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Economic recovery package to clean up abandoned mines?

Our new President and Congress are crafting an economic recovery bill. You may have heard about it. Last month, thousands of you sent letters to your Representatives and Senators, urging them to include money in the bill for abandoned hardrock mine cleanup.

Thanks in part to your letters, last week, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed a version of the stimulus that includes \$105 million for abandoned mine cleanup. The full Senate is considering the bill now and will



Abandoned Mine. Credit: Bureau of Land Management

Take Action!

Use your consumer power!



Dirty Energy sources like Canadian tar sands oil hurt local communities, the environment, and the global climate.

[Sign the No Dirty Energy pledge](#) to end Dirty Energy production.

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Charity Navigator has given its highest rating to EARTHWORKS

probably vote today (Feb 6). The full House of Representatives passed its own version of the recovery bill that also includes abandoned mine cleanup.

This is extremely good news: cleaning up abandoned mines is a cost effective, common sense way to reinvigorate local economies while protecting communities and people. Every million dollars spent on abandoned mine cleanup produces 23-65 jobs -- from construction workers and engineers to scientists and technical experts. And just as vitally, it is a long term investment in American health and safety.

We were successful in getting abandoned mine cleanup money into the bill -- but it hasn't passed into law yet. Stay tuned for more developments. [\[Learn More\]](#)

EARTHWORKS goes to the Supreme Court

This month the U.S. Supreme Court heard testimony on a case that could set dangerous national precedent on whether its legal for mines to dispose mine waste into the nation's waterways. Since 1982, federal law has prohibited new gold mines from discharging waste into rivers or lakes; yet the Bush Administration approved a permit in 2005 authorizing the proposed Kensington Mine in southeast Alaska to dispose of millions of gallons of mine waste into freshwater Slate Lake, a plan that all agree would destroy the lake's fishery. During oral arguments, Supreme Court Justice David Souter hit the nail on the head, saying, "When you are destroying the entire living (bodies) of the lake," Souter said, "it seems to me that it's getting Orwellian to say there are rigorous environmental standards." A decision in the case is expected by late spring. EARTHWORKS submitted an [amicus brief](#) to the Supreme Court on this important issue. [\[Learn More\]](#)

Dirty tar sands falling out of favor

The use of [Canadian tar sands](#) is likely to be a major discussion point when President Obama meets with Canada's Prime Minister, Sephen Harper, on February 19th. Tar sands oil is the dirtiest on earth and would be imported into the United States for refining through the Keystone XL pipeline. The [proposed pipeline](#) would snake through America, bringing tar sands oil into the country. President Obama's advisors have indicated that he has concerns about the greenhouse gas emissions associated with tar sands oil, but Prime Minister Harper is touting it as the future of an energy / security package that would curtail American imports of foreign oil from the Middle East. We are urging our new President to resist dirty tar sands oil and instead focus on sustainable, clean and renewable energy produced here in America.

EPA taking action in Nevada

The EPA recently [initiated enforcement action against two Nevada gold mines](#) after investigations found serious problems with the handling and storage of hazardous waste. The EPA found that the mines were putting mercury-contaminated waste water from their air pollution controls into unlined tailings dams, where the mercury could be [released back into the air](#) through volatilization or seep into groundwater.

[Recycle Your
Cell Phone from home!](#)



Cell phones contain toxic metals that can pollute the environment and threaten human health.

When recycled responsibly, these metals can be put back into circulation, decreasing the need for new metal mining.

[EARTHWORKS](#) and [Great Basin Resource Watch](#) sent a [letter](#) thanking the EPA for its actions, and urging the agency to investigate nine other Nevada mines that are large mercury-producing operations, to determine whether they are meeting hazardous waste requirements. [\[Learn More\]](#)

Tar sands and the future

President Obama isn't the only one concerned about the tar sands. Author Andrew Nikiforuk is set to release [Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent](#), detailing the dangers we face now and in the future by relying on dirty tar sands oil. From Amazon's review of the book:

Canada has one third of the world's oil source; it comes from the bitumen in the oil sands of Alberta. Advancements in technology and frenzied development have created the world's largest energy project in Fort McMurray where, rather than shooting up like a fountain in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, the sticky bitumen is extracted from the earth. Providing almost 20 percent of America's fuel, much of this dirty oil is being processed in refineries in the Midwest. This out-of-control megaproject is polluting the air, poisoning the water, and destroying boreal forest at a rate almost too rapid to be imagined. In this hard-hitting book, journalist Andrew Nikiforuk exposes the disastrous environmental, social, and political costs of the tar sands and argues forcefully for change.

Keep an eye out here in EARTHNOTES and on the [EARTHWORKS website](#) for more news on the book.

Mt. Tenabo denied emergency legal protection

The lawsuit seeking an injunction to stop Barrick Gold from mining Mt. Tenabo in Nevada was rejected by a federal judge on January 26th. The mine threatens sacred Western Shoshone gravesites, ritual grounds, and area water sources. The Western Shoshone lawyer made a strong case for [protecting the area](#) and the judge recognized that diminishing the spirituality of the mountain may be [very serious](#) but refused to grant the injunction. Be ready to pitch in again to help on this effort! Read more on the struggles of the Western Shoshone with [mining](#), and visit the [Western Shoshone Defense Project](#) or [Great Basin Resource Watch](#).

Norwegian pension fund dumps Barrick Gold

The Norwegian government's pension funds has dropped Canadian mining company Barrick Gold, citing "severe environmental damages" from its operations in Porgera, Papua New Guinea.

The Norwegian Pension Fund banned investment in Barrick based on its mining practices at Porgera, in Papua New Guinea, where it dumps mine waste directly into a river. The Fund's Ethics Council judged this practice irresponsible. The practice of

dumping mine wastes directly into natural water bodies such as oceans, rivers, and streams, is not in use at any operating mine in North America, but Canadian and US mining companies such as Barrick and Newmont employ this disposal method at their operations in southeast Asia. Barrick has also faced protests over its operations in Tanzania, Chile, Argentina, Australia, and elsewhere.

No Dirty Gold in National Geographic

The January 2009 issue of National Geographic exposes the human and environmental costs of mining gold at Newmont's Batu Hijau mine in Indonesia and elsewhere. Our No Dirty Gold campaign is featured in the article as part of efforts to stop these impacts; we also provided background information to the writers as they researched the article. You can [read the story](#) and see the photo gallery online.

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