



San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association

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County closes San Juan Ridge Mine permit application

The application for a use permit to re-open the San Juan Ridge Mine in rural Nevada County has been closed. In a March 14, 2016 letter to Timothy Callaway, CEO of the San Juan Mining Corporation (SJMC), Nevada County Planning Department Planning Director Brian Foss wrote, "...the Use Permit and Reclamation Plan applications are now closed... If you wish to pursue the project in the future a new application will be required and new application fees and materials will be required to be submitted."

The application, submitted in February 2012 by SJMC, had drawn widespread attention throughout Nevada County and beyond, primarily as a result of impacts to neighboring wells caused by a catastrophic dewatering event by the same mining operation in the 1990s. Led by the opposition of the San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association (SJRTA) and community members to the re-opening of the mine, the effort to question the potential impacts of the mine on the surrounding community and watershed was joined by local non-profits South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) and The Sierra Fund.

The County Planning Department required a rigorous year-long well monitoring plan through the environmental review process, but after only six months of collecting water quality and quantity data, the mine operator halted monitoring in March 2014. In a letter dated December 15, 2015, the Planning Department notified Mr. Callaway that he had until March 1 to meet and discuss re-instituting the monitoring program, or have the permit application dismissed.

In response to the County's action, SJRTA President Sol Henson stated, "After the stress and trauma experienced due to the impact on wells in the 1990s, the community has been staunchly opposed to the re-opening of this mine, and can now heave a sigh of relief. It's been a long process and we're pleased that community concern and good science was used by the County to help insure protection of our water supply. Our organization has been looking at economically viable alternative uses of the property that would fit in with the needs of the surrounding population, and, it is hoped, satisfy the property owners."

SYRCL Executive Director Caleb Dardick responded, "SYRCL is delighted by the County's closure of this application. When the mine last operated, it discharged millions of gallons of water—some of it untreated mine waste—into a tributary of the South Yuba River, scouring the creek bed down to bedrock, and

endangering the habitat of yellow-legged frogs and other sensitive species. Mercury was historically used on the mining site and significant quantities may still be present and could re-enter local waterways via discharged water. By taking this action, the County is removing a substantial threat to the habitat of our beloved Yuba River watershed.”

Dozens of individuals and representatives came forward during the environmental review process to express their concerns including Twin Ridges Elementary School District, Sierra Family Medical Clinic, Expanding Light Retreat at Ananda Village, Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, CLAIM-GV and state and federal agencies. This collaborative effort required that officials providing oversight for the environmental review process consider potential water quality and quantity impacts to neighboring wells, community health and economic impacts, legacy mining contamination from the mine property, the safety of local school children, noise and light pollution, the environmental health of the South Yuba watershed and more.

Background: *Formed in 1975, the San Juan Ridge Taxpayers Association has been addressing mining on this property over the past four decades. The mission of the organization is to promote the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the San Juan Ridge community. The mine is located in the North Columbia Diggings along Tyler Foote Rd., a legacy hydraulic mine containing gold deposits hundreds of feet below ancient placer river gravels.*