms sounded, the floor shook, and the Commission chose to continue with the hearing.

In the end, the Commissioners were unanimous, voting 5-0 to recommend to the Nevada County Supervisors to not certify the FEIR and deny the mine project.

In his closing statement before the vote, Commissioner McAteer told the packed house about the work of Judge Lorenzo Sawyer. Sawyer, a former miner who worked in Nevada City, became a lawyer and then eventually a judge. Fueled by his experience of mining's destructive impacts, he wrote the 1884 Sawyer decision that states the environmental effects of mining "must not be foisted on neighboring property or community." McAteer stated: "Today we are faced with a similar situation which has the potential to infect our air with asbestos and exhaust fumes, impact the wells of our neighbors, discharge harmful elements into the water, destroy many acres of wetlands, add significant amounts of greenhouse gases into our environment, and return to our legacy of mining."

The community has a rich history of mining with a "hotel called the Miner's Inn, the high school's mascot is the Miners, and…there's a miner in the County logo," stated Commissioner Mike Mastrodonato. "But things change."

The Nevada County Supervisors will consider the Commission's recommendation no earlier than August 2023. More on the next steps can be found on the County's website and this **Nevada County News Flash**

The 2-day hearing is available on the Nevada County YouTube site. **Nevada County Planning Commission Special Meeting May 10, 2023 – YouTube** and **Nevada County Planning Commission Special Meeting May 11, 2023 – YouTube**

For more information about the potential re-opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine visit: **www.MineWatchNC.org**

The mission of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) is to perform research, education, and advocacy to promote public policy and actions resulting in responsible land use and environmental protection in Nevada County and the Sierra Nevada region. www.cea-nc.org/. MineWatch campaign, a grassroots effort to oppose the mine. www.MineWatchNC.org

A Preliminary Assessment of the Proposal to Reopen Idaho-Maryland Mine by CEA

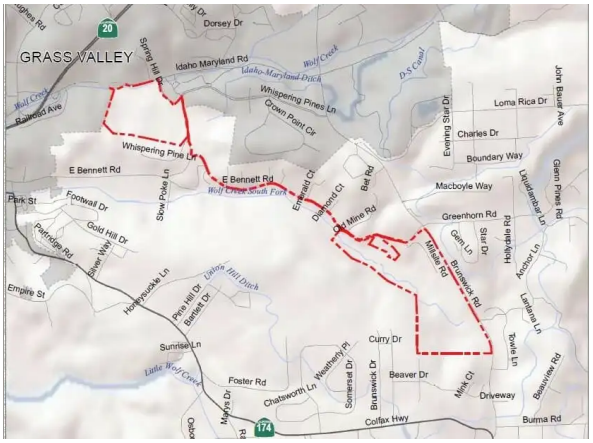
by Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
March 16, 2020

advertisement

March 16, 2020 – Rise Gold Corp's application to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Mine is not yet deemed complete by Nevada County Planning Department, but a review of currently available documents provides a glimpse into the nature of the project and how it may impact our community.

The main mine access and processing facilities will be located at the 119 acre New Brunswick site located at the corner of Brunswick and East Bennett Roads. Operations will also utilize the 56 acre Centennial site on Idaho-Maryland Road west of

Centennial Drive to dispose of mine waste.[1]



Mining will take place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. About 1500 tons of waste rock and tailings will be removed from the mine daily. Of this, 500 tons per day will be mixed with cement to form a paste backfill and re-deposited into the mine. The remaining 1000 tons per day will be deposited at the Centennial site and at a 31 acre area along Brunswick Road just south of the processing facility and bounded by neighborhoods on Cedar Ridge Drive, Elk Lane, and Mink Court.

Waste rock and tailings from the mine will be transported by trucks making up to 100 round trips per day, 16 hours per day, 7 days per week. To get to the Centennial site, they will turn left onto Brunswick Road about 0.4 miles south of East Bennett Rd, pass through the intersection of East Bennett and Brunswick and turn left onto Whispering Pines Lane to reach Centennial Drive.

At the Centennial site, an area of 44 acres will be built up with “engineered fill” to depths of up to 70 feet, eventually forming a 37 acre graded surface that may be utilized for future development. Similarly, the mine waste dumped at the Brunswick Road site will eventually cover an area of 31 acres and be built up as much as 90 feet to form a 21 acre graded area for possible future industrial uses.

The trucks will be loaded with rock with a front-end loader. Hauling will take place 6:00 AM – 10:00 PM, 7 days a week. After the rock is dumped, it will be graded and compacted 7:00 AM – 3:30 PM, 7 days a week, using bulldozers, graders, and rolling compactors. [2] This activity will take place continuously for 11 years or until both build-up areas are maximized. After that, mine waste materials will

have to be hauled out via Brunswick Road to Glenbrook Basin in order to access Hwy 49 for transport to sites not yet identified.

In terms of energy use, the permit application estimates a PG&E power net load of 6000 Kilowatts (KW). Planned diesel backup power generation capacity is 6000 KW. Electricity utilization is estimated at 42,757,000 Kilowatt-Hours (KWH) per year.[3] This is equivalent to the electric use of about 5000 houses.[4]

Full operations of the mine, including fuel for equipment, electricity, and other operational uses are estimated to produce around 9,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year.[5]

Cement, explosives, diesel, and various other chemicals will be regularly transported to the site and stored. Cement will be mixed with tailings and pumped back underground and used to backfill mining voids. By one estimate, the backfill paste will use approximately 25 tons of cement daily. Explosives will include ANFO (Ammonium Nitrate and Fuel Oil), and Ammonium Nitrate Emulsion. Up to 28,000 lbs. of explosives will be stored onsite underground.[6] Diesel fuel storage will consist of a 30,000 gallon aboveground storage tank. A number of other chemicals will be utilized for processing the gold using the sulfide flotation system and other activities.

Industrial buildings covering 122,000 square feet are proposed for the New Brunswick site. Noteworthy among these would be the gold processing plant with dimensions of 425 feet by 70 feet and 65 feet high, and the shaft headframe building with a height of 165 feet. Running between these buildings will be a 365’ long enclosed conveyor system. Tailings will be stockpiled onsite while waiting for transport.

The application to re-operate the Idaho-Maryland mine states that 312 jobs would be created by the mine operations. Of those jobs,

242 jobs are specialized technical positions likely taken by people recruited from outside the area. The remaining jobs, truck transport of mine waste, and mineral processing, could provide 70 jobs for current local residents.

CEA Foundation advocates for responsible land use and environmental protection policies and actions in Nevada County. www.cea-nc.org

[1] Project application documents may be viewed at https://www.mynevadacounty.com/2882/Application-Documents—Rise-Grass-Valley . Unless noted, see Idaho-Maryland Mine Project Description, Nov 2019;

https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/31023/Applicants-Project-Description

[2] Noise and Vibration Analysis, Table 9, https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/30467/Noise-and-Vibration-Study-Report

[3]Air Quality and greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis Technical Report for the Idaho-Maryland Mine Project, Feb 2020, pgs 73-74, https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/33583/Air-Quality-and-GHG-Report—ADDED-392020

[4] Average energy usage per CA residence = 667 KWH / month = ~8000 KWH / year. https://www.electricchoice.com/blog/electricity-on-average-do-homes/

IMM will use equivalent to 42,757,000 / 8000 = 5344 houses.

[5] Ibid [3]

[6] Environmental Factors of Blasting Report for the Proposed Idaho-Maryland Gold Project, Sept 27, 2019, https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/30457/Environmental-Factors-of-Blasting-Report

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Canadian Firm Pushing to Reopen Idaho Maryland Mine

by Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
January 14, 2020

advertisement

January 14, 2020 – A Canadian company, Rise Gold Corporation, aka Rise Grass Valley, has filed an application for a permit to reopen the Idaho Maryland mine. These are some key points from the initial application:

• The operation will remove 1000 tons of ore and 500 tons of non-gold bearing rock a day with mining continuous 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
• The headframe, rock conveyors, ore crushers/grinders, water treatment plant, paste backfill plant, and truck loading area will all be located at the Brunswick Industrial Site at the corner of East Bennet and Brunswick Road. 122,000 square feet of industrial buildings will be constructed at this site.
• Haul trucks—50 to 100 round trips per day, running from 6 AM to 10 PM, 7 days a week—will dump a mixture of barren rock and processed tailing sand at two sites: the southern end of the

Brunswick site, near to and behind homes on Mink Court, Elk Lane, Brunswick Drive, and Cedar Ridge Drive; and at the Centennial site, off Idaho Maryland Rd, along the edge of Wolf Creek.

• The trucks will be loaded with rock with a front-end loader from 7 AM until 7 PM, 7 days a week. After the rock is dumped, it will be compacted beginning at 7 AM using bulldozers, graders, and rolling compactors. This operation will create a large amount of noise and dust. Dust from these operations is likely to contain asbestos as well as lead and arsenic from massive tailings that must be remediated first.

• In addition to four industrial-size backup diesel generators, the exhaust from the daily use of diesel trucks, bulldozers, graders, and compactors, will greatly increase greenhouse gas emissions.

• The paste backfill plant will create 500 tons of backfill every day, 7 days a week. The production of the cement used to make the backfill paste will release an estimated 55,000 pounds of CO2 daily. Thus, the CO2 generated in one day—just by the backfill plant—will be roughly equivalent to the CO2 generated by over 1600 cars.

The project description, noise study, and other documents related to Rise Gold's application can be obtained at https://www.mynevadacounty.com/2882/Application-Documents.

If you object to having an industrial-scale gold mine in our community, voice your objections to Matt Kelley, who is the Project Planner for the County, and your Nevada County District Supervisor. Mr. Kelley can be reached by phone at 530-265-1423 or by email at matt.kelley@co.nevada.ca.us. Your district supervisor can be found at https://www.mynevadacounty.com/731/Board-of-Supervisors. Demand an open, public process, full disclosure of the current physical and chemical hazards on the properties in question, and the negative impacts the mine will have on our community.

CEA Foundation is committed to being fully engaged to protect our

community from the impacts of this massive project. Subscribe to our newsletter for further information.

*** Visit the CEA website at www.cea-nc.org *** Contact via info@cea-nc.org **

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Op-Ed | CEA: Impacts to Jobs and Housing from the Proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine

by Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
February 26, 2021

advertisement

Grass Valley, Calif. February 26, 2021 – The application documents submitted by Rise Gold show anticipated jobs that will be created once the mine is fully operational.[1] However, questions remain about the quantities and phasing of these jobs, and whether they will be filled from the local workforce or by people with specific technical skills from out of the area. It is also important to know what would be the net gain or loss of jobs in the area as a result of the mine, as well as the impacts on housing that may be caused by an influx of workers.

While it is true that we can expect some evaluation of housing impacts in the Draft Environmental Impact Report when it is eventually published, a more useful and comprehensive economic study regarding jobs, fiscal effects, and economic growth is not being done.

There was an economic study done as part of the analysis for the previous attempt to open the mine by Emgold Mining Corporation, 2008.[2] It must be noted that the proposed project by Emgold was different in several ways. It included a tile factory as a means of disposing the mine tailings by fusing them into tiles. And the main processing facilities were to be on the 56 acre site on Idaho-Maryland Road, not at the Brunswick site. But otherwise, the proposals are similar in that they include dewatering, establishment of a mineral processing facility, and the same basic activities of reopening and operating the mine.

There are a number of things that we can learn from that economic study. For example, because the Emgold project would have included a tile factory, the number of jobs when fully operational was predicted to be more, anticipating full operations to include 400 employees [3] (versus 312 employees in the current Rise Gold proposal [1]). Noteworthy, according to this study, 52% of the jobs would be filled by people who relocated to the Grass Valley area. [4]

Also, a critical piece in assessing the true economic impact of a project is to compare it with the alternative of “no project”. In this case, a comparison was made in 2008 between allowing the property to be developed according to the Grass Valley General Plan versus permitting the mine as per the Emgold proposal.

The findings of this comparison were rather surprising:

“Under the General Plan Land Use Alternative, the land designated for Business Park use (the 56-acre northern portion of the Idaho-Maryland site) would accommodate about 800 jobs at buildout (see Table 9). The proposed Idaho-Maryland project would not generate as many total jobs in the City of Grass Valley. Up to 660 people would be working at the project area when construction and early operations phases overlapped. Over the 14 years of stabilized operations, the proposed project would employ about 400 people

(see Table 3)." [5]

The "no project" alternative would provide twice as many jobs!

What about impacts to housing in this comparison? The study looked at the number of people who would come from out of the area for the ongoing operations once the construction phase was done. A large portion of them would take up residence as renters. There were also a number of people who would be commuting weekly from out of the area and just renting a room. Only 6 of the 400 would be home buyers. In total, of the 400 employees for operations, it was estimated that about 208 would be from out of the area, and 161 would constitute new renters in the area. [6]

What conclusions can we draw from this study? Granted, it was done 13 years ago, and for a different project. But the fundamentals of the workforce, the local economy, and the housing have not changed much, except that housing is in a shorter supply. In conclusion, it seems reasonable that if the economic study were done again it would have the same basic results: that following the General Plan will produce more jobs, that about half of the workers would come from out of the area, and that most of them would stay in rentals.

[1] Idaho-Maryland Mine Project Description, November 2019, pg17.

[2] Hausrath Economics Group, *Economic And Fiscal Analysis of the Proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine Project in Grass Valley, California,* July 30, 2008.

[3] Ibid., pg 4.

[4] Ibid., pg 6.

[5] Ibid., pg 19.

[6] Ibid., pg 6, 13.

