

San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

Autumn News

September 2014
Volume 3, Issue 3



SJRTA Fundraiser at
Stonehouse Oct 4!
(see back cover)

Wells still being monitored
for static water levels,
even though water
quality testing has been
suspended

As drought continues,
many Ridge wells are
dropping

Become a member

Thank you to all our
volunteers and donors

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What's Going On with the Mine?

As we go to press, there remains an impasse between the County and San Juan Mining Corporation (SJMC) with regard to the well monitoring program, thus stalling the mine's permit application process. In an exchange of letters between SJMC, SJRTA's attorney, County Planning staff, and SJRTA, questions of what the County will require in terms of pre-EIR monitoring have been raised, but not answered to our satisfaction. For a description of the letters, and to see copies of them, see the SJRTA website.

County Planning staff are waiting for SJMC CEO Tim Callaway to schedule a meeting to discuss what will be required in terms of pre-EIR water quality monitoring. While SJMC halted water quality monitoring in March, they directed Cranmer Engineering to download well water level data in July. This means that, in part, the monitoring program is still moving forward, **and that "the mine"**

has not gone away. An August 23 New York Times article (see "Resistance to SJR Mine in the News" in this issue) indicates that Mr. Callaway intends to continue his efforts to re-open the mine.

It is SJRTA's position that water quality testing should have to start over again. This is because a) water quality data has not been collected for a minimum and continuous twelve month period and b) over six critical months of water quality data collection have now been missed that includes all of spring and summer. We feel that these seasons must be captured. In the meantime, we must assume that SJMC intends to pursue a use permit, and that means **we must continue our efforts to raise awareness of the threats posed by this mine, and be prepared to hire experts to comment on the DEIR when it is released.**

Film About SJR Mine and the Ridge Community Nears Release

The documentary film, now titled Water for Gold is in its final stages of post-production. The filmmakers, local residents and educators Debra and Tom Weistar, have been working on this project since January 2013. It premiered as a work-in-progress at the Nevada Theater last April to a packed house.

The film is now ready to be seen as widely as possible. A local showing of the final cut will take place at the North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center on Thurs, Oct 23. Doors open at 6:30, music 7:00-8:00, film showing at 8:00, Q&A 8:30-9:00. DVDs of Water for Gold will be available for house parties, and it will be accessible on the Internet.

The film recounts the history of what happened with the mine in the 1990s

through the eyes and commentary of local residents who remember that time well. It then brings us to the present and tells of the established and thriving local businesses here on the Ridge, and how precious our water resources are.

The film features interviews with Gary Parsons, Hank Meals, Shirley Paulus, Caleb Dardick, Izzy Martin, Kurt Lorenz, Stefanie Freydon, Liese Greensfelder and Bob Erikson, and a host of others who call the San Juan Ridge home, and who tell a story of a community determined to protect its water, its resources and its economy.

To receive a copy, or for more information on the upcoming screening, call Debra and Tom at (530) 265-5490.

September 1, 1995 - A Local Day of Infamy

On September 1, 1995, blasting at the San Juan Ridge Mine (then operated by Siskon Gold Corp.) blew a four inch hole in the water-bearing bedrock F-6 fault and water started flooding the mine. Subsequently, 14 surrounding wells went dry or were drastically lowered. Each week following the breach another well or two were lost, including those of Grizzly Hill School and North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center.

It's estimated that Siskon pumped one to three million gallons per day out of the mine for months until the hole was plugged. Settling and infiltration ponds couldn't contain all the water, and much of it was released into Spring Creek, exceeding the discharge permit and degrading the watershed. Siskon paid the cost of deepening wells, or drilling (and sometimes re-drilling) new wells to replace those that had been affected, under a water remediation plan that had been hammered out by SJRTA as part of the terms of the mine's use permit. Many of those wells never recovered the quality and quantity of water that had been produced by wells damaged by the fault breach, and owners now bear the cost of pumping from deeper wells and bringing their water up to safe standards. Grizzly Hill School has spent over \$150,000 on this effort, and continues to pay thousands of

dollars every year for water treatment. Following the fault breach, some wells were contaminated with heavy metals and some residents became ill from drinking their water.

This event that caused so much pain and suffering in the surrounding community did not deter Siskon from continuing on with the mine, in the direction of other known faults. It was only the collapse of the gold market, stability issues in the mine tunnel and devaluation of the corporation's stock that resulted in the closure of the mine in 1997. In July 1994, Siskon's stock price was \$5.38 per share. By the time the mine folded, Siskon's share price was 2.3 cents and dropped even further in the following months. Investors lost everything, while that year, CEO Tim Callaway received \$791,000 in severance pay plus a salary of \$178,700.

