

San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

Winter News

February 2014

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- Attend the annual members meeting March 9
- Join SJRTA or renew your membership for 2014
- Volunteers gathered over 1,300 signed postcards at Wild and Scenic Film Festival
- Attend the rally at Eric Rood Center at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, February 25
- California's historic drought increases concerns about the mine

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Annual Members Meeting—Sunday, March 9

The SJRTA Annual Members Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 9, 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 2014 (\$5 per person), vote for the three 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 discuss the well monitoring program, stream monitoring, the Draft Environmental Impact Report, collaborating with other organizations, volunteer opportunities, fundraising and more. Please attend!

All voting members in good standing (dues paid up) are eligible to vote for the three 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 Friend of SJRTA, but may not participate in elections.

The three positions that are up for election are those of current Board members Sara Greensfelder, Sol Henson and Nancy Lorenz. They will run for re-election for a two-year term. (The other four board seats will be up for election in 2015.) Any other voting member may run. 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.

Join SJRTA! Renew Your Membership for 2014

If you're not a member, please consider joining SJRTA! And if you are, it's time to renew your membership for 2014. Please see the expiration date on the address label, and if it isn't December 2014, renew now or at the annual membership meeting. See membership form on page 3, or go to our website – sjrtaxpayers.org. We need your support! Membership is only \$5 per person, but please consider donating more.

Rally to Deliver 1,300 Postcards to County Supervisors

SJRTA and the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) invite concerned community members to a rally at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, February 25th on the proposed reopening of the San Juan Ridge Mine. The rally takes place on the steps of Eric Rood Administrative Center, 950 Maidu Ave., Nevada City.

Following the rally, SJRTA and SYRCL will hand-deliver more than 1,300 signed postcards to Nevada County's Board of Supervisors during the Public Comment portion of the meeting at 9:00 AM. The purpose of the rally and presentation is to demonstrate the community's concerns that the proposed mine would negatively impact local water supplies and the health of the Yuba River. As our representatives, it is vital that the Board of Supervisors recognizes that there is widespread concern about this mine.

There are historical gold mines in every supervisorial district in Nevada County. As values and economies have shifted since the Gold Rush, industrial scale mines that threaten water resources and watersheds and that are incompatible with surrounding communities are no longer appropriate.

The postcards, collected during SYRCL's recent Wild & Scenic Film Festival, state "water is more precious than gold" and feature an image of the mythological King Midas, who wished for the ability to turn anything he touched into gold but later regretted his decision after turning food, water and even his own daughter into the precious metal.

Ongoing Drought Increases Concerns about Mine

Sol Henson

With California in the midst of a third dry winter and the worst drought on record, the proposal to reopen the San Juan Ridge Mine could not come at a worse time. The mine would threaten local water supplies, the health of the Yuba River watershed, and the community and local economy that rely on them.

While recent rains have provided a small amount of relief to a parched landscape, last year was the driest year on record in most of California, reservoirs remain dangerously low, and on January 30 the snowpack was just 12 percent of average.

In the face of such a crisis, the waste of billions of gallons of groundwater that the San Juan Ridge Mine would consume does not qualify as a best use of our county's water. At its peak, it's estimated the mine would pump up to 3.5 million gallons of water out of the ground every day –nearly one-third of the total daily groundwater use of all of Nevada County. This discharge would impact the underground aquifer that provides water to hundreds of families, businesses, gardens and farms.

The history of the mine illustrates the threat to local water supplies: on Labor Day weekend in 1995, the same mine struck a water-bearing fault, causing the failure of 12 domestic wells and

the wells for the North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center and Grizzly Hill School. Fast forward to the present day: data on the mine's potential impacts on local water supplies is being collected under drought conditions, raising concerns that inadequate science could determine the fate of our community and watershed.

In order to produce an adequate Environmental Impact Report (EIR), significant monitoring of area wells needs to take place so that we can understand the current (or "baseline") water quality and levels of wells surrounding the mine. So far, however, mine proponents have committed to studying area wells for only a single year. Needless to say, one year of well data collected during a historic drought year does not amount to an adequate baseline study.

Without several years of monitoring, many doubt that an adequate EIR can be produced or that residents will have confidence in its findings. The San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association has asked the county to require multiple years of well monitoring in order to capture annual and seasonal fluctuations of well levels and water quality.

DEIR Update

The next important event in the mine application will be the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Upon release, agencies and the public will have 45 days to respond. County staff tells us that as of now the document is still being written, and its release date is unknown. In a project as complex as the proposed re-opening of the mine, 45 days is not much time to respond and there may be an extension granted. However we cannot count on that extension and must be prepared to dive right in.

SJRTA is working now to line up the best experts in several critical fields to examine the DEIR and to propose areas for study, and better methodologies, that may have been missed. We need a final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that lays out the project's risks in clear terms. The way to get that is to carefully examine the DEIR, and to point out where specific sections (hydrology, noise, wildlife, reclamation, etc.) are inadequate. A hearing will be held before the Planning Commission to take public comment on the DEIR. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the EIR authors to answer the issues brought up at the DEIR hearing in their re-write of the DEIR that will be re-submitted months later as the proposed EIR. Then the Planning Commission will hold special hearings to examine the EIR, and eventually they must certify it as "adequate". The decision makers must rely heavily on the EIR, and we have to help make it the best EIR possible.

