Protecting Communities and the Environment

MPC news

MINERAL POLICY CENTER NEWSLETTER

Spring 2000

Lessons from the Disasters on the Danube: Is Modern Mining Safe?

by Steve D'Esposito, MPC President with Jozsef Feiler, Friends of the Earth, Hungary

Tycho Sierra

Repaired section of mine waste dam.

On January 30th over 3.5 million cubic feet of toxic mine waste contaminated with cyanide and heavy metals was released into a tributary of the Danube River from a Romanian gold mine operated by a small Australian mining company, Esmeralda Exploration. The waste overflowed a poorly constructed mine waste dam just fifty meters from an apartment block in the town of Baia Mare. Officials immediately warned citizens to avoid contact with the water. They prohibited fishing and other uses of the water and instructed people not to feed the dead fish

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Goran Tomasevic/Reuters

Worker collects dead fish poisoned by cyanide spilled from a gold mine in Romania.

Mining Tops Toxic Polluter List

by Francine Madden

Until this year, the mining industry was exempt from reporting its releases under the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), despite the fact that it produces more toxic waste than any other industry in the United States.

In this first year it was required to report toxic releases, the hardrock mining industry topped the list of industry polluters, dwarfing industries that previously held the number one spot. For instance, in 1998, the Cyprus Miami Copper Mine in Arizona released 123 million pounds of TRI-reported toxic chemicals into the environment. To put that in perspective, in the same year the entire state of New York released about 60 million pounds of TRI reported toxics from non-mining sources. Just one hardrock mine, and not an unusually large mine, released twice as much toxic waste as all industries in the entire state of New York.

According to a U.S. Environmental Protection Agengy (EPA) report to Congress, hardrock mining creates up to two billion tons of waste every year in the United States. That is more than nine times the municipal solid waste produced by all U.S. cities combined. These wastes can contain lead, arsenic, mercury, cadmium and copper, which are linked to cancer and other adverse human health effects.

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Tibor Kocsis

A toxic bullet of cyanide and heavy metals killed all aquatic life along a 250 mile stretch of the Danube River.

Citizen action is now a worldwide, 24-hour, seven-day a week enterprise. Gone are the days when mining companies could escape public scrutiny. And gone, too, are the days when companies could seek to dumb-down environmental standards by playing one country, or state, off another. When it comes to protecting the environment from irresponsible mine operations the expectations of citizens are now the same worldwide.

Letter from the President

It's Now A Small World

On February 4th, we received a fax from a colleague based in Turkey, Birsel Lemke. We know Birsel from her successful campaign to block a number of proposed gold mines in an environmentally and historically important region of Turkey.

Birsel's fax was of a short vague newspaper article, in German, describing a cyanide spill that had just occurred in Romania. Birsel's message to us was simple and clear: "Please help get the word out."

After translating the story, we sent out an email advisory to colleagues in the U.S., Europe, Canada and Australia.

Our friends at the Mineral Policy Institute (MPI) in Australia quickly ascertained that the company involved, Esmeralda Exploration, was a small Australian-based company. MPI phoned the company; the official who answered admitted that there had been problems with the facility.

In Hungary, Jozsef Feiler of Friends of the Earth (FOE), who worked with us in the aftermath of the cyanide spill in Kyrgyzstan, hit the ground running. Jozsef alerted other environmental organizations, government officials and the regional press to the spill.

MPI broke the story in Australia where it was a front-page story for a week. Australians struggled with the question of how much responsibility they had for this mine accident on the other side of the world. The Australian public's answer: Plenty.

As a plume of cyanide and heavy metals made its way down a 250 mile stretch of the Danube, the devastating impact of the spill became clear. In Romania, Hungary and then Yugoslavia, hordes of dead fish began to wash up on the banks of the river. Government officials quickly shut down drinking water supplies. One commentator called it the worst environmental accident in Europe since Chernobyl.

As the magnitude of the environmental wreckage was realized, CNN Headline News and almost every major newspaper across the US featured the nightmarish aftermath of the spill—photos of a river full of dead fish told a graphic story of cyanide's deadly impact.

The question that CNN, *The Washington Post*, and others asked MPC most frequently was: Can it happen here in the Unites States? The answer, unfortunately, is that it can happen here. It already has. And it will happen again and again, unless we get some common-sense mining laws on the books.