CEA advocates for responsible land use and environmental protection policies and actions in Nevada County. Our goal for Nevada County's future is a thriving community, a strong economy, and a healthy environment. CEA's parent groups, the Rural Quality Coalition and CLAIM have been working for Nevada County since as far back as 1999.

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Jane Pelton: Another Golden Gamble in Grass Valley

by Jane Pelton, Grass Valley
September 25, 2018

advertisement

September 25, 2018 – Yet another Canadian junior mining company wants to re-open the abandoned Idaho-Maryland mine (IMM) in Grass Valley.

Rise Gold, a junior mining company based in Canada, has begun exploratory drilling, and at this early stage they have already been called to account for violating the 100' setback from South Fork Wolf Creek and failing to abide by the county's erosion control requirements.

Rise Gold disregards the fact that hard rock gold mining in a populated region that is surrounded on all sides by homes, businesses, and schools, is in no way compatible with the community that Grass Valley has become.

Grass Valley WAS a mining town, and the scars from that era are

still visible today, more than 60 years later. The mining that took place here between 1850 and 1957 released enormous amounts of toxic contaminants, some of which are still present at high levels in the watershed. The underground mineral map for the IMM covers 2800 acres from Glenbrook Basin, to the airport, to the Y at Brunswick & Hwy 174, and under the Sierra Nevada Hospital.

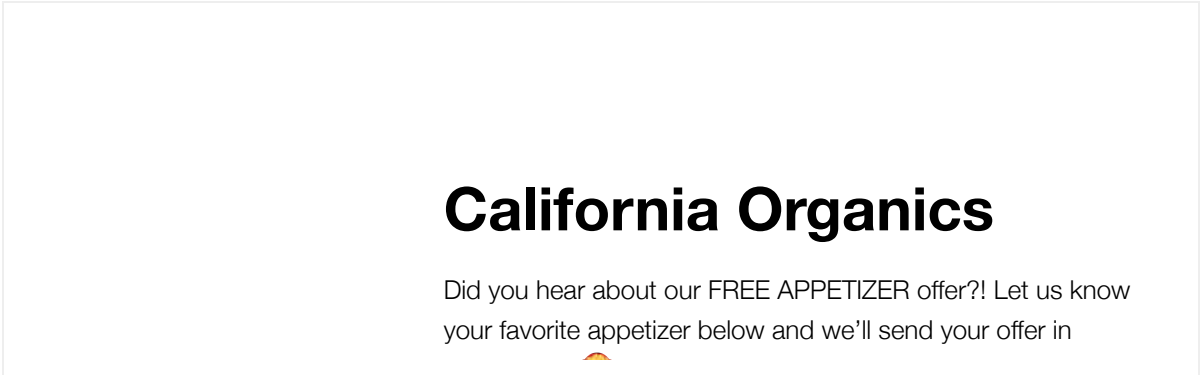
Our community dodged a bullet when the last foreign mining junior, Emgold, pulled up stakes and blew town. Setting aside for the moment the environmental destruction that inevitably comes with mining, the risks to private wells, the decline in value for properties located near the mine, and the probable contamination of Wolf Creek, our city and county representatives should be wiser now to the fact that temporary jobs in a dirty boom/bust industry like gold mining are poor substitutes for cleaner industries with staying power and the ability to contribute to long term economic resiliency for Grass Valley.

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Jonathan Keehn: Junior mining company from Canada unable to follow simple Nevada County rules

by Jonathan Keehn, Wolf Creek Community Alliance
June 12, 2020

advertisement



June 12, 2020 – Once again, a junior mining company from Canada has arrived in town with an eye to re-open the Idaho-Maryland Mine. So far, RISE Gold Corp. has not made a good impression.

If you're new to the area, or your memory fades on the subject, here's a quick refresher:

Every 5 or 10 years, gold mine investors get excited about the idea of re-opening an abandoned mine. These investment companies are often from out of state. In particular, "junior" mining companies from Canada operate in California because they enjoy funding loopholes that encourage speculation. The last such company, Emgold, threw in the towel after it was unable to complete the

permitting process in 2012.

RISE is the latest case, and has been behaving as these companies often do. So far, RISE has not complied with some of the most basic Nevada County land use regulations.

In 2017, at their site off East Bennett Road, they began by removing a healthy stand of trees without a Timber Harvest Plan. CalFire issued two citations for this infraction – one to the property owner and one to the logging company.

Then they started construction of an equipment storage pad. However, South Fork Wolf Creek, a perennial tributary of Wolf Creek, runs close by, and RISE neglected to follow the simple minimum 100' riparian setback requirement for streams in Nevada County. This is not a complicated rule: one simply needs a measuring tape, some wooden stakes, and a hammer. Start at the "Ordinary High Water Mark" of the stream, measure 100', and drive some stakes. To be safe, add 5'. Connect the dots and you have a line showing the non-disturbance zone: no construction, no equipment, no disturbance is allowed.

Nevertheless, RISE's newly-graded pad was clearly located on the wrong side of the line by 10' or 20', and they encroached even farther with heavy equipment, a large pile of logs, and stacks of brush and small trees. For these violations, the County required RISE to file a Management Plan, which told them to remove the logs and clean up the worst of the thrashed non-disturbance zone. When this was done, the company moved in their big exploratory drilling equipment. Apparently, still no one had pulled out a measuring tape; the equipment was set down on the wrong side of the line. This time the County insisted on a second, much more comprehensive Management Plan. Eventually, they installed the stakes correctly and relocated the equipment once more to protect South Fork Wolf Creek.

All of this took about a year, and then RISE fired up their heavy equipment. That's when the neighbors really started to complain.

You probably know the area around the intersection of Brunswick, East Bennett, and Greenhorn Roads. Since the last of the Grass Valley mines closed in the 1950s, this has become a quiet, highly desirable, rural-residential neighborhood. Most lots are 1 to 5 acres, with easy access to both downtown Grass Valley and Glenbrook. The homes are on private wells and septic tanks.

The exploratory equipment operated by RISE for 16 months was essentially a super-sized well-drilling rig. It could go a mile deep and was multi-directional, so it could "explore" under neighboring properties. There was no county or state oversight on damage it might do to local aquifers or water wells. And it operated 24/7. The neighbors, being subjected to continuous loud noise and bright lights, had to call the sheriff in the middle of the night and file complaints; eventually RISE constructed a 20' tall canvas "sound barrier", to almost no effect. One County Supervisor visited a neighboring house and was astounded by the noise impacting a residential area.

Then, in November 2019, in spite of their history of repeated violations, RISE submitted an application to the County to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine.

This is a company that has never actually operated a mine of any kind; like the previous two attempts to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine, they will be spending millions of investors' money to learn, once again, that it is still a bad idea.

YubaNet.com

Nevada County Planning Commission unanimously recommends denying the Idaho Maryland Mine – Rise Grass Valley Project

Commission also recommends denying the approval of the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

by YubaNet
16 hours ago

Two days, and close to nine hours of public comment later, the Nevada County Planning Commission voted unanimously to not recommend approval of the Rise Gold project and also did not recommend approval of the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR.) Commissioners were not swayed by the project proponent's arguments or the M5.5 earthquake that rattled the building.

The project application, the EIR, the requests for rezones, variances, use permits (exceptions to the County's General Plan rules) and sundry will now be move to the Board of Supervisors (BOS).



Opponents of the gold mine project. Photo YubaNet



Proponents of the gold mine project. Photo YubaNet

Nevada County has provided the update below:

Next Steps

Following the Planning Commission's recommendation, a Board of Supervisors Public Hearing will be scheduled no sooner than August 2023 to consider the Planning Commission's recommendation and all public and agency comments received during the application process.

Over the next several months, the County will work to update the staff report for the Board of Supervisors Public Hearing to include public comments from the Planning Commission Public Hearing and integrate the Planning Commission's recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors will hold a noticed public hearing to take final action on the proposed project.

Where to Find Project Documents

1. Watch the recorded Planning Commission Public Hearing for **May 10th** and **May 11th** online via **Nevada County's YouTube Channel**.

- All documents pertaining to the proposed actions, Staff Reports, and other supporting documents are available for public review at the **Idaho Maryland Mine Planning Commission Staff Report** webpage.
- The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is available for public review online at **www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise**.
- Printed copies of the EIR are available at the Nevada County Planning Department, the Madelyn Helling Library, and the Grass Valley Library.

Interested residents are encouraged to subscribe for updates and view the project's planning process and timeline on the website at **www.NevadaCountyCA.gov/IMMRise**.

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Op-Ed | SYRCL: California can't afford the Idaho-Maryland Mine

by South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL)
4 hours ago

In 2019, Rise Gold Corp., a private company based out of Canada, submitted plans to the Nevada County Planning Department outlining a proposal to reopen the long-abandoned Idaho-Maryland Mine – hidden away beneath the vibrant community of Grass Valley, an archive of toxic mine waste and an intricate underground tunnel system dating back to the Gold Rush Era of the 1800s.

In a community still recovering from the legacy effects of past mining operations, including exposure to both physical hazards on an altered landscape and chemical hazards such as mercury contamination, acid mine drainage and arsenic, lead and asbestos inhalation, the prospect of reawakening the mine has given rise to intense scrutiny and local activism, calling greater attention to the project's significant environmental and public health impacts.

If you asked the average community member about the project, the sentiment is clear. Driving around the County and beyond you will see bright yellow lawn signs with the simple plea: "No Mine. Protect our Air. Water. Quality of Life."

The project is currently under review by the Nevada County Planning Commission and will ultimately come before the Nevada County Board of Supervisors for a final vote, expected sometime in mid-2023.

As it turns out, a decision on this project is much more complex than meets the eye, particularly when considering the boarder context of California's climate policy agenda.

In the fight against climate change, the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine is in direct conflict with not only local climate goals and initiatives, including the County's own General Plan, but also with the State's climate policies and long-term

goals more broadly.

A key question to consider is, what role does our community want to have in the statewide effort to fight climate change? At the local level, this requires going far beyond the simple checking of boxes and comes down to a deeper question of true leadership and ethical obligation.

Proposed operations at the Idaho-Maryland Mine would generate an overwhelming 9,000 metric tons of new greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions annually from the proposed site in Grass Valley, plus another 4,000 metric tons of new GHGs from cement manufacturing performed offsite.

Nevada County already suffers from poor air quality due to extended wildfire seasons, vehicular pollution, factory emissions and other sources of dust and particulate matter accumulation, yet the community would have to endure further air quality impacts from rock crushing, hauling, and compacting activities that could release hazardous chemicals such as asbestos and silica particles into the air during mining operations.

Further, the excessive increase in diesel truck operations, road usage, and traffic generated by this project will only exacerbate local air quality concerns, damage to roadways, and increase electricity demand equivalent to approximately 5,000 new homes. The major uptick in new GHGs from this project reaches beyond local impact and contributes significantly to the state's carbon footprint, ultimately detracting from statewide environmental goals.

This just scratches the surface when it comes to the project's potential environmental impacts, which also include significant impacts to water quality, groundwater resources and wildlife habitat.

These impacts are not only harmful to the community directly, but they are in direct conflict with the state's climate agenda.

So where *does* the Idaho-Maryland Mine project fit in to the broader context of our state's climate change goals, and where should we go from here?

In 2022 alone, building on the work of years' past, California enacted a sweeping portfolio of new climate laws, ranging from codifying the state's long-term climate goal

of achieving net-zero GHGs by 2045, to prioritizing clean electricity, to enacting a strong state budget that prioritizes tens of billions of dollars in climate spending – referred to as the "California Climate Commitment."

From building regional climate resilience, to transitioning our state's workforce to a carbon-neutral economy, to decarbonizing buildings, to prioritizing zero-emission vehicles, all while responding to wildfires, drought, and other catastrophic climate events – forward-thinking climate action is and has been at the forefront of decision making in California.

The bottom line is that the Idaho-Maryland Mine simply doesn't have a place on the state's path to a cleaner, greener economy, and California simply can't afford to be set backwards in its intentional fight against climate change.

Reopening a toxic mine with significant environmental impacts for the benefit of very few is simply not a risk worth taking, particularly as we consider our role in the larger fight against climate change in California.

Every policy decision is a chance to do better for our communities and our environment. That is why our community is relying on our local government and its leadership to do the right thing and reject the reopening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

Join us in person at the Nevada County Planning Commission hearing on Wednesday, May 10 at 9:00 AM at the Eric Rood Administrative Center, at 950 Maidu Avenue in Nevada City, California, to let our local government officials know this project is wrong for our community and for California.

Gianna Setoudeh is the Policy Director for the South Yuba River Citizens League

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Rise Gold may apply for “vested right to mine”

by YubaNet
August 15, 2023

During the recent Board of Supervisors meeting an agenda item by County Counsel’s Office, increasing the contract price for legal services pertaining to the Rise Gold project, yielded a new development. Rise Gold, via their lawyer, informed the county they consider filing a petition granting them the “vested right to mine.”

Required public hearing will delay BOS decision on Rise Gold application

If Rise Gold moves forward with the petition for vested rights, Nevada County will have to hold public hearings on the matter. A California Appeals **Court decision in 2006** requires vested rights decisions cannot be simply determined by the lead agency (generally a county or a city) but are subject to noticed public hearings.

During the August 8th BOS meeting, County Counsel clarified, “The reason for this current increase [in the legal fees contract] is, in meetings with Rise Gold recently, they have asserted that they have a vested right to mine. A vested right is a legal principle that asserts that they have a legal right to mine on the Brunswick site. They have not yet filed the petition, but they have told me that they are planning to file that petition. Once they do that, we have a mandate to address that and to take that first before the Planning Commission and then to the Board of Supervisors.”

