

# San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

## Autumn News

November 2015  
Volume 4, Issue 3



Welcome to our new outreach coordinator, Suzanne Calkins

2015 on track to be the hottest year on record

Increase your defensible space this fall and winter!

Thank you to all our volunteers and donors

Support SJRTA- buy a T-shirt (see back cover)

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## San Juan Ridge Mine for Sale?

Tim Callaway, CEO of the San Juan Mining Corporation (SJMC), has confirmed to SJRTA that he and Shasta Gold Corporation are considering selling the 1400 acre San Juan Ridge Mine (SJRM) property for an asking price of 8.6 million dollars. SJMC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Shasta Gold Corp., of which Mr. Callaway is the President. Although Mr. Callaway is looking into selling the property, he has indicated that he may instead go forward with the application process to re-open the mine.

While SJRTA has facilitated meetings to discuss alternative uses for the mine property, since learning that the property may be for sale we have accelerated our efforts in this direction. In October, we contracted with Bisnett Design Associates (BDA) to develop a feasibility study that will help determine the value of the property, viable alternative uses, and how purchase of the property might take place. Founded by principal Brian Bisnett in 1984, BDA specializes in land use planning and architecture, mapping and site analysis, with a dedication to conservation, stewardship and sustainable development.

These are some of the issues that we foresee must be addressed:

a) Money—the property will cost a huge sum of money even if we are able to negotiate a more reasonable price. It would take multiple large grants, donations, or investors to make it happen and likely it will take all three of these.

b) Mine legacy contamination—there is certainly mercury contamination on the property. If SJRTA or another entity purchases the land they then become responsible for that legacy contamination. Assessment and remediation must be a part of any purchase of this historic hydraulic diggings.

c) Alternative use—an alternative use for this land must be determined. The SJRTA has held two community workshops to develop ideas for such uses. Far and away the most popular one that was suggested by the community

was recreational. It is probable that any alternative use for the land would include a conservation easement and a significant zone set aside for recreation. However, some type of economic development would likely be required in order to make purchase, payment of property taxes and property maintenance feasible. That would include the potential for housing, light industry, or agriculture—and any proposed development would need to pass through the environmental review process.

d) Land management—this is a very large tract of land that has a long history of challenges. These include illegal dumping and squatting, illegal gold dredging, trespassing with off road vehicles and more. The eventual owner of the property will likely have to deal with all of the same issues.

Here are some questions to ponder: if the community is not willing to accept another mine on this property then what are we willing to accept? Are we willing to accept light industry that could be noisy or increase traffic? Are we willing to accept housing that could shift the demographics of the ridge we know and love today? We need to be able to accept some alternative use for this land in order to avoid the continuation of addressing this mine every 7 to 10 years. We know what we are against but now we need to know what we are for, or willing to accept.

Please stay tuned as we begin this process. Continuing input from our members and the greater community will be critical to keeping our efforts on track.

**Mine permit application update.** The permit application by SJMC remains open. The SJRTA continues to insist that this application should be closed due to the inactivity of SJMC. Please go to our website at [sjrtaxpayers.org](http://sjrtaxpayers.org) and sign the on-line petition to the County to close the application to mine.

## Drought and Fire on the Ridge

During our fourth year of drought, exacerbated by record-setting high temperatures over the past year, the Ridge was very lucky to escape any major wildfires this past fire season. Observing the explosive Butte and Valley Fires from afar—that killed a number of people, destroyed thousands of homes, businesses and out-buildings and devastated many square miles of natural habitat—one could imagine such a fire here.

Taking a look around the Ridge, we see an extremely heavy fuel load of crowded forest and underbrush. Many roads and driveways are in need of fuels reduction in order to allow for safer evacuation and ingress of fire equipment in the event of a fire—including some of our designated evacuation routes and fire breaks.

This summer, SJRTA decided to broaden our focus beyond the proposed gold mine to include working towards making the Ridge more fire safe. In June, we wrote a letter to the Cal Fire State Director, asking that an equitable share of Cal Fire's Fire Prevention Fees collected in Nevada County be returned to our county. This summer we attended two of North San Juan Fire Protection District's board meetings to see how we might join their efforts to protect our district. And in August we participated in a meeting with Supervisor Hank Weston, the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, NSJFPD board members and others to try and discover what programs might be available to the Ridge.

The Fire Safe Council offers a chipping program, defensible

## Sign Online Petition to the Nevada County Planning Dept

As SJRTA works to identify avenues to purchase the San Juan Ridge Mine property, we continue to pressure Nevada County to drop the Mine's application. You can help encourage the County to drop the application by signing our online petition, available at [www.sjrtaxpayers.org](http://www.sjrtaxpayers.org). The Nevada County Planning Department is the lead agency for the permitting of the San Juan Ridge Mine.

