



San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

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**For immediate release**

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## **Supervisors Increase Budget for Mine Impact Study**

### ***Residents question whether EIR scope is sufficient***

The San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association (SJRTA) praised the Nevada County Board of Supervisors for voting to increase by nearly 40 percent the budget for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the proposed re-opening of the San Juan Ridge Mine, but questioned whether the EIR will adequately assess the mine's potential negative impacts on the San Juan Ridge community.

"We are grateful to the county for requiring a full EIR and thank the Supervisors for supporting additional analysis of the mine's potential impacts to our community. But in light of the disastrous history of the mine and its lingering impacts, we remain concerned about unavoidable threats to our water, our schoolchildren and residents, our economy and our natural environment," said Gary Parsons, SJRTA President.

The Board voted at its August 27 meeting to increase by \$68,114 the county's contract with Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC) for preparation of the San Juan Ridge Mine EIR, bringing the total contract to \$247,925. The county had previously decided to require preparation of a full new EIR on the project.

Foremost among community concerns is the potential for mining operations to dewater local and regional water supplies. When Siskon Gold Corporation operated the same mine in the 1990s, more than a dozen local wells were dewatered, including the one serving Grizzly Hill School. The school's replacement well remains contaminated to this day. "Water still must be treated and filtered before children can drink it, and this has cost the school district and taxpayers up to \$150,000 to date, and continues to cost the school \$8,000 a year," said Kurt Lorenz, a former Twin Ridges Elementary School District Board member.

"An intact aquifer on the San Juan Ridge is far more valuable than people realize. It is an irreplaceable resource that requires no maintenance, taxation, or operations cost. The access cost is to simply drill a well. This is a natural resource that is at the foundation of all economic activity, residential values, and environmental quality on the San Juan Ridge," Parsons told supervisors during Tuesday's meeting. "If the aquifer is damaged, the damage is permanent. We feel the EIR may not be

considering the economic impacts to the value of the aquifer into the future, especially considering the cost of constructing an alternative delivery system for the area affected by the mine,” Parsons added.

Residents have also questioned whether the EIR will include an adequate economic analysis of the mine’s potential downside for area businesses. The five largest employers on the Ridge border the mine, including Grizzly Hill School and the only medical facility on the Ridge. Combined, these five businesses represent about 200 jobs, \$12 million in annual revenue and 150 years of business operations. The Ridge is also home to numerous agricultural businesses that rely on groundwater, including vineyards, family farms and commercial organic farms.

“This is not a “jobs vs. the environment” situation, but a situation where a thriving and diverse local economy is threatened by one high-risk mine that promises relatively few short-term jobs.” said Stefanie Freydon, whose jewelry business, Extasia, borders the proposed mine site. “It makes no economic sense except to the outside speculators who are proposing the mine.”

With a membership that includes some 200 local property and business owners, the SJRTA has voiced concerns over the mine’s potential to lower property values. “Property values adjacent to the mine declined by as much as 75 percent after the last mine failed,” said Parsons. “Property owners should not bear this risk again, and the county cannot afford the loss of property tax revenue another disaster would bring.”

Environmentalists fear that the constant dewatering and discharge of millions of gallons of mine water would threaten the headwaters of local streams, the wetlands critical to water quality and quantity, and the wildlife that rely on them, including a number of rare, threatened and sensitive species. As proposed, the mine would pump up to 3.5 million gallons of water out of the ground every day, a quantity that is nearly *one-third* of the total daily groundwater use of all of Nevada County. This water would then be discharged onto the mining site and from there into creeks that flow into the South and Middle Yuba Rivers.

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*Founded in 1975, the San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association (SJRTA) represents residents, property and business owners on the San Juan Ridge of Nevada County, California. We advocate for the responsive and responsible use of taxpayer money by state and county agencies and the maintenance of the rural environment and economic, environmental and social well-being of San Juan Ridge. Our current focus is opposing the proposed reopening of the San Juan Ridge Mine. For more information, please visit our website:*

[www.sjrtaxpayers.org](http://www.sjrtaxpayers.org).