On May 11, 2023, the **Planning Commission unanimously recommended denying the project** and the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) submitted by the applicant. The decision to approve or deny the project and/or the EIR rests with the Board of Supervisors.

The Board of Supervisors Public Hearing for the proposed Idaho Maryland Mine – Rise Grass Valley Project was scheduled for October 2nd and 3rd. This would be postponed to allow for the vested rights hearings to be held.

Preparing the necessary documents, once the petition is filed, scheduling Planning Commission and BOS

hearings on the matter might be accomplished by the end of the year.

If the petition is rejected, the BOS will then take up Rise Gold's current application and EIR again in 2024.

Vested right to mine

A simple definition of "vested right to mine:" A mine operated before 1976 — when the state's mining law, the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) became effective — and has continued to operate to the present time.

In Rise Gold's own **reclamation plan submitted with their application** in 2020 and updated in September of 2022, the background information (page 8 of 957) reads as follows:

> The Idaho-Maryland Mine is a historic, past-producing, underground gold mine. The mine produced 2,414,000 ounces of gold between 1866 and 1956. The mine has been inactive since its closure in 1956 and was inactive for several periods during its production period. In 1901 the mine was allowed to flood with water, and then the mine was dewatered in 1904. In 1914 it was again allowed to flood, and then it was dewatered in 1919. The mine was allowed to flood again after its final closure in 1956.
>
> Idaho-Maryland Mine Reclamation Plan submitted by Benchmark Resources on behalf of Rise Gold

Any vested mine does not need to apply for a mining permit to the county and no California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document for the mining operation itself is required. Another exemption concerns grading permits for roads, landing pads, staging areas, etc. Culverts and diversion ponds are also exempt from any oversight under the vested right to mine.

While a vested right to mine relieves an operator from some of the county regulations, all other Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) requirements apply, including annual reporting, a lead-agency approved reclamation plan, and an annual financial assurance. Failure to have either a complete reclamation plan or financial assurance is subject to a penalty of up to $5,000 per day, and may also result in a cease-and-desist order.

Déjà vu

This is not the first time an applicant for a mining project applies for vested rights in Nevada County. In 2010, Blue Lead mine, represented by the same attorney now representing Rise Gold, applied for and ultimately failed to obtain vested rights.

Well owners urge Supervisors to safeguard resident's wells

by Community Environmental Advocates Foundation
12 hours ago Updated 11 hours ago

Nevada City, CA December 13, 2022 – Today, well owners and community organizations urged the Nevada County Board of Supervisors to implement better safeguards to protect residents' wells. Their comments focused on the possible risks and potential damage to homeowners' wells connected with the proposed re opening of the Idaho-Maryland Mine.

RISE Gold Corp., a company headquartered in Canada, is applying to re-open the mine. The above-ground properties sit on the edge of Grass Valley's City limits; however, the company also purchased underground mineral rights covering over 2,500 acres in the same area. Rise proposes pumping over a million gallons of water daily to dewater the mine. Residents are concerned that dewatering risks impacting hundreds of wells in the area.

"For miles in every direction from the mine site, we have densely populated land, including hundreds of homes with domestic wells that produce our only source of clean water," said Tony Lauria, an impacted homeowner and member of The Wells Coalition. "In the event of a well gone dry during dewatering, we would be thrown into chaos trying to save our families from severe undue hardship."

Earlier this year, the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the mine proposed minimal protections for nearby well owners. Mitigations included NID hookups for just thirty homes and a future plan to use just fifteen "monitoring" wells to estimate impacts across hundreds of wells. Experts from the Nevada Irrigation District (NID) and the community found these measures to be remarkably inadequate.

"We are astounded that a comprehensive domestic well monitoring program was not established before the Draft EIR was published," said Christy Hubbard of The Wells

Coalition. "We are here today to ask the County to facilitate the development of this program as soon as possible and work with the community to ensure its viability."

"There are over 300 wells near Rise Gold's mineral rights area, but the DEIR did not provide any current monitoring for these wells" said Gary Pierazzi of The Wells Coalition. The DEIR relied on sparse patches of data from over 15 years ago and deferred the collection of reliable baseline data until "later". Such a deferral does not comply with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

"Many homeowners – and our school – lost their wells on the San Juan Ridge after a mining company breached a water bearing fault-line," said Sol Henson, President of San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association. "Some wells may have lost 50% capacity or had arsenic levels rise above drinking water standards. But without baseline data, owners could not prove that the mine had impacted their wells."

The Wells Coalition urged Supervisors to:

● Initiate a comprehensive domestic well monitoring program for a minimum of 3 years to collect reliable baseline data on individual wells.

● Include the new baseline data in a revised Draft EIR so it can be reviewed and then used in the decision-making process.

● Develop the domestic well monitoring program as soon as possible – before the EIR is finalized and prior to any dewatering of the mine.

"Well owners are alarmed that the County seems to be skipping the important step of measuring existing groundwater conditions for well owners near the mine. We believe the community is owed the same commonsense measures the County has offered in the past and that the environmental review process requires it," stated Ralph Silberstein, President of Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation)."

Comments on the DEIR are currently being reviewed by Nevada County. The Board of Supervisors could vote on the proposal as early as 2023.

For more information about the challenges facing well owners visit: ★ 'Hung out to

dry': Well owners contend with Idaho-Maryland Mine report's finding (minewatchnc.org).

For more information about the potential impacts to water visit: Drains our Water | MineWatchNC.org

The mission of the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation (CEA Foundation) is to perform research, education, and advocacy to promote public policy and actions resulting in responsible land use and environmental protection in Nevada County and the Sierra Nevada region. www.cea-nc.org. The Wells Coalition includes residents from over 100 homes near the Idaho-Maryland Mine. wells@cea-nc.org. The group is a member of CEA Foundation's MineWatch coalition and campaign, a grassroots effort to oppose the mine. Stop The Idaho-Maryland Mine | MineWatch Nevada County (minewatchnc.org).

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SECTION TITLE

I. **The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces AGAINST the Mine**

1. Creative Fun
2. Economic Impact
3. Environmental Impacts
4. General Opposition
5. Neighborhood Impacts
6. Strength of Community Opposition
7. Toxic History
8. Trust
9. Vested Rights

II. **The Union – Letters and Opinion Pieces FOR the Mine**

III. **News Articles**

1. The Union
2. YubaNet
3. Others of Note

ALASKAHIGHWAY NEWS

Vancouver mining CEO convicted on environmental charges



Jeremy Hainsworth
about 18 hours ago



A B.C. provincial court judge has convicted a Vancouver mining company president of environmental offences. | BC provincial court

Listen to this article
00:03:37

A Vancouver mining company president has been found guilty in a Prince Rupert Provincial Court retrial of multiple counts of environmental pollution at a B.C. mine.

The charges relate to discharges of zinc and other waste contrary to Banks Island Gold's (BIG) permit for the Yellow Giant Mine site on Banks Island, B.C., between Sept. 9, 2014, and July 31, 2015.

The island is just south of Prince Rupert on Hecate Strait.

"A systemic failure resulted in various exceedances in the water samples," Judge David Patterson said in his July 7 decision. "BIG should have had a fool-proof system, regardless of which BIG department was responsible for the testing."

Patterson said company president Benjamin Mossman was the person responsible.

"The BC Prosecution Service does not need to prove that Mossman directed, permitted, or authorized any single discharge containing metal levels over the prescribed limits as particularized in each relevant charge," the judge said. "The failure to have a fool-proof system in place led to the exceedances. To quote an old adage: 'The buck stops at the top.'"

Business in Vancouver reported in August 2015 that the mine was ordered to shut down for unauthorized discharges of effluent from its mine site that resulted from flooding. An inspection by the Ministry of Energy and Mines also found a number of permit violations, including the processing of ore from an unpermitted mine site.

Banks Island Gold had one operating mine on Banks Island — the Tel mine — and three other potential mine sites: the Bob, Kim and Discovery, where it had been conducting bulk sampling (the mining of ore to test for mineralization).

Unlike most mines in B.C., the company did not store mine waste in a tailings pond. It puts the processed ore back underground, although Al Hoffman, chief inspector of mines, said it wasn't being done properly.

The company was found to be trucking tailings that were supposed to go underground at the Tel mine and trucking it to the Bob site, where it was dumped into a "glory hole" — a depression created when the workings from an old underground mine break through the surface.

Heavy rain and a failed sump pump resulted in flooding that spilled a "relatively small" amount

of water and tailings into local waterways on June 25, 2015.

The original case resulted in convictions for Mossman and acquittals for Dirk Meckert, assistant manager and chief geologist and alternate mine manager. Both the convictions and acquittals were appealed.

A retrial was ordered following a number of appeals, including to the British Columbia Court of Appeal and Supreme Court of Canada.

The retrial before Patterson began on April 14, 2022.

In his July 7 decision, Patterson found Meckert not guilty on all counts and convicted Mossman of:

- four counts of failing to comply with requirements of a permit by exceeding the allowed rate of discharge for zinc;
- five counts of failing to comply with requirements of a permit, by exceeding the allowed rate of discharge of total suspended solids; and,
- four counts of depositing effluent into the environment that contained a concentration of deleterious substance.

Several original charges were abandoned.

With files from Nelson Bennett

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Featured Flyer

British Columbia

CEO of defunct northwest B.C. mining company found guilty of environmental violations

Judge finds Benjamin Mossman was 'actively or passively involved' in a spill at the Yellow Giant mine

Akshay Kulkarni · CBC News · Posted: Jul 13, 2023 6:27 PM PDT | Last Updated: July 13



The Yellow Giant mine, overseen by Banks Island Gold Ltd., began commercial production in January 2015, and was ordered to cease operations in July 2015. In January 2016, the company filed for bankruptcy. (Submitted by Ian McAllister)

The former CEO of a defu[redacted]en found guilty of 13 environmental violations [redacted]rom a northwest B.C. mine in late 2014

mine in late 2014.

On July 7, Judge David Patterson's decision found that Benjamin Mossman was "actively or passively involved" in the Yellow Giant mine exceeding permitted amounts of zinc and other substances in the woods and wetlands surrounding it on multiple occasions. The Crown had initially charged Mossman with 23 violations.

Mossman was the former CEO of Banks Island Gold Ltd., which oversaw the Yellow Giant mine on Banks Island, 120 kilometres south of Prince Rupert, B.C., in the Hecate Strait, about 718 kilometres west of Prince George.

"The failure to have a foolproof system in place led to the exceedances," reads the written decision.

"To quote an old adage: 'The buck stops at the top.'"

The Yellow Giant mine closed in July 2015, shortly after operations began in January that year.

Mossman is now CEO of California-based Rise Gold Corp.

Ministry had ordered mine closed

The Gitxaała First Nation had expressed concerns about the Yellow Giant mine's operations in 2015 before B.C.'s environment ministry performed an inspection on July 9 that year.

The next day, a pollution abatement order was issued, saying the mining company had released tailings and effluent into a creek, a lake, a pond, as well as forest and wetland on Banks Island.

On July 15, 2015, the Ministry of Energy and Mines ordered operations of the

Yellow Giant mine to cease and desist until they were in compliance, and in January 2016, Banks Island Gold filed for bankruptcy.



A report from the Ministry of Environment shows areas where mining waste was detected on Banks Island during a July 2015 inspection. (B.C. Ministry of Environment)

In 2018, Mossman was convicted of two environmental violations, while Dirk Merkert, the mine's chief geologist and assistant mine manager, was acquitted on all counts.

Both men were on trial again in the B.C. Provincial Court in 2022, after an appeals judge ordered a re-trial due to issues with evidence.

However the re-trial also featured issues with evidence, relating to a witness whom the judge found unreliable. Merkert was later acquitted of all counts by the court.

Applying to re-initiate a gold mine in California

Applying to re-initiate a gold mine in California

Mossman was found guilty of being responsible for the effluent discharges that contravened safety standards and occurred on multiple days from August to December 2014, according to the July 7 decision.

His violations, under the Fisheries Act and B.C. Environmental Management Act, could attract fines of hundreds of thousands of dollars or imprisonment. Court records show a court date in the case has been fixed for September.

In a statement to CBC News, Mossman's lawyer, Chilwin Cheng said they applaud the court's acquittal of Merkert of all charges, and of Mossman of "all significant charges" related to accidental discharges at Banks Island.

Cheng added that Mossman is considering appealing the B.C. court decision.

CBC News has also reached out to the Gitxaala First Nation and B.C. Prosecution Service for this story.

- **B.C.'s high court upholds new trial for two managers after spill at mine**

In August 2016, according to Mossman's LinkedIn, he became the CEO of Rise Gold Corp in Grass Valley, Calif.

That company has been applying to re-initiate a long-closed gold mine in Nevada County, Calif., with a decision expected from county supervisors in October.

With files from Andrew Kurjata and Tessa Vikander

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Rise Gold Appoints Joseph Mullin as President and CEO

Board & Management Changes (/mining-topics/topic/board-management-changes.html) Follow (/register.html)

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Last Trade: 0.28 0.00 (0.00%)

Mr. Joseph Mullin reports:

Grass Valley, California--(Newsfile Corp. - September 25, 2023) - **Rise Gold Corp.** (CSE: RISE) (OTCQX: RYES) (the "Company" or "Rise Gold") is pleased to report that Mr. Joseph Mullin has been appointed as President and CEO of Rise Gold and President of the Company's wholly owned operating subsidiary, Rise Grass Valley Inc.