September 2015 marked 1½ years since San Juan Mining Corporation (SJMC) unilaterally halted well water quality testing for residents bordering the San Juan Ridge Mine. Such tests are

## SJRTA BBQ Benefit a Success

On August 29, community members gathered at the North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center to join their voices together to say "Never Again" to the San Juan Ridge Mine. It was 20 years ago on Labor Day weekend that the mine breached a water-bearing fault, de-watering 14 surrounding wells.

The SJRTA benefit featured a delicious barbecue, great music, fun kids games and a silent auction. Friends reconnected and enjoyed the cool and windy day. The event was a financial success, bringing more needed resources to SJRTA's work. After three years of constant work to oppose the mine, SJRTA Board of Directors wants to thank the community for sticking with us through the long haul.

SJRTA's outreach coordinator, Andrew Collins-Anderson,

space inspections and special needs assistance for low-income folks. We highly recommend all of these services—see the Council's website at [www.areyoufiresafe.com](http://www.areyoufiresafe.com) for details. Another program that could help Ridge residents is the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS's) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP.) EQIP provides financial incentives to farmers, ranchers and timber land owners that apply approved conservation practices on their properties. NRCS helps to defray the costs by 50-75%. Typical practices in Nevada County include forest thinning and pruning, conversion of brush fields to timber land or range and pasture, and improvement of wildlife habitat. To learn more, contact NRCS at (530) 272-3417 and ask about the EQIP program.

SJRTA will continue to meet with agencies to see how we can work together to make a safer environment for all. In the meantime, we urge everyone to take advantage of the fall and winter months to create as much defensible space on your property as possible, and to cut back and thin vegetation along driveways and roads. Be sure your driveway is marked with a reflective sign. They can be ordered from the NSJ Fire Department—drop by Station 3 (next to Mother Truckers) or give them a call at 292-9159. Don't be lulled into complacency by winter rains. Now is the time to make our homes and community more fire-safe!

part of the Baseline Groundwater Monitoring Program (BGMP) established by Nevada County as a part of the environmental review process for the mine. SJMC has failed to fulfill its requirements under the BGMP by:

- Not completing the mandated one year of concurrent well water supply and quality monitoring.
- Not providing reports on well level data to program participants.

We are requesting that the application to re-open the San Juan Ridge Mine be dismissed for failure to honor the requirements set forth in the Baseline Groundwater Monitoring Program.

organized the event as his last duty with SJRTA. "Thank you everyone for all your hard work, and for welcoming me into your community," Andrew said. "It was a pleasure to work with you all to protect the water and way of life on the Ridge. I will take these memories and experiences with me as I continue to work towards a more just and resilient world."

**Thank you to cook Aaron Thompson, musicians Bryan Cahall, Marc Ryan, Beaucoup Chapeaux and the Belfry Brothers, and to all the other participants, volunteers and donors who made the event a big success.**

**We couldn't have done it without you!**

## We have a new outreach coordinator

SJRTA would like to bid a fond farewell to Andrew Collins-Anderson who has decided to move to the Pacific Northwest to look for a change in scenery and a new organization with which to hone his activist craft. For those of you that did not have the pleasure of meeting Andrew, he served as our outreach coordinator for the last two years. Andrew worked tirelessly training and coordinating volunteers and tabling at dozens of events on behalf of the Taxpayers. He kept busy working on newsletters, updating our website, and coordinating and publicizing events (such as our recent barbecue benefit.) Andrew kept the gears in motion for our outreach efforts but he also did so much more. He played a role as liaison between SJRTA, South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), The Sierra Fund, and other organizations that have worked to show our decision makers and the public that the San Juan Ridge Mine is a countywide issue.

No matter how hard or frustrating the situation, Andrew was there with a quick smile and then ready to roll up his sleeves and take care of business. Besides his part-time position with SJRTA, Andrew also worked for SYRCL and was the Yuba Bear Watershed Council president. He will be sorely

missed not only by SJRTA but also as an advocate protecting our rural quality of life across Nevada County. All the best to you, Andrew!

While we were wondering how to fill this vital position to our organization, we became aware of the availability of Suzanne Calkins—who, like Andrew, joined SYRCL from the ranks of Americorps. Suzanne served as the Stewardship Coordinator for SYRCL for the past year, and as such, recruited, hired and trained volunteers and employees that made up the River Ambassador program. The program engaged 4000 visitors to the South Yuba River to raise awareness of their potential impact on the river environment, and required many of the skills we seek in an outreach coordinator. Suzanne has a strong background in graphic arts, and has worked previously as an environmental educator, graphics coordinator and communications coordinator in various locations throughout California—all skills that are most welcome and needed at SJRTA. At our October 28 board meeting, we interviewed Suzanne and subsequently offered her the position of Outreach Coordinator. We're pleased to say that she accepted. Welcome aboard, Suzanne!

**RENEW OR JOIN  
THE SJRTA**  
Check your mailing  
label for expiration date  
**MAKE OUR  
VOICE STRONG**



**Our membership  
goal for 2015 is 400**  
**We are at 332**  
**Can you help?**

### 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.

- \$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 _____	

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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*

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