Stream Monitoring

Partnerships among San Juan Ridge based and regional organizations are insuring that monitoring of Spring and Shady Creeks receives extra attention. Concerned about past impacts on our streams caused by Siskon Gold in the mid 90s we are taking matters into our own hands.

SJRTA has partnered with SYRCL on a Rose Foundation Grant in order to measure flow on Spring and Shady Creeks at a point below where the mine would be discharging water should their project move forward. The grant funds have allowed us to install two stream flow gauges that effectively allow us to determine how much water is in the creek at all times. This has been a major team effort to locate appropriate sites, install the stream gauges and make field trips to download the data. It hasn't been an easy process. Both sites are arduous to get to and monitoring often takes place during intense storm events. Volunteers from the Yuba Watershed Institute and SJRTA with the assistance of staff from SYRCL and Sierra Streams Institute have made this effort possible.

We are now collecting viable streamflow data in order to determine a baseline for flows on our streams. We can also double check any monitoring results conducted by the mining corporation and their consultants, a luxury we did not have previously when large volumes of water were discharged unchecked into Spring Creek.

Call for Volunteers- Something for Everyone

When the San Juan Ridge Mine applied to reopen in 2012 the Taxpayers reawakened to ensure the community was educated and informed during the Mine’s permitting and review process. A big THANKS to everyone who has donated, volunteered and participated in our events and actions to educate the community about the Mine.

The SJRTA Board has been working tirelessly to be prepared for the upcoming release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report and beyond, but we need your help! There are several fun and engaging volunteer opportunities for you to leverage your passion and defend the Ridge this year.

We are rebuilding our phone bank to ensure all Ridge residents are informed and ready to act at critical times during the permitting process. If you are interested in helping with the phone tree there are several places to get involved. You can help with coordination or sign up to be a captain or secondary caller.

If you are computer minded we need assistance in data entry and database management. If you are website savvy, your assistance in updating our website would be invaluable. We

would also like to recruit good writers to contribute to our public education work.

This summer we will be conducting outreach at events on the Ridge, in Nevada City and Grass Valley. If you are a people person and want to educate the public about the threats the Mine brings to the Ridge and the Yuba watershed we need you to help us table! We will be holding a fun and engaging training in the spring to share outreach techniques and all the great history and information we have gathered about the mine. This is a great opportunity to get out and spread the word.

We will also be holding several events in 2014, and need willing and eager event planners and other volunteers to ensure successful events. And if you have any specialized or technical skills or expertise that you feel could contribute to our efforts, please be in touch.

If you have a notion to get involved, please contact SJRTA’s Outreach Coordinator Andrew Collins-Anderson at andyca25@hotmail.com or (707) 499-9870 to get connected. Again, thank you. We appreciate your help and support.

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

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/FRIEND OF SJRTA – 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
 You may also join SJRTA on our website: www.sjrtaxpayers.org
 ~Thank you for your membership~

Rec _____
 DB _____
 TY _____
 TL _____

San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

*Serving the Greater
San Juan Ridge
Since 1975*

PO Box 421
North San Juan CA 95960

PHONE:
(530) 292-3592

E-MAIL:
info@sjrtaxpayers.org

Board of Directors

Gary Parsons – President
Kurt Lorenz – Vice President
Nancy Lorenz – Treasurer
Sara Greensfelder – Secretary
Sol Henson
Alexa Wondergem
Lars Ortegren

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.sjrtaxpayers.org

Like us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/sjrtaxpayers

Well Monitoring Program

In response to what SJRTA believes were inadequate proposals to monitor wells, we held meetings with County staff to discuss our concerns. Out of those exchanges a well monitoring program that SJRTA finds acceptable began in October 2013. It is being managed by the County, and carried out by Cranmer Engineering, with assistance from Covert's Pump Service.

100+ wells within a two-mile radius of the proposed mine are on the program, and are being tested for both water level and water quality. This round of monitoring is designed to help establish a baseline for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) authors and the County. This baseline will provide pre-project conditions for the potentially affected wells. Although SJRTA pressed for multiple years of pre-monitoring, so far the county has only agreed to one year. But this program is superior to that established for the previous mine operation in the 1990s, providing both water level testing and comprehensive water quality tests that were not included last time around. It is still possible to sign up for well monitoring—call Cranmer Engineering at 273-7284.

If you are on the program now you can call Cranmer and they will give you a unique code number for your well. Then go to the County website mynevadacounty.com/nc/cda/planning/Pages/San-Juan-Ridge-Mine.aspx

Halfway down the page follow these directions, "[Click here to search the BGMP Well Data](#)". NOTE: only enter your well ID number in the Keyword Search field."

This will bring up your well data. Most of the report is about the chemical content of your well, the most complete water quality panel available. To see the water level of your well at the time of each test, find the "Field Well Pump Form," after chain of custody pages.

Future water monitoring: The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), and then later the final EIR will specify surface and well water monitoring programs to be followed if the project were to be approved. While SJRTA is committed to NO PROJECT, we will continue to advocate for the very best total water monitoring package.



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