Mr. Mullin's considerable experience with financial markets will guide the Company to achieve its objectives as it nears the conclusion of the Vested Right hearing on October 27th and moves into a new phase of permitting, exploration, and project development.

Mr. Mullin has over 25 years of experience in corporate finance, private equity, restructuring, and early-stage mineral exploration. He was previously the President of Virginia Energy Resources Inc. and led its sale to Consolidated Uranium Inc. Prior to that Mr. Mullin was the CEO of QuestEx Gold & Copper Ltd. for two and a half years leading up to its sale to Skeena Resources Ltd. He began his career as a Financial Analyst at Goldman Sachs, and subsequently worked at Invesco Ltd. and Millennium Global Investments Ltd. Mr. Mullin is the Managing Member of Mount Arnon Partners LLC, and is currently an Independent Director of FireFox Gold Corp. and Pure Energy Minerals Ltd. Mr. Mullin has been involved in metals and mining in Nevada since 2011. *"We are*

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excited that Joe has agreed to join Rise Gold Corp. as its President and CEO at this important time in its history," said Dan Oliver, Director of the Company.

Mr. Ben Mossman will continue in his position as Director and will also serve as an advisor to provide his substantial accumulated technical knowledge of the project and the EIR to help with the management during a transition period. The Board of Directors would like to thank Ben for his dedication and commitment to the Company over the past six years.

About Rise Gold Corp.

Rise Gold is an exploration-stage mining company incorporated in Nevada, USA. The Company's principal asset is the historic past-producing Idaho-Maryland Gold Mine located in Nevada County, California, USA.

On behalf of the Board of Directors:

Joseph Mullin
President and CEO
Rise Gold Corp.

For further information, please contact:

RISE GOLD CORP
Suite 215, 333 Crown Point Circle
Grass Valley, CA 95945
T: 530.433.0188 info@risegoldcorp.com (mailto:info@risegoldcorp.com)
www.risegoldcorp.com (https://api.newsfilecorp.com/redirect/BpM8RSJZg7)

The CSE has not reviewed, approved or disapproved the contents of this news release.

Forward-Looking Statements

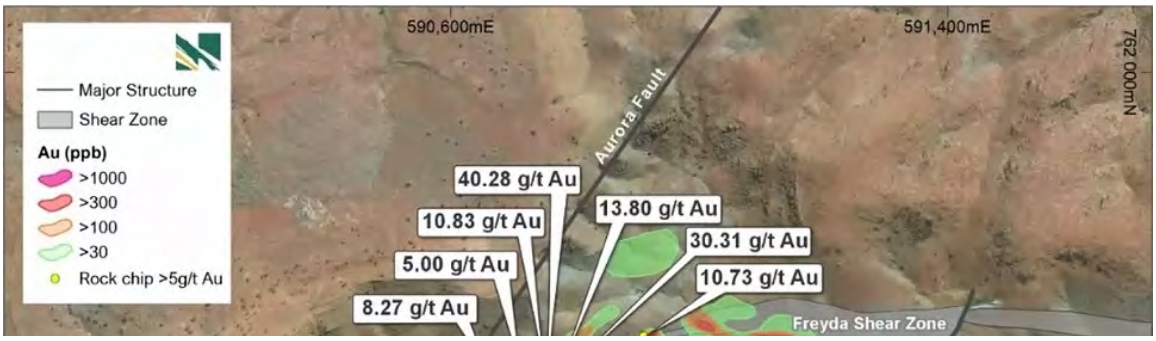
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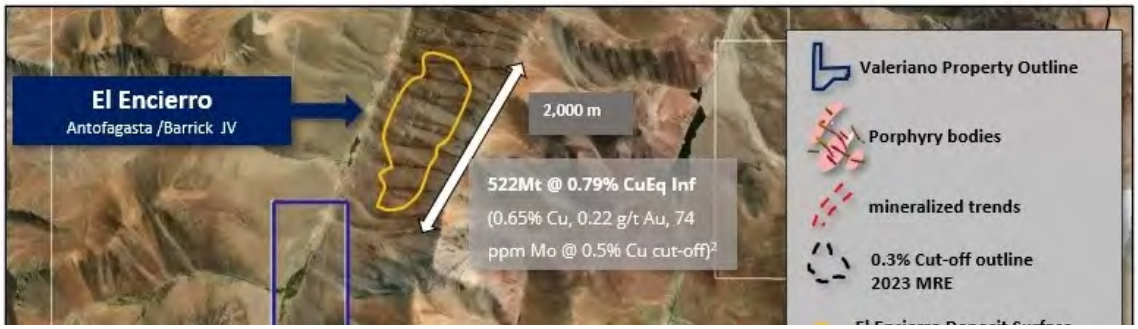
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CALIBRE MINING (TSX: CXB)

CALIFORNIA

A California gold mine's toxic legacy: Inside the fight over reopening a treasure trove



Ben Mossman, chief executive of Rise Grass Valley, on the grounds of the closed Idaho-Maryland mine in Grass Valley, Calif. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

BY HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS | STAFF WRITER

Photography by ROBERT GAUTHIER

JUNE 24, 2022 5 AM PT

GRASS VALLEY, Calif. — Five years ago, Canadian mining executive Ben Mossman came to this little Gold Rush town in the Sierra Nevada foothills, planning to strike it rich.

His company bought the abandoned Idaho-Maryland mine — an 1860s-era treasure trove that once was one of the most productive gold mines in the country.

He has tried to sell the idea of reopening the mine to locals by promising to create more than 300 good-paying jobs in rural Nevada County, where references to the Gold Rush — the Mine Shaft Saloon, the Gold Miners Inn, the rusty ore carts and stamp mills decorating street corners and parks — are everywhere.

“This could be a major mine,” Mossman said. “Those aren’t easy to find. People are looking all over the place, different countries, all over the world, to find a deposit like this.”



A small lake on the grounds of the abandoned Idaho-Maryland gold mine. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

For five years, his company, Rise Grass Valley, has been trying to get a permit from Nevada County to start prospecting.

But the people of Grass Valley have overwhelmingly rejected the mine. And Mossman.

The project has sparked fear that precious groundwater will be sucked dry and has re-opened historic wounds in an Indigenous tribe, the Nisenan, who were displaced from their ancestral land by the first wave of gold miners.

The saga has turned into one of mutual dislike, with Mossman saying local activists perpetuate virulently anti-mine "conspiracy theories" and bog him down with bureaucracy. He figures they will wear down. Eventually.

"It's been dragging out," he said. "They're probably even getting tired."

In turn, some residents think Mossman acts as though he's stumbled into a mix between Mayberry and "The Beverly Hillbillies."



Grass Valley resident Christy Hubbard, who lives near the long-closed Idaho-Maryland mine, opposes e orts to reopen it. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

“These guys, they must think we are an ignorant rube county,” said Christy Hubbard, who owns a home near the mining site. “Is this a man we want in our town? No.”

Hanging over the controversy are questions from Canadian prosecutors — who want answers from the would-be gold king of Nevada County.

::

Nobody doubts there is still gold in the Idaho-Maryland.

Over nine decades of intermittent operation, the mine yielded 2.4 million ounces of gold. At today’s prices — more than $1,830 an ounce — that’s a haul worth $4.4 billion.

When the mine closed in 1956, it was because the operation just wasn't worth it anymore, thanks to the 1944 Bretton Woods agreement that set a fixed price of $35 an ounce for the metal.

As the mine sat idle, groundwater flooded into its 73 miles of underground tunnels. A sawmill opened, then closed, on its wooded grounds.

Homeless people set up camp. Taggers covered the last concrete silo — which stands above a shaft that plummets 3,400 feet, or two and a half Empire State Buildings, into the earth — with graffiti.



Ben Mossman, chief executive of Rise Grass Valley, at the base of a concrete silo on the grounds of the former mine. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

Rise Grass Valley bought the mine in 2017, and Mossman, a laconic Vancouver native, moved to the area.

He says he gets “pretty nasty” treatment in the local media. And that opponents simply stand in the way of any development on his company’s heavily wooded but industrial property.

Mossman said people call all the time, asking for jobs that would pay around $94,000 a year, plus benefits.

Inside his company’s small Grass Valley office, green-and-gold yard signs for potential mine supporters proclaim: YES! IDAHO-MARYLAND MINE.

But if they are displayed around town, they are hard to find.

Meanwhile, on front lawns and in storefront windows, black-and-gold signs scream: PROTECT OUR AIR, WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE. NO MINE.

::



Ben Mossman, chief executive of Rise Gold Corp., pulls pieces of old core samples that are stored on the grounds of the

closed mine. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

The mine's tentacles sprawl beneath Grass Valley, a mountain town of about 13,700 people.

Rise Grass Valley — which is trying to get an 80-year use permit from the county — owns about 4 square miles of subsurface mineral rights that extend beneath homes, businesses and the Nevada County Airport.

Calling their campaign MineWatch, alarmed townspeople — who have successfully thwarted previous attempts to reopen the mine — have packed into public meetings and waved signs outside the locked gates of the Idaho-Maryland.

One resident wrote a rock song called "Wells Run Dry," complete with a music video featuring dancing, sun-dappled anti-mine protesters.

Won't you please do us the decency of pretending like you care? the singer pleads. *While you fill our space with toxic waste and contaminate our air.*

Like many of California's estimated 47,000 abandoned mines, the Idaho-Maryland has a toxic legacy.



An arsenic-laden tailing berm near the site of the abandoned mine. (Elias Funez / Union)

An aboveground portion of the mining grounds, called the Centennial Site, was historically used for dumping mine waste and is so contaminated with arsenic, lead and mercury that it warranted consideration as a federal Superfund site.

To avoid that designation, Mossman and his company agreed to clean it up — but said they might use the site for mine waste disposal in the future.

To get the mine running again, Rise Grass Valley would have to drain its flooded tunnels and continuously pump groundwater from it. The water would be sent to a clay-lined pond where heavy metals, such as iron and manganese, would settle out of it, then be filtered at a newly built water treatment facility.

It would then be discharged into South Fork Wolf Creek, a small brook that flows through the property that critics contend could flood as mine water is dumped into it.

Mossman says the treated water will be “better than drinking water” and that the mine will actually create a surplus of much-needed water that could be used for agriculture and other needs.

But detractors are leery of a project that requires pumping groundwater as California is in the midst of climate change and an extreme drought that is adding to strains on underwater aquifers. Elsewhere in the state — most famously the Central Valley — overpumping has caused land to sink.

::



Mossman casts a shadow over boxes of the core samples on the site. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

Before coming to Grass Valley, Mossman was the president and chief executive of a company called Banks Island Gold.

It ran the Yellow Giant gold mine on remote Banks Island off the coast of British Columbia, on the traditional land of the Indigenous Gitxaala Nation — which long

opposed the mine because of potential pollution.

Mossman started mining there in 2014. But after he received complaints, provincial inspectors showed up the next year and found that his company was releasing mine waste and contaminated water into creeks, ponds and wetlands.

In July 2015, the British Columbia government shut down the mine. Mossman's company declared bankruptcy a few months later.

The government confiscated the company's $420,000 reclamation security — essentially a security deposit — and has spent about $250,000 to remove explosives and hazardous materials, develop a final cleanup plan, and monitor water quality, the British Columbia Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation told The Times.

Mossman and his chief geologist are currently on trial in British Columbia on nine federal and 20 provincial charges related to spills at the mine, a spokesman for the British Columbia Prosecution Service said.

The trial began this week, the spokesman said.

Mossman declined to comment on the case.

::



Jonakai Bottomley-Rappaport, 10, holds a sign protesting the proposed reopening of the Idaho-Maryland mine in Grass Valley, Calif. (Elias Funez / Union)

In Grass Valley, this is Christy Hubbard's nightmare scenario: She walks into her kitchen. Turns on the faucet. No water comes out.

Hubbard, who lived out her dream by moving to the mountains after retiring from Adobe Systems in the Bay Area, lives on four forested acres that border the mine. She relies upon a well for her water.

Like many, she worries her well could be depleted or contaminated as Rise Grass Valley pumps groundwater from the fractured bedrock.

"Water is our gold," she said. "We're at the very center of the drought. We're on the front lines of climate change here. We live in a forest, for heaven's sake, that's been really hit by drought."

The draft environmental impact report says the mine could significantly affect wells on about 30 properties. Rise Grass Valley would pay to hook those properties up to the Nevada Irrigation District, which relies on the drought-shrunken Sierra snowpack.

But members of the Nevada Irrigation District's board of directors have expressed "concern that the number of impacted wells could far exceed the 30 estimated" by the report, Susan Lauer, a spokeswoman for the district, said in an email.

They recommended Rise Grass Valley gather more data — including more extensive monitoring of wells and groundwater — before sucking water out of the mine, she said.

On a recent hot and mosquito-thick afternoon, as Mossman stood beside scores of boxes full of cylindrical rock core samples on the Idaho-Maryland site, he shrugged off concerns about water.

Mining, he said, would happen far below domestic wells — primarily at 1,600 feet and deeper — where the rock is more solid than it is closer to the surface.

"They're like, 'Well, what if I'm connected to the mine through some fractures?'" he said of his critics. "If they were connected, their wells would already be put in a drain.

"You have all these PhDs with hydrology studies, but it really isn't that complicated. It's solid rock. It's just not permeable."

::

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors will ultimately vote on whether to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine, and the project would need a slew of other permits from federal and regional entities.

If it reopens, mining will commence on the ancestral homeland of the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, who were brutalized and forced off their land during the

Gold Rush.



