

# San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

## Summer News

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- Wells still being monitored for static water levels, even though the monitoring program has been suspended
- Millions of Californians rely on groundwater every day, levels have decreased
- Standing room only for "More Precious Than Gold" movie
- Letters of concern from schools have been or will be issued to the county
- Become a member
- Thank you to all our volunteers and donors

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## Application to Re-Open Mine on Hold, But We Must Remain Vigilant

On Wednesday, March 26th, San Juan Mining Corp. CEO Tim Callaway notified the County that he was suspending the well-water monitoring program for the proposed San Juan Ridge Mine. The program is required by Nevada County as necessary background data for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that was in process. Letters from Cranmer Engineering, that had been conducting the well monitoring program, were sent to residents informing them that the program had been suspended.

As a consequence, the County put the application for the project on hold, and PMC, the EIR consultant, stopped working on the EIR. At this point, according to Tod Herman, Nevada County Senior Planner, the project is in limbo waiting for Mr. Callaway to sit down with County staff to look for a path forward.

This is a highly unusual situation and raises the question of how long the application can sit in limbo with nothing further happening. Mr. Herman reports

that, "The County has only warned the applicant that 'this could result in substantial delays in the preparation of the EIR due to the lapse in well monitoring' but has not yet provided any sort of ultimatum for the application."

In an article in The Union (June 3), Mr. Callaway is quoted as saying, "San Juan Mining Corp. is still monitoring static water levels via 'in well' electronic data loggers. Water quality monitoring in homeowner wells was temporarily suspended pending some legal clarification regarding CEQA requirements for pre-EIR baseline information requirements."

The County is well aware of the water problems the community encountered last time the mine operated and is requiring a good baseline study. Mr. Callaway unilaterally decided to stop that process, and he cannot re-start it without meeting with County staff. That hasn't happened as of this writing.

***SJRTA expects that despite this interruption in the process, the mine application will move forward—under what terms remains to be seen. We have advocated for multiple years of pre-project baseline well data, but would expect that at least one year of data will be required by the County. In the meantime, we cannot afford to stop preparing for hearings on the EIR and on the project itself. We still have to work to educate County decision-makers, the public and State agencies on the risks this mine presents. We still have to raise money and line up experts in several fields to testify. Until there is a viable reality to make other use of the mine property the specter of a mine will always be present. We have a long way to go.***

## Not Enough Water to Go Around

As we're all aware, California is in the third year of a drought, and there's just not enough water for everyone—particularly for the state's huge agricultural sector. Diversions of water from streams and rivers for human use threaten aquatic ecosystems and already endangered salmon populations. Reservoirs are low and won't be replenished by a nearly non-existent snowpack.

According to a Capital Public Radio story of June 10, during a normal year, 30 percent of the water Californians consume comes from groundwater—but this year, the California Department of Food and Agriculture says groundwater will account for 60 percent.

On April 30, the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR) released a report on groundwater showing that throughout California, groundwater resources are at historically low levels. According to DWR Director Mark Cowin, while millions of Californians rely on groundwater every day, groundwater levels have decreased in nearly all areas of the state since spring 2013, and more notably since spring 2010. The greatest concentration of recently deepened wells is in the fractured bedrock foothill areas of Nevada, Placer, and El Dorado counties.

Much of the Ridge depends on wells sunk into fractured bedrock. Hearsay has it that many wells on the Ridge are being deepened. With the shut-down of the public water source at the Coughlan ranch, which many residents used for both drinking water and agricultural purposes, surely more wells are being drilled. More and deeper straws drawing water from aquifers that are not being replenished means, of course, that water tables will drop even further.

The SJR Mine operator assures us that a technique will be employed to guarantee that there will be no catastrophic blow-outs of water-bearing faults (as happened in 1995), and that pumping millions of gallons of water a day out of the ground to de-water the mine will not affect surrounding wells. Including the possibility of work stoppages, the mine is proposed to operate for up to 15 years and to cross a number of known faults. Once mining is completed, it is estimated to take many years to replenish the depleted aquifer through rainfall and run-off. With ongoing drought, increasing pressure on groundwater resources and a mine with a bad track record, SJRTA takes the position that the risks presented by this project to the community's water resources are unacceptably high.

## “More Precious than Gold” Film Screening Strengthens Community Support for SJRTA

On April 16, SJRTA, Synergia Learning Ventures and the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) presented “More Precious than Gold,” a film screening and panel discussion on the proposed reopening of the San Juan Ridge Mine.

With standing room only the audience in the Nevada Theater was struck by the powerful tale of hardship and determination as Ridge residents have, for decades, dealt with the ramifications of extensive gold mining in their community. The property and mine at the center of the story, as we know, was last in operation in the 1990s, with disastrous effects on local wells and streams, yet there is a proposal to reopen this mine.

The film's directors, Tom and Debra Weistar, are longtime residents of the San Juan Ridge and live about a mile from the proposed mine. Their well was affected the last time the mine was in operation. “When San Juan Mining Corporation submitted a proposal to reopen the mine, I started talking to my neighbors about it,” said Debra Weistar. “Those conversations turned into this film, but it's not just about water and mining—it's about a

vibrant community and the importance of protecting our existing jobs and businesses, and our watershed, the Yuba.”