Citizens' groups here in the U.S. were quick to express support for the citizens of Eastern Europe and to identify examples of irresponsible mining here in the U.S. In Colorado, the Alliance For Responsible Mining, a newly formed coalition, quickly alerted the local press to the fact that a similar spill, at the Summitville Mine, killed a 17 mile stretch of the Alamosa River. The Boulder-White Clouds Council, based in Idaho, put out a press release pointing a cautionary finger at the troubled tailings waste dam at the Thompson Creek mine in Idaho, near the Salmon River.

There are many unfortunate lessons that will result from the devastation of the Danube. But one positive sign is this: citizen action is now a worldwide, 24-hour, seven-day a week enterprise. Gone are the days when mining companies could escape public scrutiny. And gone, too, are the days when companies could seek to dumb-down environmental standards by playing one country, or state, off another. When it comes to protecting the environment from irresponsible mine operations, the expectations of citizens are now the same worldwide. Fortunately, today they have the tools at their disposal to shine an uncomfortable spotlight on anyone who cuts environmental corners.

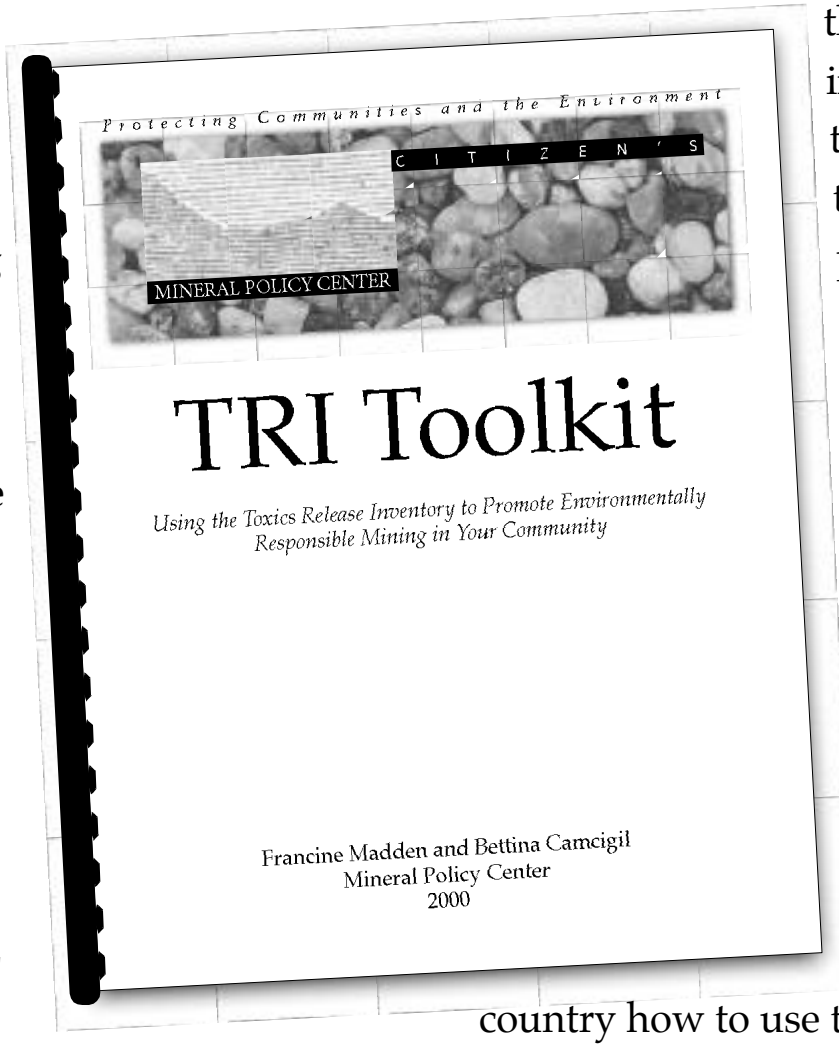
Stephen D'Esposito
President, Mineral Policy Center

Thanks
All of us here at MPC wish to thank **Frank Wheat** for his ongoing support and legal insights. We also want to say a special thanks to **Mike McCloskey**, a founding MPC board member and current MPC board chair, who provides us with both wisdom and inspiration. Thank you Frank and Mike.

Your MPC Membership Dollars At Work. . .

In 1990 MPC,

along with the Environmental Defense Fund and the National Audubon Society, petitioned the EPA to eliminate a loophole allowing the mining industry to escape reporting their waste under the Toxics Release Inventory program.