Shelly Covert, with the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, is speaking out against the possible reopening of the mine. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

Shelly Covert, a spokeswoman for the tribe, said she was stunned to hear the mine could be reopened. Like the Gitxaala people in Canada, the Nisenan don't want Mossman's mine because of the harm it could do to the environment.

"This land is just starting to revive," she said. "They're saying, 'The science is great now. We don't have to worry about anything.' I still almost get speechless because I think it's just so irresponsible."

The Nisenan, Covert said, feel as though their small tribe has "a small voice" when it comes to the mine because its federal recognition — which would give it more formal bargaining power — was terminated by Congress decades ago.

The county supervisors who will eventually vote on Mossman's project have publicly supported helping the tribe regain its recognition.

In an April letter to the county planning department, Frank Lawrence, an attorney for the Nisenan Tribe, wrote that the project's draft environmental report did not address the Idaho-Maryland's role "in causing and perpetuating the genocide against the Tribe and its members."

The letter was forwarded to Mossman in an email. He accidentally hit "reply all" and inadvertently responded to Lawrence.

"The county is so naive in trying to assist this group to gain status," Mossman wrote.

Then he sarcastically alluded to the tribes of the Great White North, where the Gitxaala could not stop his last mine from opening.

"Welcome to Canada."

Times researcher Jennifer Arcand contributed to this report.

Watch L.A. Times Today at 7 p.m. on Spectrum News 1 on Channel 1 or live stream on the Spectrum News App. Palos Verdes Peninsula and Orange County viewers can watch on Cox Systems on channel 99.

MINING.COM

CEO of defunct Banks Island Gold guilty of environmental violations at British Columbia mine

Staff Writer | July 14, 2023 | 1:22 pm News Canada Zinc



Banks Island, British Columbia. Credit: Gitxaala Territorial Management Agency.

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The CEO of a defunct British Columbia miner, Banks Island Gold, has been found guilty of 13 environmental violations in relation to waste discharges from the Yellow Giant mine in 2014, *CBC News* reported.

The court ruling found that former CEO Benjamin Mossman was "actively or passively involved" in the Yellow Giant mine exceeding permitted amounts of zinc on multiple occasions, polluting fresh water lakes and creeks in and around the exploration sites.

The judge found that in September 2014 "at or near Banks Island, in the Province of British Columbia, being the holder of a permit issued under this *Act* to introduce wastes into the environment, failed to comply with the requirements of the permit, by exceeding the allowed rate of discharge for zinc."

Yellow Giant is an underground gold and silver project on British Columbia's north coast on Banks Island on the eastern shore of the Hecate Strait, 110 km south of Prince Rupert.

The Gitxaała First Nation had expressed concerns about the Yellow Giant mine's operations.

The property is home to four deposits: Bob in the northwest; Tel 2 km southeast; and Disco and Kim, 2 km east of Tel. Together, these deposits host 78,000 measured and indicated tonnes grading 23 grams gold per tonne and 44 grams silver per tonne, plus 81,000 inferred tonnes averaging 13.7 grams gold and 33 grams silver.

Falconbridge first identified gold at Yellow Giant in the 1970s. Over the

next 30 years several companies explored the site, but no one drilled deeper than 150 metres.

After entering production in 2014, the company in 2015 received a pollution abatement order due to ". . . a spill of water with sedimentation which occurred at the backfill dump location on June 25th at the Bob Zone."

The company was asked to submit a revised plan for tailings, water management and sediment control.

Banks Island Gold initially pushed back against media reports, saying production had not been halted at Yellow Giant, but "significantly impacted" by orders from the provincial government after the company was found to have violated pollution regulations.

The company filed for bankruptcy in January 2016.

The violations, under British Columbia's Fisheries Act and Environmental Management Act, could result in hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines or imprisonment, CBC reported. A court date has been set for September.

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Reuters | July 15, 2023 | 2:56 pm

Canada to speed up critical minerals permits in bid to erode China's dominance

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government hopes to unveil a plan by the end of this year to streamline permitting for mining projects.

Bloomberg News | July 14, 2023 | 8:13 am

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PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS

North Coast First Nation appeals Supreme Court decision on mining permits

Seth Forward
about 22 hours ago



The Gitxaała First Nation has appealed a B.C. Supreme Court decision after their attempts to quash mining projects on their territory and enforce UN recommendations were rejected on Sept. 26.

While the B.C. Chief Gold Commissioner was ordered to overhaul its online mineral tenure system to ensure consultation with First Nations was mandatory, the decision does not affect several existing projects on Gitxaała territory the Nation was not consulted on.

Supreme Court Justice Alan Ross's ruling also does not prevent mining prospectors from obtaining permits on Gitxaała territory for the next 18 months while the province changes its permit system,

another aspect of the ruling the Nation is appealing.

Though the First Nation lauded the decision to force the province to change its mining permit system, they argue the 18 months the judge gave the province to fix the system leaves them vulnerable to more unconsulted mining projects.

“Our case was an important win that confirmed BC’s automatic mineral claim regime breaches our constitutional rights, but the Court has allowed the harm in our territory to continue,” said Gitxaała Sm’ooygit Nees Hiwaas (Matthew Hill).

“With every passing day, the provincial government is taking advantage of the temporary suspension in the Court’s ruling to grant new unconstitutional mineral claims.”

The duty to consult, which is outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), was argued for by Gitxaała lawyers in the precedent-setting lawsuit.

DRIPA is the legal interpretation of UNDRIP in B.C., though it was only used as an “interpretive aid” by Ross. The Sept. 26 ruling was the first test of DRIPA in action, according to the Gitxaała Nation.

“The provincial government fought us tooth and claw in court to argue that DRIPA – the law B.C. itself enacted to uphold UNDRIP – is not legally enforceable,” said Gitxaała Chief Councillor Linda Innes.

“The Court’s decision is a result of B.C.’s efforts to score political points on DRIPA while avoiding any legal accountability – but DRIPA must be more than an empty political promise.”

While Ross said in his judgement that DRIPA “does not implement UNDRIP into the domestic law of B.C.,” the province’s website claims DRIPA “mandates the government to bring provincial laws into alignment with the UN Declaration.”

According to the judgement, there are seven current claims that the Nation was attempting to quash, all on Banks Island, approximately 120 kilometres south of Prince Rupert.

A recent ruling fined former mining CEO Benjamin Mossman, who operated his Yellow Giant Mine on Banks Island, $30,000 for environmental regulation breaches.

READ MORE: Former B.C. mining mogul fined $30,000 for past environmental infractions

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ISSUES AND CAUSES

Quantity vs Quality: The Shoddy Science Behind the Idaho-Maryland Mine

May 3, 2023

Aaron Zettler-Mann, Interim Executive Director and Watershed Science Director at the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), holds a PhD in fluvial geomorphology. The following is an Op-Ed he wrote for the local news outlets:

The final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Idaho-Maryland Mine fails to adequately address the valid critiques of the draft EIR. Instead, shoddy science, bad computer models, baseless assumptions, and mountains of text hide the truth – the Idaho-Maryland Mine is bad for the environment and bad for our community.

In the world of academic writing, the peer review process serves as a check on the quality of the work that was done. This process ensures that the methods used were sound, appropriate, and the right conclusions are being drawn from the evidence. The EIR fails in this respect, making unrealistic false assumptions and drawing large conclusions based on unacceptably small sample sizes.

Rather than reanalyze problem areas and the critical shortcomings, the final EIR doubled down in an attempt to justify their false assumptions and inadequate sampling.

For a conclusion to be meaningful, the sample size must be appropriately representative. Of the core samples Rise Gold acquired from Emgold Mining, and the additional 67,500 linear feet of exploratory drilling Rise Gold conducted, they chose to test only 11 feet for potentially hazardous chemicals. Those 11 feet are supposed to accurately characterize more than 25 million tons of waste rock to be produced over the life of the mine. The testing for asbestos represents less than 2/10,000 of the total rock to be mined over the project lifespan. The Air Quality Board and Water Quality Board both state that the samples analyzed are inadequate to accurately characterize the potentially hazardous chemicals which could leach into our ground water, surface water, or be released into the air.

And the likelihood that most of the mine tailings will have to be stored on-site is high, because there is not a viable market to sell it as engineered fill in the Sacramento market, as the final EIR claims. There is no proof, such as signed contracts, for this claim. The sole evidence to support this claim is the *2018*

Aggregate Sustainability 50-year Demand map sheet which does, in fact, show that the Sacramento area only has about 50% of gravel permitted based on the 50-year demand. They fail to note, however, that Placer County has roughly 60% more gravel permitted than demand and that Nevada County has about 25% more gravel permitted than demand. They further fail to recognize that the Yuba Goldfields area is a ready source of 685 million cubic yards of gravel owned by one of the oldest gravel producers in the State, which their business models suggest will supply the region with the necessary gravel to be used as engineered fill for more than 100 years.

Rise Gold and the EIR do a good job burying the reader in circular references to their own reports and cherry-picking information from reports and studies that support their false and misleading claims. The truth is their sampling is inadequate to understand the risks of the project and their assumptions about the project are faulty.

Don't be fooled by the length of the document, this is bad science plain and simple. Join us at 9am at the Rood Center in Nevada City to tell the Planning Commission to recommend the *rejection* of the Final EIR. Sloppy science can't get past us.

Find Out More About The May 10th Planning Commission Meeting By Visiting The MineWatch Save The Date Page

#Idaho Maryland Mine

One Comment

May 15, 2023 6:59 PM

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Rise Gold Sees Commission Deny Idaho-Maryland Mine Project In California

May 15, 2023 12:40 PM ER Velasco 0 Comments Idaho-Maryland Gold Project, Rise Gold

After its two-day public hearing, the Nevada County Planning Commission of California unanimously voted down the proposal to reopen the Idaho-Maryland gold mine near Grass Valley. The property is the principal asset of

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Rise Gold Sees Commission Deny Idaho-Maryland Mine Project In California

Video



exploration-stage mining company ***Rise Gold Corp. (CSE: RISE)***.

Nevada County Planning Commissioner Terry McAteer, in making his motion to recommend the permit not be approved, cited one of the county's first environmental thinkers, Lorenzo Sawyer. Sawyer was assigned to San Francisco's 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, and in 1884, he signed the Sawyer decision into law, which said that the environmental impacts of mining must not be placed on adjoining land or communities.

"Today we are faced with a similar situation which has the potential to infect our air with asbestos and exhaust fumes, impact the wells of our neighbors, discharge harmful elements into the water, destroy many acres of wetlands, add significant amounts of greenhouse gasses into our environment and return to our legacy of mining," McAteer said.

In a 5-0 vote, other commissioners joined McAteer in his motion, recommending both the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) and the use permit for the Idaho-Maryland gold project be denied. The vote elicited cheers and elation among the public present during the hearing.



The chambers at the Rood Government Center in Nevada City erupts in cheers and signs of elation once the Nevada County Planning Commission unanimously voted to deny the EIR and the proposed mining project by Rise Grass Valley to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. Rise Grass Valley plans to make changes to the EIR based on the comments made Thursday.

Source: Marianne Boll-See/The Union

Fifty-eight of the 78 comments made by members of the public during Thursday's hearing were against the mine's re-opening, while 20 were in favor of it.

Entertainment Latest Video Series

Katie Sorensen: The Influencer Mom Who Cried Kidnap

May 15, 2023 1:30 PM Jay Lutz 0

Well, folks, we've all heard of "fake it 'til you make it," but have you heard of "fake a kidnapping

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Athena Gold Set To Begin Drilling

"The mine is very very close to my school," said 8-year old Bowman Rinne said to the commissioners. "Mine's are a dangerous operation on the environment, I would like adults to make choices on behalf of the environment, the plants, the animals and the community, not money."

Another county resident, Lorraine Webb, warned that "whether it is approved or not, there will be enough monies from the people of this county to sue the county if we have to to point out the fact that this is an illegally inadequate EIR."

However, Commission Chair Bill Greeno reminded everyone that the vote "is just a part of the process." According to county authorities, the project is still scheduled to go before the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, to whom the Planning Commission is advisory, sometime in August.

Rise Gold shares plummeted almost 60% following the news, sinking to an all-time low.



Rise Gold did not comment on the vote, on top of announcing the Planning Commission's recommendation. However, one of its independent directors, Lawrence Lepard, came to Twitter ahead of the vote, claiming that the "project is totally clean" and that it is only the "[liberals who] are fighting it."

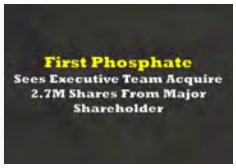
"[We] will see if the Planning Commission are adults or not," Lepard tweeted.

> fingers crossed. project is totally clean. libs are fighting it. will see if the Planning

At Excelsior Springs Next Month

May 15, 2023 8:56 AM Jay Lutz 0

Athena Gold (CSE: ATHA) this morning revealed its exploration plans for 2023, as it continues to focus on its recently expanded flagship Excelsior Springs Project in Nevada.



