

# San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

## Spring News

February 2015  
Volume 4, Issue 1



SJRTA member meeting  
Mar 15!  
(see back cover)

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

As drought continues,  
many Ridge wells are at  
summer levels

Become a member

Thank you to all our  
volunteers and donors

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**SJRTA member meeting Mar 15!**  
**(see back cover)**

## The Ridge Economic Complex

The word “economy” is rooted in the Greek word “oikos” meaning home. The San Juan Ridge is home to many who value place, family, and lifestyle as much or more than monetary wealth, giving weight to such considerations as a sense of community and being in touch with the natural world that surrounds us. Because of these values, many have developed businesses and livelihoods that strive to preserve the environment, employ local people and foster the wellbeing of workers.

During the campaign to stop the San Juan Ridge Mine from dewatering our properties, SJRTA has emphasized the revenue that businesses located near the mine bring to our county. In truth, such figures only scratch the surface of the prosperity that both sustains local residents and radiates outward into the regional economy.

When thinking about the economics of the Ridge, it is difficult to quantify many aspects that contribute to a sustainable life-style. Many residents harvest materials from the land: firewood for heat, lumber for building, food and medicines from gardens and the wild, electricity from solar systems. Some are involved in a sharing economy of labor, goods and transportation. Jobs come from a mix of small businesses, institutions and self-employment. There are teachers, medical professionals, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, loggers, heavy equipment operators, restaurateurs, organic farmers, herbalists, writers, artists, and craftspeople, to name some of the array of occupations represented.

Beyond the jobs held by residents, how many jobs are created or enhanced to

service the households of the Ridge? From propane trucks, to well service, building contractors to plumbers, generator service to solar upgrades, the Ridge contributes to the greater prosperity of the region. Personally, I can attest to this. Due to the business my solar company does within a two mile radius of the mine, two installer jobs have been created. Taking into account their pay, equipment sold and installed, and the amount paid to local supply houses, my company's business in this small area has been responsible for hundreds of thousands of dollars flowing into the larger economy. And because these two employees are local, much of their paycheck is immediately kicked back into the county wide economy. Our company is a small player in this picture; one can only imagine what the big picture might look like.

By threatening our water supply—the basis of all livelihood—the prospect of this mine re-opening threatens to open a rift in our richly interdependent economic system, in order to provide short term profits to a company that will ship gold and profit to faraway places. Our economy needs water as much as our ecosystem does, and it's up to us to make sure the decision-makers are aware of what is at risk when considering the re-opening of this mine.

-Lars Ortegren, SJRTA Board of Directors, and owner of California Solar Electric Co.

## Letter from Sierra Family Medical Clinic to Nevada County

November 7, 2014

Dear Sirs,

This letter is to express my grave concern as to the potentially disastrous impact of reopening the gold mine. Water is critical to the operation of our clinic. Any disruption to the water supply to our well, accidental or not, would be a total disaster for our staff as well as our patients. We simply cannot operate without a sustained, clean, dependable water source.

A disruption to our water supply would immediately put 35 people out of work and immediately curtail medical, dental, and mental health services for almost 4000 patients. Many of our patients are indigent, lower income, unemployed, disabled, and/or lacking in transportation. I can honestly say that without our clinic in full operation, many of these patients will go without health care, as it would be extremely difficult if not impossible for them to find an alternative provider for their medical care, dental treatment, and behavioral health needs.

The most highly impacted would be the folks who are most

in need of integrated health care, in particular those with mental health challenges, disabilities, low or no income, and who lack transportation. These are not simply statistics we're dealing with here; these are human lives.

I am for the most part supportive of private enterprise and initiative, and I respect the rights of individuals to earn a living and make use of their resources, including their property. However, when the mine project brings with it the risk – even a small risk – of destroying access to much needed medical, dental, and mental health care for potentially thousands of needy patients, the disastrous consequences must be considered. On behalf of our clinic, I absolutely cannot support such a venture. The potential ramifications of the mine project are simply too impactful, too threatening, and too potentially damaging to people's health to allow the project to move forward.

Respectfully,

Steve Weber - CEO, Sierra Family Medical Clinic

## Water for Gold and SJRTA workshop shine at the Wild and Scenic Film Festival

SYRCL's Wild & Scenic Film Festival this January was a smashing success and SJRTA's message was heard loud and clear. The Weistars' movie, Water for Gold, won the People's Choice Award and was shown three times to packed audiences.

SJRTA wants to thank volunteers Jenny Bath, Paul Moore, Julie Childs, Ramsey Demeter, Jane Theobald, and Muriel Kerr who tabled through the weekend talking with hundreds of people and getting scores to sign our petition to the Planning Commissioners.

Last but certainly not least the Taxpayers teamed up with SYRCL and The Sierra Fund (TSF) to put on the workshop "A New Vision for our Historic Mines." The workshop highlighted local projects in Nevada County where historic mine lands are being cleaned up and re-purposed as public assets. The panel included regional expert Ignacio Dayrit, director for The Center for Creative Land Recycling, as well as Dawn Zydonis of Nevada City Parks and Recreation, Kyle Leach a geologist with Sierra Streams Institute, and Izzy Martin, TSF's CEO.