Now, 19 years later, the San Juan Ridge community is faced with the proposed re-opening of the same mine, with the same CEO, under a new corporate name—San Juan Mining Corporation. Just as we were assured in the 1990s that our water would not be affected, Mr. Callaway again assures us that should he be granted a permit to re-open the mine, our water won't be affected. Given the history of this mine, we're not willing to put his claims to the test this time around.

Resistance to San Juan Ridge Mine in the News

The proposed re-opening of the San Juan Ridge Mine has recently received national and international media attention. An August 23 New York Times' article, "Gold and Water Clash in the Sierra," describes the frustration of San Juan Mining Corporation CEO Tim Callaway in his attempt to overcome community resistance to the mine, and presents his argument that the mine will create jobs and contribute to tax revenues and the economy. It provides some past history of the mine and its impacts, and gives voice to community concerns in quotes from a number of past and current board members of the San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association. See SJRTA's website for a link to the August 22 web version of the article, "Efforts to Revive Rich California Mine Hit Strong Resistance." The article's author is free-lance journalist Carol Pogash.

The September 2014 issue of the UK-based New

Internationalist magazine is themed "Gold Trouble," in which a number of articles illustrate "our crazy lust for the shiny yellow metal," the destructive effects of gold mining and the "delusion of worshipping the gold standard." In "View from the ridge," author Jane Theobald speaks of her unsuccessful quest as a jewelry designer to find an ethical source of gold, and depicts the historical and current hunger for gold as an addiction that has no basis in practical need. In describing locals' efforts to prevent the San Juan Ridge Mine from re-opening, she posits that as compared to many other communities in the world that suffer from gold mines in their midst, "we have the advantage of being well-educated and highly organized" in our resistance. A PDF of the gold-themed articles in the magazine can be found at the SJRTA website. To order a copy, or subscribe to New Internationalist, see www.newint.org on the web.

SJRTA Receives Grant from Sarah Forslund Fund

SJRTA is pleased to announce receipt of a general support grant of \$2000 from The Sierra Fund's Sarah Forslund Fund for Environmental Leadership. Located in Nevada City, The Sierra Fund's mission is to increase and organize investment in protecting and restoring the natural resources and

communities of the Sierra Nevada. Sarah Forslund was a founding board member of TSF, who died in 2002. The memorial fund was created as a way of ensuring the legacy of her remarkable life. We are very grateful to TSF and the Forslund Fund for their generous gift.

Summer Tabling was a Success

We are happy to announce that SJRTA had a very successful summer educating residents of Nevada County about the impacts of the proposed San Juan Ridge Mine. With the help of our wonderful crew of volunteers we were able to share the story of the San Juan Ridge community's fight to protect our water and livelihoods. SJRTA was present at several events this summer, including the North San Juan Cherry Festival, Summer Nights in Nevada City, Thursday Night Market in Grass Valley, the Nevada City Farmers Market and Ridgestock.

Our main call to action for people at these events was to sign a petition to the Nevada County Planning Commission—the first body to review the Draft Environmental Impact Report. The

petition reads, in part: “We respectfully urge you to require the best available science, demand rigorous baseline data, hold the project applicant accountable and listen carefully to citizen and expert commentary on the forthcoming DEIR.” Over 350 people signed this petition over the summer and we have a goal to gather 500 signatures by the end of the year.

Thank you to all the outreach volunteers who made this effort possible. Look for SJRTA as we raise awareness and gather support at your favorite local market, Briar Patch or Mother Truckers this fall. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Outreach Coordinator Andrew Collins-Anderson at andyca25@hotmail.com or (707) 499-9870.



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
--

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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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.sjrtaxpayers.org

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www.facebook.com/sjrtaxpayers

Newsletter editor: Sara Greensfelder

Saturday, Oct 4, 2014

San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association Presents....

Hanging in the Balance:

A benefit giving weight to water and life



ACHILLES WHEEL

**Belfry Brothers
& DJ Jim Tonic**

\$15

Purchase advance tickets at
Briarpatch &
www.sjrtaxpayers.org

21 & over only

@The Stonehouse

107 Sacramento Street
Downtown Nevada City

& A FORMAL DINNER ON THE PATIO

HOSTED BY

Polly's Paladar

A Nevada City Supper Club



TICKETS SOLD SEPARATELY.

FOR MORE INFO

WWW.SJRTAXPAYERS.ORG/BALANCE

OR (530) 263-0600

BY RESERVATION ONLY, SEATING LIMITED



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