The Weistar's intent for this film is to educate others about an emerging rural economy, and serious issues facing communities in the “Gold Country” of the Sierra Nevada.

SJRTA would like to thank everyone who attended the event and everyone who donated to the organization. With your commitment we raised \$1800 that evening. These funds go to hiring expert consultants to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report when it is released, and to paying for outreach and education efforts used to broaden our base of support.

The film is in the final stages of post-production and will be ready later this month to be used for house parties and other community events. Please email Debra at [debra@synergialearning.org](mailto:debra@synergialearning.org) to request a copy for use at house gatherings/screenings.

# San Juan Ridge Mine is a County Wide Issue

SJRTA is making a concerted effort this summer to reach out to all of Nevada County to show how permitting the San Juan Ridge Mine will have potential impacts throughout Nevada County. From potentially polluting the South Yuba River to starting a new gold rush in our county, it is vitally important that we get support from off of the Ridge.

If you are interested in volunteering at outreach events this summer please contact Andrew Collins-Anderson at andyca25@hotmail.com or call (707) 499-9870. We will be holding a training on Saturday, June 28th from 1-2pm at the San Juan Ridge Family Resource Center. Come learn outreach techniques, the current status of the project and SJRTA messaging to be the best advocate for clean creeks, safe schools, and our right to water!

**EVENTS**

Thursday Night Market (Grass Valley)  
Thur- Jun 26, Jul 10 & 24, and Aug 7, 6-9pm

Summer Nights (Nevada City)  
Wed- Jul 16, 23, 30, 6-9pm

Nevada City Farmers Market  
Sat, Aug 9, 8am-2:30pm

Ridgestock  
Sat, Aug 16, 11am-11pm



**We Need YOU!**

## RENEW OR JOIN THE SJRTA, help make our voice strong!

Some of you have not renewed your membership for 2014. Check your mailing label for expiration date. Please join or renew now (it's only \$5), and consider making an additional contribution. We gain our strength from an organized response backed by a strong membership.

We estimate that we will need to raise about \$40,000 to hire the experts needed to best make our case when the Draft Environmental Impact Report is released.

**2014 San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Membership Application**

- VOTING – Must be a San Juan Ridge resident or landowner (resident or non-resident). Jan 1-Dec 31, 2014.
- NON-VOTING – Not a Ridge resident nor landowner. Jan 1-Dec 31, 2014.

Member 1	Email Address
Member 2	Email Address
Member 3	Email Address
Member 4	Email Address

Mailing Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone		

Membership is \$5 per person per year.  
Anything above is a donation.

- \$5
- \$10
- \$25
- \$35
- \$50
- \$75
- \$100
- Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer for:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tabling	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone Tree
<input type="checkbox"/> Mailing	<input type="checkbox"/> Helping with events
<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Skills _____	

Would you like to receive documentation so that your donation will be tax deductible? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to SJRTA, PO Box 421, North San Juan CA 95960  
info@sjrtaxpayers.org ♦ www.sjrtaxpayers.org  
~Thank you for your membership~

**San Juan Ridge  
Taxpayers Association**  
*Serving the Greater  
San Juan Ridge  
Since 1975*

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## Safety in schools is plain common sense

SJRTA has been working hard these last two years to get the message out that the San Juan Ridge Mine has the potential to vastly disrupt the rural quality of life that we have come to expect on the Ridge. All of that hard work is paying off. In March, Holly Hermansen, Superintendent of Schools for Nevada County wrote a letter to Nate Beason, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, with her concerns regarding the potential impacts of this project to Grizzly Hill School (the letter in full is posted on our website). This is excellent news and shows that while this proposed project is tucked away on the San Juan Ridge, often considered an outpost of Nevada County, people of influence are paying attention.

In her letter, Holly Hermansen cites concerns related to past impacts to the water quality of Grizzly Hill School's well as a primary issue. However, she also notes the potential disruptions and dangers of increased noise, increased traffic, transport of hazardous materials, and air quality as potentially significant issues.

Hermansen also notes that in addition to Grizzly Hill School, other schools and educational

facilities are at risk from direct impacts of the mine. Synergia Learning Ventures, Ananda's Living Wisdom School, and Shady Creek Outdoor School are all in the crosshairs of this project. Letters of concern from all of these schools have been or will be issued to the county. In addition the San Juan Ridge Family Resource Center has shown incredible support for our efforts to address the San Juan Ridge Mine and has been a crucial outreach arm of the Superintendent of Schools.

We expect other schools in Nevada County to help bring this issue into the forefront in the future. If you know teachers or education administrators in our county, talk to them about the safety concerns posed by the San Juan Ridge Mine. See if they will write a letter and if they will talk to their peers to write a letter.

Hermansen sums it up best when she writes, "The role of the school is to educate students, not to spend valuable funds and time just to make sure that the students are able to drink the water at the school." We could not agree more.



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