After a short introduction with clips from Water for Gold, the argument was made for a broader vision in Nevada County for our historic mine lands. Too often the decision on what to do with these contaminated properties lands in two camps: ignore it or mine it. However, local projects

in Nevada City such as the Tribute Trail and Hirschman's Pond and upcoming projects like the new site for Yuba River Charter School fly in the face of the old way of thinking. Sure, mining has some economic merit but these lands can be used more wisely and can benefit greater numbers of local people without the risks inherent in mining.

At the end of the panel presentations the audience was asked to write their ideas for alternative land uses on index cards and then to talk about their ideas in small groups. By far the top response was the need for recreational lands to be available to the community. Other popular suggestions included community housing, power generation, education facilities, and community gardens. Overall there was a great response from the attendees of the workshop. See the SJRTA website at [sjrtaxpayers.org](http://sjrtaxpayers.org) to find out how you can contribute to this process with your ideas and feedback.

SJRTA looks forward to furthering this dialogue with our partnering organizations, city and county officials, and the Nevada County community. The conversation is central to the SJRTA stance on the San Juan Ridge Mine. The community at large sees this project as having a negative impact on our quality of life but we need viable alternatives that exhibit the values that we collectively share in support of a rural and vibrant San Juan Ridge.

## What's Happening with the Mine?

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) process for the mine is still stalled, as a result of the failure of the applicant to carry out the required well water quality testing. Under the Baseline Groundwater Monitoring Program, Nevada County required a year long well water quality and quantity measurement package to provide data for the DEIR. After several months of testing, San Juan Mining Corporation stopped taking water quality samples of wells surrounding the mine in late March 2014.

Well water level data is still being collected, however. In early February, Cranmer Engineering technicians downloaded data stored in transponders placed in wells. (According to Cranmer staff, the static level of most wells was roughly the same as levels observed last July, the last time that data was collected. While the transponders take a well level measurement every 15 minutes,

well owners still haven't been provided with this comprehensive data.)

Although there are no plans in place to start over on well quality measurements, SJRTA is concerned that continued water level data collection may be an attempt on the part of the applicant to move the DEIR process forward without fulfilling all monitoring requirements laid out by the county.

SJRTA continues to stay abreast of developments regarding the mine. It has been a long process, but this means the county is taking community concerns seriously and is not buckling under the significant pressure that a project like this one causes. We continue to do the necessary background work, and keep the public aware of the risks of reopening the same mine with the same methods and once again impacting OUR WATER.

**RENEW OR JOIN THE SJRTA**  
**Help make our voice strong!**

**We Need YOU!**



**2015 San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Membership Application**

- VOTING – Must be a San Juan Ridge resident or landowner (resident or non-resident). Jan 1-Dec 31, 2015.
- NON-VOTING – Not a Ridge resident nor landowner. Jan 1-Dec 31, 2015.

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.

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other \$ _____ |

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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 _____	

Please return to SJRTA, PO Box 421, North San Juan CA 95960  
 info@sjrtaxpayers.org ♦ www.sjrtaxpayers.org  
 SJRTA is a registered 501(c)(3) organization, tax ID #32-0374207  
 ~Thank you for your membership~

## San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

*Serving the Greater  
San Juan Ridge  
Since 1975*

PO Box 421  
North San Juan CA 95960

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(530) 478-1941

Email  
info@sjrtaxpayers.org

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sol Henson – President  
Kurt Lorenz – Vice President  
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Lars Ortegren

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We're on the Web!

*Visit us at:*

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*Like us on Facebook*

**[www.facebook.com/sjrtaxpayers](http://www.facebook.com/sjrtaxpayers)**

Newsletter editor: Sara Greensfelder

# SJRTA Annual Members Meeting Sunday, March 15

The SJRTA Annual Members Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 15, at 2 p.m. at the North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center. All members should attend if possible! At the meeting, you may join or renew your membership for 2015 (\$5 per person), vote for the four seats up for election on the Board of Directors, and get all the news about what's happening with the mine application and what SJRTA has been up to. We'll show a short version of Tom and Debby Weistar's movie, "Water for Gold," discuss alternative land uses for the Diggings, the well monitoring program, stream monitoring, volunteer opportunities, and more. Please attend! All voting members in good standing (dues paid up) are eligible to vote for the four directors' seats. Voting memberships are open to a) persons who own land on the San Juan Ridge and b) persons who reside on the San

Juan Ridge. We welcome others to attend and/or join in the Friends of SJRTA membership category. Anyone can become a (non-voting) Friend of SJRTA. The four positions that are up for election are those of current Board members Kurt Lorenz, Alexa Wondergem, Lars Ortegren and Gary Parsons. (The other three board seats will be up for election in 2016.) Kurt, Alexa and Lars intend to run for another term, but Gary will not. Any voting member may run for the board. If you wish to do so, please submit a letter of intent to SJRTA by February 28, so that you can appear on the ballot. Include a brief statement of your experience/ what you feel you would bring to the board. You will also be asked to make a statement at the membership meeting. A letter of intent may be sent by email to info@sjrtaxpayers.org, or mailed to SJRTA, P.O. Box 421, North San Juan, CA 95960.



San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association  
PO Box 421, North San Juan CA 95960

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