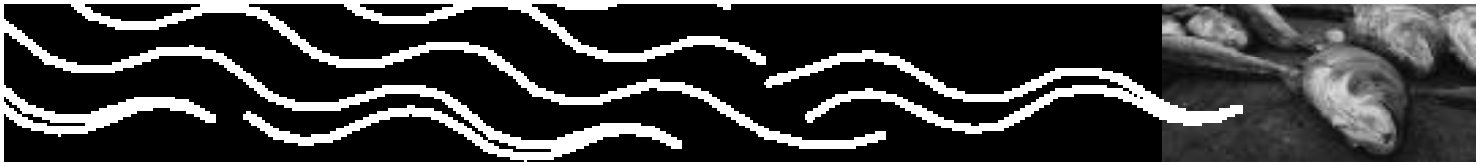


After a seven-year campaign, the EPA finally closed the loophole. This spring, the mining industry reported its toxic releases for the first time. And guess what? The EPA's TRI report exposed the mining industry as the biggest toxic waste producer in the country. The state of Nevada tops the list.

With your help, MPC produced a *TRI Toolkit* to show communities around the country how to use the newly released information to pressure the mining industry to clean up its act.

Success after a 7 year campaign

Persistance, with your help, paid off.



Lessons from the Disasters on the Danube, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to other animals. Cyanide is a dangerous chemical, which can be lethal to humans, fish, and wildlife, depending upon concentration and exposure. A single teaspoonful of 2% cyanide solution is enough to kill a person. In the U.S., the mining industry uses approximately two hundred million pounds of cyanide solution annually.

The Romanian spill produced a 25 mile long toxic plume of cyanide and heavy metals that wiped out all aquatic life, from plankton to catfish, along a 250 mile stretch of the Danube and its tributaries. The Tisza River, described by Robinson Crusoe author Daniel Defoe as "three parts water and two parts fish" suffered the greatest impacts.

Soon after the spill, the Hungarian and Serbian government said it would seek compensation from the Romanian government and Esmeralda Exploration. A Romanian government minister blamed Esmeralda for lax safeguards at the mine. Mining company officials, while not denying that the spill had occurred, claimed that the impacts were "grossly exaggerated." Esmeralda Chairman Brett Montgomery was reported to have voiced "considerable skepticism" about the impacts of the spill. The mining industry and industry trade associations were unusually quiet.

Then things got worse. A second and then a third mine spill occurred in the same region, six weeks later. According to BBC reports and contacts in the region, heavy rainfalls and melting snow broke the wall of a dam at a state-run mine in northern Romania, sending 20,000 tons of zinc and lead waste into the Vaser River. The Vaser is a tributary of the Tisza, which in turn flows into the Danube. Together these spills polluted 36 miles of the upper-Tisza, an area that was not affected by the first spill. According to Jozsef Fieler of Friends of the Earth in Hungary: "We had hoped that the upper part of the Tisza could be used to help return life to the lower portions of the river, those devastated by the first spill. Now it looks like the door has been closed on this option."

Following the spills, the Romanian environmental minister, Romica Tomesci, counted 41 mining sites in Romania that posed a danger to the environment. Zoltan Illes, chairman of the Environment Protection Committee in the Hungarian parliament, described the Romanian mines and waste-disposal reservoirs as "ticking time-bombs." Officials in Hungary ordered an environmental alert and began testing the waters from the Tisza every two hours for signs of toxins.

The only good news is that citizen's groups and officials of the European Union and the United Nations were quick to respond. The United States agreed to deploy experts from the Environmental Protection Agency. Unfortunately, it is likely to take years and tens of millions of dollars before the river system begins to restore itself. But in many ways the notion of river-restoration is a myth. As Jozsef Fieler points out, "the river Tisza is some 8000 years old, which means the ecosystem is of such age as well. Revitalization of such a system does not take place in 10-15 years. There will be a river but it will not be the same."

Understandably, the focus today is on cleaning up the damage from the spills. But it is not just these spills or the 41 other Romanian mines that pose an environmental threat. The Romanian spills raise important questions about the safety of cyanide operations worldwide, the environmental safety record of mine waste dams, and the quantity and composition of the waste that mines produce. This leads us to ask, can it happen again? Where might the next spill occur? (See map on pages 10 and 11.) And what can be done to prevent such disasters?