First Phosphate Sees Executive Team Acquire 2.7 Million Shares From Major Shareholder

May 11, 2023 9:51 AM 0



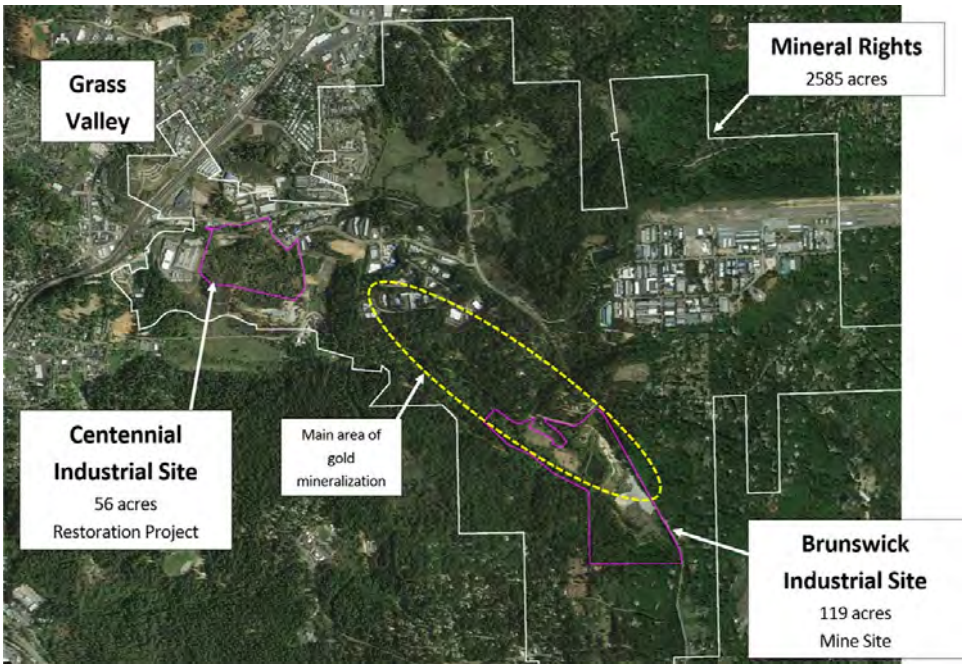
Eguana Shakes Up Management Team With New CFO

May 11, 2023 8:22 AM 0

World War II, the IMM was the second largest lode gold producer in the United States, producing 920 tons per day with an average mill head grade of 0.38 oz per ton (12.9 g/t) and 121,000 oz of gold per year.

At the IMM Project, Rise Gold has completed 20,600 meters of drilling, and hopes to conduct additional drilling it has planned upon the approval of the Use Permit.

Rise Gold filed its application for a Use Permit with Nevada County in November 2019 to reopen the Idaho-Maryland Mine. The Use Permit application suggests resuming underground mining at a throughput of 1,000 tons per day.



Nevada County released its independent Final Environmental Impact Report on December 16, 2022, confirming no substantial air, biological, water, vibration, or noise impacts from the project.

“The independently prepared FEIR is the culmination of three years of intensive study by the Nevada County government with the support of its consultant, Raney Planning & Management Inc., an experienced firm located in Sacramento, and contributions from many qualified technical experts and scientists,” Rise Gold said in a statement at the time of FEIR’s release.

However, the FEIR also outlined three significant unavoidable impacts, namely temporary construction noise from the installation of a water pipeline, addition of traffic to an intersection already operating at an unacceptable level of service, and aesthetics impact due to noticeable changes to the existing visual character of the project sites.

The Nevada County also released an Independent Economic Study confirming the project’s substantial economic and community benefits, which Rise Gold

believes to significantly outweigh the three unavoidable impacts.

Back then, the company expected to have its Use Permit approved during the first quarter of 2023.

“I can’t help but point out, many of the folks who are speaking out professionally about the mine, are being paid to find the findings they are finding,” resident Wade Laughter said to the commission during the hearing. “Many of the folks who are speaking like myself, who are clearly in opposition to the EIR and the mine, are here because we care about this community, not because we want to make money off of it.”

Rise Gold touts a high local support within the Nevada County for the IMM Project based on the recent J Wallin Opinion Research survey conducted. The majority of respondents (59%) favored reopening the Idaho-Maryland Mine, with only 34% opposed.

Rise Gold last traded at $0.21 on the CSE.

Information for this briefing was found via The Union and the sources mentioned. The author has no securities or affiliations related to this organization. Not a recommendation to buy or sell. Always do additional research and consult a professional before purchasing a security. The author holds no licenses.

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THE NORTHERN VIEW

Former B.C. mining mogul fined $30,000 for past environmental infractions

Seth Forward
2 days ago



The Yellow Giant mine site on Banks Island was shut down after Environment and Climate Change Canada enforcement officers found evidence that the company was dumping waste into the area surrounding the mine. (File photo)

A former North Coast mining tycoon has been fined $30,000 for a myriad of environmental breaches by the Banks Island-based Yellow Giant Mine.

Benjamin Mossman, the former CEO of Banks Island Gold was found guilty of 13 counts of environmental regulations breaches in July, mainly for excessive zinc discharges into nearby waterways on the uninhabited island.

The Crown appealed Justice David Patterson's decision, which was then cross-appealed by Mossman's defence counsel Chilwin Cheng.

While Patterson determined Mossman was remorseful for his actions, the Prince Rupert judge said the former CEO and his company were "lucky" their actions did not lead to a full-blown environmental disaster.

"By failing to ensure that the Yellow Giant Mine had protocols in place to avoid the very failings for which he was convicted, Mossman is the author of his own misfortune," the judge said.

Patterson speculated whether Mossman's failure to abide by mining regulations was due to an inability to maximise profits from the mine.

"It may be that the financial strain of trying to get an old mining site productive led to the offences in the first place," Patterson said in his sentencing.

The defence was seeking a $6,500 fine, though that suggestion was swiftly dismissed by Patterson.

Mossman's financial situation, which is reported as income of $10,000 per year from his role as a board member at a California mining company Rise Gold, was taken into account by Patterson in his sentencing. Mossman was recently fired from his CEO position at Rise, according to the sentencing.

READ MORE: Court rules B.C. must fix mineral claims system after Gitxaala challenge

Gitxaała First Nation, whose traditional territory Banks Island (Lax k'naga dzol) sits on, has been against the mine's operation since its opening, saying its concerns surrounding potential environmental accidents were completely ignored during the initial permitting process.

While Gitxaała Chief Councillor Linda Innes said the Nation is happy to see Mossman held accountable, she was dissapointed in what the Nation deemed an insufficent punishment.

"While Mr. Mossman is certainly accountable for the horrendous example of what happens when bad mines are allowed to operate without clear oversight and accountability to Indigenous Rights and Title holders, these shamefully light administrative penalties amount to nothing but small fractions of the costs of correcting the devastation left behind," Innes said.

The mine's environmental breaches affected not only the island, but also the Gitxaała people, according to Patterson.

"Not only does violating mining permits potentially jeopardize the environment," he said. "But in the present case, the offences jeopardized the rich resources and economy of the Gitxaała Nation as

well as the spiritual beliefs of its people."

According to Innes, the province has estimated the clean-up cost will be approximately $2.2. million, though the nation fears the mine's environmental legacy will cost much more than that.

"The pollution has devastated Banks Island's salmon-rich creeks and near-shore areas and continues to this day," she said.

Gitxaała Nation was also involved in a historic lawsuit last month, challenging the province's online mining permit system, which did not require prospectors like Mossman and his former company to consult First Nations.

"The Yellow Giant Mine started with mineral claims granted without notice, consultation, or consent," Innes said "The recent B.C. Supreme Court ruling on Gitxaała's challenge to B.C.'s mineral tenure system confirms that granting mineral claims without consultation is unconstitutional."

While the province was ordered to change its system in the next 18 months, there have been seven permits approved for mining on Banks Island since 2018.

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BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE

Man behind plan to reopen Grass Valley gold mine faced charges. Here are the verdicts

BY RANDY DIAMOND

JULY 20, 2023 5:00 AM

Ben Mossman, the man behind a controversial plan to reopen a shuttered gold mine in Grass Valley, has been found guilty of 13 environmental crimes but was exonerated on another 10 counts in connection with another mine project in British Columbia.

The court ruling involves a failed gold mine on an island off the coast of British Columbia that turned into a toxic site due to mine waste leaks.

Ben Mossman is due to be sentenced on Sept. 26 in Prince Rupert Laws Court, said Ann Seymour, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Attorney General, British Columbia Prosecution Services in an email.

Under the environmental statues, he was found guilty of penalties including fines and jail time or a combination of both. British Columbia law enforcement officials have not discussed what penalties they would seek.

The offenses that Mossman was found guilty of July 7 by Judge David Patterson of the Provincial Court in Prince Rupert are related to the discharge of waste, effluent and other deleterious substances into the environment.

Mossman was found not guilty on charges of failing to report environmental spills and dumping, discharging mine waste into the environment and unauthorized work in and about a stream.

Chilwin Cheng, Mossman's attorney in Vancouver, said in an email that Mossman was acquitted "of all significant charges."

Cheng said Mossman intends to refer to evidence at the trial in sentencing submissions that the normal government response to the charges he was found guilty of would have been an advisory note, the lowest level of intervention.

"That said, we are disappointed with the limited findings of guilt and we are considering options for appeal," the statement read. "Mr. Mossman has not yet been sentenced and so any further comment would be premature."

A spokesman for the prosecution said it would not be making a comment on the verdict.

It's unclear how the court findings and the late September sentencing will influence the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. The board is expected to hold hearings in October and make a decision on the plans of Mossman's company, Rise Gold Co., to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine, which has been closed for nearly 70 years.

Most residents oppose the plan, citing environmental concerns and changes to

the rural character of Nevada County. Several hundred residents spoke out against the mine at planning commission hearings in May.

The Nevada County Planning Commission rejected the reopening of the mine on May 12, but the final vote will be up to the Board of Supervisors.

Mossman came to Grass Valley six years ago with his plan to reopen the mine, after the geologist/entrepreneur's involvement in the Banks Island mine project off the coast of British Columbia.

Mossman began mining operations in 2014 on Banks Island, but the next year government mine inspectors cited his company, saying mine waste and contaminated water were leaking into creeks, ponds and wetlands.

Bank Island Gold declared bankruptcy in 2015 several months after the British Columbia government shut down the mine.

Court proceedings charging Mossman with environmental damages have lasted years. A previous trial resulted in acquittals on all but two of the charges, but a new trial was held last year after being ordered by an appeals court.

In his written ruling on July 7, Patterson stated that he had "his suspicions" about the charges on which Mossman was exonerated, but that the prosecution had failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Mossman was directly responsible for the environmental damage resulting from the mine spills.

Patterson also stated that the testimony of the prosecution's primary witness, the mine's environmental manager and site biologist "was flawed." He cited her "profound hostility, animosity, and negative attitude" toward Mossman.

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BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE

How the $100 million proposed reopening of a former gold mine has angered Grass Valley

BY RANDY DIAMOND

UPDATED JUNE 08, 2023 10:50 AM

GRASS VALLEY

Ben Mossman believes one of the largest amounts of unmined gold in the world lies deep under the ground in Grass Valley and wants to extract it. And that has made him, and his Rise Gold Corp., public enemy No. 1 in this town.

Sixty-eight years have passed since the Idaho-Maryland Mine operated in this small city in the Sierra Nevada foothills, about 50 miles east of Sacramento. Grass Valley residents want to keep it idle, a relic of the past.

Residents cite concerns that the 2,585-acre mine site would create failed wells, groundwater contamination, noise pollution and air pollution and increased

truck traffic. Mossman said he and environmental studies have rebutted all those fears. He promises a mine that won't damage the environment and will create an economic boom.

"There are some people who are just trying to stir up fear intentionally," said Mossman.

Not so, residents counter. Opponents crowded two days of hearings with the Nevada County Planning Commission last month, overflowing outside listening to testimony near a tent, with a "no mine" banner, that had audio piped in.



Idaho-Maryland Mine opponents Nicole Lazio, left, Kathy Ogburn, center, and Tracie Sheehan in one of the opposition tents set up outside the Nevada County administration center on May 1 second day of planning commission hearings on the project. Nathaniel Levine *nlevine@sacbe*

Penny Collins was one of nearly 400 residents who attended the hearings. She said Grass Valley has already seen three wildfires and several power outages in the last few years.

“I just can’t understand, given the other environmentally related and weather related things that we have going on here, how my kids are going to be safe,” she said. “I have a 19-year-old and a 16-year-old and I just feel kind of overwhelmed by what their future would look like.”

The planning commission agreed with the opponents. It rejected the plan to reopen the mine.

But the final decision will be up to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, which could take up the matter in August.

County Planning Board Chairman William Greeno said the mine in itself isn’t a bad idea.

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“I think this could be an amazing mine project somewhere,” he said. “The problem is it doesn’t belong on the project site.”





"This is God's country! Don't mess it up," reads the handmade sign of JoAnne McIntire, right, in opposition to the Idaho-Maryland Mine during the second day of the planning commission's hearing on the project in May. She sits with Nevada City resident Sharon Lipski, who also opposes the project. Nathaniel Levine *nlevine@sacbee.com*

In a June letter 5 letter to the Board of Supervisors, Mossman accused the planning board and planning staff of being "biased" since he presented his plan to reopen the mine in late 2019.

He said the planning board in May ignored expert testimony that the project would have no significant environmental impact and excluded proponents of the project from speaking at the hearings by giving opponents tickets at 7 a.m., leaving project proponents shut out when they arrived at the stated 8:30 arrival time.

"While we recognize that the biased actions of the Planning Commissio other County representatives throughout the Project entitlement proces

necessarily reflect the manner in which the Board will consider the Project, we are concerned that the demonstrably biased disposition may influence the Board's decision," Mossman wrote.

A spokesperson for Nevada County did not respond to a request for comment on Mossman's letter.

GRASS VALLEY HAS CHANGED

Grass Valley is obviously not the same town since the closing of the mine. It has gone upscale. The mine is seen by some as an artifact from another era, when long, risky labor was the only means of survival in this once-frontier town.

Some descendants remain of the Cornish miners who came from England to dig up gold in more than 500 miles of tunnels in Grass Valley and nearby Nevada City. But, today, the gold connection is strictly for tourists.

State parks on the site of old mines in Grass Valley and surrounding communities offer a glimpse of the gold rush in the 1860s that brought tens of thousands to this area looking to strike it rich or just to have steady work.



Today, the small downtown of Grass Valley is full of gold-rush era buildings occupied by wine tasting rooms, fancy restaurants and art galleries, far removed from actual gold mining.

Adding to the Western chic atmosphere are a downtown performing arts center with several stages and a new director from New York City and a kombucha brewery with a stage featuring musical groups and aerial acts.

WHAT THE PLANS ARE

Gold history is one thing, but a working mine, despite the promise that i

hurt the environment, is the last thing anyone seems to want.

The county planning staff in its recommendation to the planning board didn't disagree with Mossman that mining activities could be conducted in an environmentally safe way.

The planning staff had reviewed a more than 800-page environmental impact report paid for by Rise Gold but done by an independent consultant.

But planning staff found that reopening the gold mine was not consistent with the county's overall general plan to maintain the rural characteristics of Nevada County.

Mossman, who moved from Vancouver, Canada, to Grass Valley after Rise Gold purchased the mine, has promised 300 high-paying jobs that pay $145,000 annually on average from mine operations. He said it would generate $6 million in local taxes each year, 10 times larger than any one taxpayer now.





Rise Gold Corp. CEO Ben Mossman looks up in May at the silo from the historic Idaho-Maryland Mine near Grass Valley that would be reused if the mine were to reopen. In the fenced area at the structure's base is the vertical shaft, long covered, that drops about 3,400 feet below the surface. Nathaniel Levine *nlevine@sacbee.com*

"It would be an economic boom to Grass Valley," he said.

But Grass Valley isn't desperate for jobs. Nearly 25% of city residents are elderly, almost twice the rate of California overall. Recent arrivals include second-home buyers looking for a rural escape in an artsy town and remote workers who don't have to live in a major city.

Publicly traded Rise Gold, has already invested $25 million in its plan to revise the mine, including $2 million to buy the abandoned mine.

Mossman has anticipated spending $100 million to reopen the mine but sees a

big payout for Rise Gold based on previous gold production at the mine.

MOSSMAN'S BACKGROUND

Mossman, 45, is an engineer and grew up in Vancouver Canada. He has worked in mines in both Canada and South Africa.

Mossman was involved in controversy before the Grass Valley mine project.

Banks Island Gold, a Mossman company, ran a gold mine on the remote Banks Island off the coast of British Columbia. The mine was on the land of the indigenous Gitxaala Nation, which opposed the mine, citing environmental concerns.

Mossman began mining operations in 2014 but the next year mine inspectors cited his company, saying mine waste and contaminated water were leaking into creeks, ponds and wetlands.

Bank Island Gold declared bankruptcy in 2015 several months after the British Columbia government shut down the mine.

The government confiscated the company's $420,000 reclamation security deposit and has removed explosives and hazardous materials from the land as well as monitoring water quality.

Mossman and his chief geologist went on trial last year on 16 offenses related to the mine spills. A previous trial resulted in acquittals on all but two of the charges, but a new trial was ordered by an appeals court.

A judge was expected to announce on June 19, a date for a verdict in the civil case, said Dan McLaughlin, a spokesman for the British Columbia Prosecution Services in an email.

Mossman won't discuss the case.

LARGE AMOUNTS OF GOLD

What he will discuss is the potential in Grass Valley.

In its nine decades of operation, the mine produced 2.4 million ounces of gold. At today prices of around $2,000 a ounce, that's almost $5 billion dollars.

Exactly how much gold is left is unclear, but Mossman believes it's a lot.



Gold sparkles amid a vein of quartz in an exploratory drilling sample from the Idaho-Maryland Mine held by Rise Gold Corp. CEO Ben Mossman in his Nevada County office. The mine produced more than 120,000 ounces of gold in 1940-41, its last year of full-scale operation before it closed for World War II. That amount would be worth about $240 million at current trading prices. Nathaniel Levine *nlevine@sacbee.com*

He said what got him excited about owning the mine was after he came across the government summary of mining that was going on in the early 1940s.

"They talked about how the mine had just completed an expansion in 1942 to double the production," Mossman said. "So to go from 1,000 tons to to 2,000 tons per day. It was already the second largest gold mine in the entire U.S."

But the increased production never occurred because all U.S. mines were shut

in 1942 as part of the federal government's World War II effort. The government's focus shifted from gold because it did not produce minerals that could be used to aid the war effort.

The government put the spotlight on producing other metals such as copper and iron to boost the production of equipment, ships, tanks, airplanes and bullets.

The mine reopened after the war but the price of gold was fixed at $35 an ounce thanks to the 1944 international Bretton Woods agreement.

"Mining gold wasn't profitable any more," said Mossman

The agreement was scrapped in 1971 and the value of gold recently has stayed high for investors who view it as a hedge against inflation and the value of the dollar.

Mossman said he is pretty sure a large amount of gold is in the ground to justify the $25 million Rise Gold has spent. Rise Gold had conducted exploratory drilling, which found gold, but he conceded the exact amount is impossible to determine.





Rise Gold Corp. CEO Ben Mossman points to a map of the Idaho-Maryland Mine workings made before its 1956 closure that shows an area of particularly high gold yield. The mine's tunnels are now filled with water, which would have to be pumped out before mining could resume. Nathaniel Levine *nlevine@sacbee.com*

"If you could bring back production and achieve the success of the past, it would be among the highest grade major gold mines in the world," he said.

Mossman said in the past gold was extracted to 1,600 feet below the surface. "And you can mine to a depth of 10,000 feet before it gets too difficult," he said. "So, there is a lot of room left for mining."

Mossman feels residents are misinformed about what they think is the mine' s detrimental consequences.

"We've gone through a lot of work to design the project to the high stand Nevada County and what we think is going to be the most environmenta friendly gold mine in the world," he said.

Mossman said the mine will be creating gold concentrate, not the finished product of gold bullion, meaning it won't have to use environmentally dangerous chemicals such as mercury and cyanide.

"So we don't use any harmful reagents," he said.

RESIDENTS WORRIED

Most residents have not been reassured, especially those close to the mine.

A big concern to residents is the dewatering of the mine, which became flooded with rainwater after it closed in 1956. An estimated 815 million gallons of water would have to be pumped out, 3.6 million gallons of day, which would take six months, the first part of a three-year plan to reopen the mine.

Once the mine is dewatered, another 1.2 to 3.6 million gallons per day would continue to be pumped from the underground workings to maintain the dewatered state.



Theresa Youngman, who lives near Penn Valley, sits amid supporters of the Idaho-Maryland Mine project at a Nevada County planning commission meeting on May 11. “I have to go to Auburn to get a good-paying job,” she said. “We need jobs, and I’ll be the first person to drink the water that comes out of that mine.” Nathaniel Levine *nlevine@sacbee.com*

Many homeowners here are dependent on well water. Homeowners worry that the dewatering could affect the network of fractures and faults in the rock that fill with water and provide the water supply to wells.

The environmental review found that the wells of eight homes could see a decline in their water levels, though the study said none would go dry.

Mossman has agreed to hook up those homes and another 22 closest to the mine to the treated water supply managed by the Nevada Irrigation District.

But 527 homes with wells lie above site where gold would potentially be mined.

Many residents worry regardless of the environmental study finding that only a few homes would potentially be affected.

Ricki Heck's home is a mile away from the mine but is not one of the homes in the remedial plan scheduled to get water from the Nevada Irrigation District if things go wrong from the mine.

Heck, a real estate broker approaching 70, said she and her 72-year-old husband want to downsize from their 4,000-square-foot-plus house, to move to a smaller residence. But she said that just the potential fear of wells being contaminated from the mine are keeping people from buying their residence.

"We have to sell that house," she said. "We cannot live there and take care of it at our age anymore. I tried to sell it two years ago, and the cloud of this has made it unsellable."

The Nevada Irrigation District is concerned that more wells than expected could be affected by reopening the mine and asked the planning board at the May 9 hearing to require Rise Gold to put up a $14 million bond to cover the cost of 527 additional hookups to its treated water system.

District General Manager Jennifer Hanson said in the letter that "a high level of uncertainty" surrounds the accuracy of predicting how many homeowners wells could be affected given climate change and the difficulty of accurate modeling well failures.

Hanson warned that the irrigation district would not be responsible for supplying water to connect homes if wells failed. She said even if the county or Rise Gold had the resources to pay, "connections could be delayed, or worse not happen."

RISING TENSION

For some, talk of the mine has become personal, particularly when Mossman's name comes up.

Rick McNulty, an engineer, remembers his initial dealings with Mossma
he purchased the mine and began exploratory drilling in 2019.

McNulty's house is several blocks from the mine site. He said noise from a generator powering the exploratory drilling was so annoying that he talked to Mossman, who told him not to worry.

"He seemed nice and honest," McNulty said. "He promised the noise wouldn't get any worse, and that it would eventually stop."

But McNulty said just a week or two later Mossman installed a "diamond drill."

"It created a loud, high-pitched howl that echoed through my neighborhood for up to 18 hours a day," McNulty said. "There were days I thought my ears would bleed."



Rise Gold Corporation CEO Ben Mossman gestures in May towards some of the exploratory drilling samples – ones without gold – his company has taken in recent years at the historic Idaho-Maryland Mine near Grass Valley. The company says it has found gold near the mine's existing tunnels. [illegible] Levine *nlevine@sacbee.com*

McNulty said the noise only ceased after he gathered a petition of neighbors and complained to the county, which forced Mossman to install a $10,000 soundproofing enclosure.

“Beware of Ben Mossman,” he told the planning board.

Mossman said in an interview that the noise was within limits.

Nevada County spokeswoman Taylor Wolfe said county inspectors responded to McNulty’s complaint. She said the noise was found to be within acceptable limits. Wolfe said the county closed the complaint after Mossman agreed to install walls around the drilling apparatus “to further buffer any noise.”

WORRIES ABOUT A HISTORY OF POLLUTION

Residents are also concerned because a secondary Idaho-Maryland Mine site in 2020 was found to have high concentrations of lead, mercury and arsenic.

A Rise Gold subsidiary owns the 56-acre mine waste disposal area that was used for dumping mine waste until the Idaho-Maryland Mine closed.

The site was listed as a potential federal Superfund site site until Rise Gold agreed to conduct a cleanup as part of the agreement with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control.

Rise Gold’s permit application to reopen the mine calls for the removal of 1,500 tons of rock per day, 24-hours a day. During the 80-year project timeline, 2.4 million cubic yards of mining tailings and rock waste would be deposited at the main mine site and the secondary site once the environmental cleanup is finished.





Members of the public hold up “no mine” signs, while others wave their hands in the air in silent applause, as a man who spoke against the Idaho-Maryland Mine during public comment walks back to his seat on May 11 during the second day of the Nevada County planning commission hearings on the project. The commission later voted unanimously against the mine. Nathaniel Levine *nlevine@sacbee.com*

A Rise Gold spokesman said the mine tailings and rock waste would be in handled in an environmentally safe way that would not use mercury or cyanide.

Lawrence Lepard, Rise Gold’s largest shareholder thinks environmentalist are drowning out others.

“I think what’s happened here is a small group of very loud environmentalists, who haven’t even, in my opinion, taken the time to think through the environmental report, have come to the conclusion the report’s not true

Lepard, who owns 11% of Rise Gold, said the company is still intent on working

with opponents and addressing their concerns.

He said the mine will be a “win-win” for everyone in Grass Valley.

“What I think very few people realize this is one of the best gold deposits in the entire world. I mean, the entire world, all deposits that have ever been mined,” he said. “This is going to be like in the top 2%. And that’s why guys like me, we want to see it brought back because we know that it will produce and produce gold for 20, 30, 40 years.”

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A new gold rush pits money and jobs against California's environment

Companies are seeking to open old mines and explore in new sensitive regions, amid resistance from Californians who want the Gold Rush to remain part of history

By Scott Wilson
July 17, 2022 at 12:36 p.m. EDT

GRASS VALLEY, Calif. — Where the Sacramento Valley steepens into the Sierra Nevada, Susan Love found a home with big windows and pine-forest views. It was the house she shared happily with her husband before his death.

The surroundings, though, are changing.

A long-dormant gold mine within view of her front garden is showing signs of life. Once the second-highest-producing gold mine in the nation, the Idaho-Maryland Mine is again in the sights of prospectors, this time a Nevada-based company proposing to reopen it in this place born more than a century and a half ago in a rush of gold.

There is still a lot of gold in these hills and a lot of money at stake. But across California, a strong environmental ethos and, in many historic places, an economic shift toward tourism are now sharply at odds with the resumption of gold mining, despite its promise of new jobs more than a century and a half after tens of thousands of migrants arrived to strike it rich in this state on the country's edge.

A frontier chic now characterizes many towns that have moved far from the hard-hat lifestyle of hard-rock mining. Drawing on their gold-rich history to draw tourists, these antique towns have adopted a different view of the actual mining, still a potentially dirty business even if improved from the past.

Love, whose family traveled generations ago from Ohio to join the gold rush, put her home on the market this year and quickly accepted an offer. But the buyers backed out once they discovered what might emerge next door. Now she fears that, at 69, she is stuck in a home without value.

"It all comes down to our local politicians and I think a lot of it will come down to money," said Love, a retired preschool teacher. "There are no miners here so where would they all come from, where would they live?"

The timeless treasure making a comeback in the era of cryptocurrency here in the Sierra foothills, the cradle of California's 19th-century gold rush, reshaped the state's population and economy, often at the expense of native residents and a fragile environment.

But interest has spread beyond here, as the price of gold skyrockets. Shuttered hard-rock mines and, further south, remote fault lines rich with gold dust have become coveted targets for companies willing to take on community opposition and California's environmental regulations.

The economics are obvious. When the Rise Gold Corp. bought the Idaho-Maryland Mine in 2017, the average price of gold was $1,260 per ounce. So far this year's projections suggest the average price will increase to $1,830 an ounce, a 45 percent increase and a record high if those estimates hold.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported that $10 billion of gold was mined in the nation last year, much of it from Western states. California estimates that mining — excluding fossil fuels — generates more than a half-billion dollars annually in economic activity, and after bottoming out in the early 2000s, the amount of gold mined here each year has been climbing.

"Gold is used as a hedge against economic insecurity, and we've certainly seen a lot of that in recent years," said Elizabeth Holley, an associate professor in the Colorado School of Mines' department of mining engineering. "And if you consider the time when Idaho-Maryland operated, the methods have matured greatly and today you can mine much more efficiently and at lower grades of ore."

Given the high prices, Holley said, the interest in gold has expanded well beyond traditional mining states in the West. She serves on a National Academies of Science board examining the potential effects of gold mining in Virginia.

"The environmental and social impacts are always concerning for a community," Holley said. "But modern mining is highly regulated and I do think people conflate historic practices with what mining is now."

Nonetheless, the potential for new prospecting has inspired a visible public resistance, a jobs vs. community character debate, that at its heart asks whether the Golden State really needs gold anymore.

"There is no industrial need for gold — it is just a luxury," said Ralph Silberstein, a 24-year resident here who heads the Community Environmental Advocates Foundation and MineWatch, a group that opposes the Grass Valley project. "Sure there are a lot of old mines around here, but all have a toxic history behind them."

Rising from the plain

They are the breadcrumbs of gold exploration, the small chunks of quartz that lay scattered across the desert east of Mount Whitney, about 300 miles south of Grass Valley.

Where there is quartz, there is often gold. There is a lot of both in this place, another target in another part of the state for corporate prospectors. The small, white minerals, slightly translucent, are as common as wild sage in this dry, quiet stretch of the Eastern Sierra.

From the Lee Flat rises Conglomerate Mesa, a 22,000-acre plateau administered by the Bureau of Land Management and held sacred by the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone and the Timbisha Shoshone tribes.

Native American petroglyphs are visible on the volcanic rocks that line the dirt road toward the mesa, along a plain thick with Joshua trees, suffering in other parts of the state as the climate warms.

Wind blows down through narrow canyons. From the trunks of small trees, boulders and thick-brush branches flash small silver tags the size of quarters. They are etched with numbers, individual claims to mine these small plots for gold.

The mesa is in the middle of nowhere but silent desert, land stretching between the state's highest peaks and the depths of Death Valley.

"Protect Conglomerate Mesa," reads a billboard along U.S. Route 395, as it cuts through the closest town of Lone Pine. "Don't Mine Death Valley's Doorstep."

Companies are exploring in and around the Walker Lane, part of a geological fault that roughly follows the California-Nevada border. To mine these often remote areas requires a different process than the one used in the Sierra foothills, one that is more water-intensive.

"It all comes down to water, as does everything in the American West," said Wendy Schneider, executive director of the Friends of the Inyo, a nonprofit seeking to protect Conglomerate Mesa. "And there is none."

A Canadian company called K2 Gold has proposed a major project to mine Conglomerate Mesa through an open-pit system, which uses a chemical process that in this case involves cyanide leaching through earth to drag out gold. Bald spots along the mesa's rolling plateau are evidence of the company's drill tests.

In March, the Bureau of Land Management effectively froze the project, which would require dozens of miles of new roads in addition to the construction of the pit system which would rely on 30 drill sites, more than the company originally proposed.

In a statement, the bureau said that "drilling at Conglomerate Mesa raised natural and cultural resource concerns from the public, Tribes, and other agencies. Based on these and other factors, the BLM determined a broader environmental analysis would be required."

Following the order, the company announced that it would put the project on hold. But in recent weeks, K2 Gold has informed opponents of the mine, according to members of those groups, that it will proceed with preparing a full environmental impact statement, as the federal agency has required. Neither the bureau nor K2 Gold would comment further.

Friends of the Inyo and the local tribes are seeking federal protection for the land. Not only is the area a new haven for the vulnerable Joshua tree, it is also valued as a "dark sky" preserve in a state where light pollution often masks star-filled nights.

K2 Gold controls hundreds of claims around the mesa. Schneider said that even more stringent environmental protection would not retire those claims because of a 19th-century federal law designed to encourage Western expansion and, as incentive, protect mining rights.

"None of this, none of the protections, will make it impossible to mine here," she said. "That's why we must focus on the values that Conglomerate Mesa represents."

A clash of economies

In Grass Valley, about 30 miles north from where gold was first discovered in this state, tourists drawn by the lure of the past stand in line at gluten-free bakeries. Sushi restaurants and wine-tasting rooms occupy the brick-and-balcony facades of buildings, now restored, that stood during the Gold Rush.

There are craft drinks served at the Golden Gate Saloon and, across the street from the allegedly haunted Holbrooke Hotel, a restaurant is set to open called The Little Nugget. From the center of town rises the spire of a 1940s-era movie theater called the Del Oro — "of gold." The landmark opened in the same decade that the Idaho-Maryland Mine near Susan Love's home first shut down.

"I've never met a single person who wants it," Kendell Christianson, 69, who in his retirement fixes electronics, said of the mine. "What is the purpose of this? Greed."

Placards opposing the mine, stuck into main-street medians and shopping-mall landscaping, are visible around town. But there is history to contend with.

In a sign of how deeply it defines the region's character, an old mine cart marks the entrance to the county administrative building, where the decision about whether to open the mine will eventually be made. The county could collect as much as $10 million a year in additional property taxes if the mine is developed.

"Mining is part of Nevada County's legacy and there may still be gold in the ground," said Brian Foss, the county's director of planning. "But the community has grown up around these places, and it will be up to the board of supervisors to decide whether this is an appropriate use of this location."

The Idaho-Maryland Mine covers about 175 acres, some of them partly surrounded by high pines and fir. Adjacent to a pond, a large cement shaft emerges from one corner of the main mine site, where rock was once hauled from hundreds of feet underground to be cracked open for gold.

It produced 2.4 million ounces of gold before being shut down in 1942 by the U.S. government, which following Pearl Harbor sought to shift mining resources toward metals such as copper that were essential to the war effort. The mine reopened after the war, but never achieved the same productivity before it closed again in 1956.

If it were to reopen now, the mine would be felt as well as seen. While covering far less ground on the surface, the mine could expand to 2,585 acres underground, the limit of the company's mineral rights, although the prime gold deposits are concentrated in smaller areas. The underground blasting would be conducted in those seams, but would still likely be felt in some nearby homes and buildings above ground.

Rise Gold Corp. is seeking an 80-year permit from the board to operate the mine around-the-clock seven days a week, a testament to just how much gold it believes remains in the ground.

"If you could put this mine back in production as it was when it closed, it would be one of the top gold mines in the world," said Ben Mossman, the company's chief executive, who displays a series of core samples in his office here bearing thick seams of gold. "This is a major mine."

The company's goal would be to extract about 1,000 tons of gold-bearing rock a day. Mossman said he expects that annual revenue would exceed $190 million, or about 4 percent of the county's economy.

"We really don't know how much gold there is and what the grade will be," he said. "More work needs to be done. But we have a historic rate of production to go by."

Mossman said the project would bring more than 300 new jobs into the community, but the company will not be building housing in a market that is very tight. It is one major concern — the stress on an already-tight housing market — held by those who live here. The county's unemployment rate is 6 percent, higher than the state average of 4.3 percent. "Help Wanted" signs are common sights.

Opponents also cite potential traffic problems and the environmental risks associated with an industry that uses arsenic, mercury and other toxic chemicals in gold processing. Rise Gold Corp. would be responsible for cleaning up one highly polluted part of the mine site, the legacy of a previous operator, at a cost of about $3 million.

Mossman said there would be safeguards in place to prevent similar problems. Much of that is the subject of a thousand-plus page environmental report that county supervisors are using to guide their decision, which could come before the end of the year.

"There used to be a big difference in regulations between California and other states," Mossman said. "But that has narrowed, as the regulatory burden has increased in other jurisdictions, and made California much more attractive for projects like this."

Risk and memory

This part of the Sierra foothills is fire country, and the valley that falls away toward the South Yuba River is bone dry. The Idaho-Maryland Mine has raised concerns about water — an unknown number of private-home wells are predicted to run dry because of mining use near the site itself, in addition to the potential chemical spillover from its ponds that could make its way into a highly popular river system.

“We have to ask ourselves if this is the way we want to be using our most precious resource,” said Melinda Booth, executive director of the South Yuba River Citizens League, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of and helps maintain a river that draws nearly a million visitors a year. “I think the community says no.”

In Nevada City, the county seat as close to the mine site as Grass Valley, there is an equally picturesque downtown with saloons and lattes and boutiques. There is also a storefront museum. Its exhibit is called, simply, “Erased.”

The 1848 discovery of gold here overwhelmed the native people — the Nisenan — and a population of roughly 9,000 at the time is now a loose diaspora numbering just under 150 people.

In 1913, the federal government granted the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan tribal status and land. But the government removed that status a few decades later and, in 1964, sold the land it had set aside for the tribe.

Shelly Covert, who runs the museum, has been seeking restoration of the tribe’s federal status and the land since she was old enough to hear stories about its loss. Her family has helped lead the tribe for generations.

“We don’t really have a voice,” Covert said. “The exhibit is called ‘Erased’ for a reason.”

As a child, Covert, now 55, recalls her family recounting how her ancestors had no use for gold. Then, the stories go, nuggets were so plentiful you could pick them up off the ground and use them as fishing weights or slingshot stones.

“It was laying around everywhere,” she said. “It was just kind of useless.”

Among the exhibits in the museum hall is one dedicated to the Gold Rush, when roughly 300,000 prospectors arrived in and around Grass Valley, displacing the Nisenan, spreading disease and stealing land they quickly degraded with high-intensity mining.

“The land is just coming back after decades of this, with a lot of hand-holding,” Covert said. “And it always feels un-American to oppose jobs, jobs, jobs. But at what cost?”

Story editing by Cathleen Decker. Photo editing by Karly Domb Sadof and Tristen Rouse. Copy editing by Brian French. Design by Beth Broadwater.

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

Man behind plan to reopen Grass Valley gold mine faced charges. Here are the verdicts



Nathaniel Levine/nlevine@sacbee.com

Randy Diamond

Thu, July 20, 2023 at 5:00 AM PDT · 3 min read

Ben Mossman, the man behind a controversial plan to reopen a shuttered gold mine in Grass Valley, has been found guilty of 13 environmental crimes but was exonerated on another 10 counts in connection with another mine project in British Columbia.

The court ruling involves a failed gold mine on an island off the coast of British Columbia that turned into a toxic site due to mine waste leaks.

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Under the environmental statues, he was found guilty of penalties including fines and jail time or a combination of both. British Columbia law enforcement officials have not discussed what penalties they would seek.

The offenses that Mossman was found guilty of July 7 by Judge David Patterson of the Provincial Court in Prince Rupert are related to the discharge of waste, effluent and other deleterious substances into the environment.

Mossman was found not guilty on charges of failing to report environmental spills and dumping, discharging mine waste into the environment and unauthorized work in and about a stream.

Chilwin Cheng, Mossman's attorney in Vancouver, said in an email that Mossman was acquitted "of all significant charges."

Cheng said Mossman intends to refer to evidence at the trial in sentencing submissions that the normal government response to the charges he was found guilty of would have been an advisory note, the lowest level of intervention.

"That said, we are disappointed with the limited findings of guilt and we are considering options for appeal," the statement read. "Mr. Mossman has not yet been sentenced and so any further comment would be premature."

A spokesman for the prosecution said it would not be making a comment on the verdict.

It's unclear how the court findings and the late September sentencing will influence the Nevada County Board of Supervisors. The board is expected to hold hearings in October and make a decision on the plans of Mossman's company, Rise Gold Co., to reopen the Idaho-Maryland mine, which has been closed for nearly 70 years.

Most residents oppose the plan, citing environmental concerns and changes to the rural character of Nevada County. Several hundred residents spoke out against the

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Mossman came to Grass Valley six years ago with his plan to reopen the mine, after the geologist/entrepreneur's involvement in the Banks Island mine project off the coast of British Columbia.

Mossman began mining operations in 2014 on Banks Island, but the next year government mine inspectors cited his company, saying mine waste and contaminated water were leaking into creeks, ponds and wetlands.

Bank Island Gold declared bankruptcy in 2015 several months after the British Columbia government shut down the mine.

Court proceedings charging Mossman with environmental damages have lasted years. A previous trial resulted in acquittals on all but two of the charges, but a new trial was held last year after being ordered by an appeals court.

In his written ruling on July 7, Patterson stated that he had "his suspicions" about the charges on which Mossman was exonerated, but that the prosecution had failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Mossman was directly responsible for the environmental damage resulting from the mine spills.

Patterson also stated that the testimony of the prosecution's primary witness, the mine's environmental manager and site biologist "was flawed." He cited her "profound hostility, animosity, and negative attitude" toward Mossman.