In the aftermath of the spill, Friends of the Earth International called for a worldwide "ban on new large-scale toxic gold mines" and for full financial liability on the part of mining companies. Two years ago citizens in the state of Montana banned new open-pit cyanide process gold mines after they became frustrated with the industries record of spills and accidents in their state. Citizen frustration will continue to mount worldwide, unless immediate steps are taken by governments and the mining industry to act on the lessons learned from the disasters on the Danube. Here are some of the issues that need to be considered:

LESSON #1 It Can Happen Anywhere, But It Shouldn't, And It Doesn't Have To

Environmental disasters at modern mines have almost become an annual event. In 1993 a spill at the Summitville gold mine in Colorado killed a 17 mile stretch of the Alamosa River with acid and cyanide pollution. In 1995, 860 million gallons of cyanide-laden mine waste poured into a major river in Guyana from Cambior's Omai gold mine. In 1996 environmental problems at the the Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea, where mine waste is dumped directly into the Ok Tedi and Fly Rivers, reached dramatic proportions. In 1997, the Zortman-Landusky gold mine in Montana was abandoned by the Pegasus Gold Corporation after a series of cyanide spills and pollution problems, leaving Montana taxpayers with a likely $90 million cleanup bill. Also in 1997, the tailing dam at the Los Frailes Zinc mine in Spain broke and polluted a significant portion of the Guadiamar River and threatened Donana National Park. In 1998, a cyanide spill outside of the Kumtor gold mine in Kyrgyzstan resulted in hundreds of people falling ill and may have led to one or more deaths.

Mine pollution can be prevented. In the U.S. the solution to the problem is the reform of the 128-year old Mining Law and elimination of other exemptions from environmental laws. Strong environmental laws should also be implemented by other countries and by regional and international bodies such as the European Union. Publicly funded banks, such as the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development should have strong rules that prevent them from funding destructive or poorly planned mining projects.

The Romanian spill produced a 25 mile long toxic plume of cyanide and heavy metals that wiped out all aquatic life, from plankton to catfish, along a 250 mile stretch of the Danube and its tributaries.

LESSON #2

Mining Companies Should Pay for Mine Cleanup Up Front, Or They Shouldn't Mine

In the case of the recent Romanian cyanide spill, Esmeralda Exploration had set aside no funds for mine closure or cleanup. In Colorado, Galactic Resources abandoned the Summitville Mine leaving taxpayers with a $170 million cleanup bill. In Papua New Guinea BHP has not set aside funds for mine closure or cleanup. In the U.S., a recent report (see "Money Pits," page 9) exposed a billion-dollar shortfall in funds set aside by mining companies to clean up today's mines.

The solution to this problem is simple. Mines should not be permitted unless a mining company sets aside guaranteed funds for cleanup, in the form of an environmental bond or financial guarantee, before mining starts.

LESSON #3

Despite Industry Rhetoric, Cyanide is Dangerous

Mining companies and industry trade associations assert that cyanide is safe. However, the industry has a troubling record of cyanide spills and mine accidents. Frequently, the ideal conditions envisioned in glossy industry brochures fail to materialize. For example, in Romania much of the Danube was covered in ice and the water was cold. As a result it is likely that the cyanide, because it was not exposed to sunlight and oxygen, failed to breakdown rapidly. And as MPC revealed in its issue paper *Cyanide Uncertainties*, cyanide does not simply dissolve. It can turn into other chemicals that are themselves potentially hazardous.

Some of the more progressive individuals and companies in the industry are beginning to grapple with this issue. In a recent report, Placer Dome Inc. makes the following statement:

"...government regulatory bodies and lobby groups in many parts of the world are working together towards banning cyanide in their jurisdictions. To prepare for that eventuality, Placer Dome's Technology Group has earmarked funds for research into: minimizing transport risk and cost by producing cyanide at the mine site, less expensive and more effective cyanide recovery and destruction technology, and alternatives to cyanide for leaching gold, which are environmentally friendly, give good recovery and are economically viable."

LESSON #4

Tailings Dams Can and Do Fail

Massive piles of mine waste are typically left behind after mining. Waste from mining can contain processing chemicals like cyanide, heavy metals and acid generating rock. Most of the waste is contained or stored permanently behind earthen dams or in massive ponds. Despite industry assurances, these dams and ponds often fail or overflow. A United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) report from 1996, in only a partial study of tailings dam failures, found 59 incidents that occurred mostly in the 1980's and 1990's. MPC's research has found over 70 such spills and accidents. UNEP reports 324 fatalities from such incidents in the last twenty years and considerable environmental damage.

The public assumes that mine waste dams are solid, impermeable structures. The reality is that many can be characterized as engineering experiments. The UNEP authors state "tailing dam embankments are typically (but not universally) constructed from non-cohesive materials such as cycloned tailings, earthfill or waste rock, all of which can be easily eroded by water." The report also points out that "incidents involving reported seepage have become more common with the increased use of cyanide in the recovery of gold, both in parts of the world where it had not been used before, and in established markets."

Most countries lack an inventory of existing dams, even those that may prove to be an environmental threat. The UNEP report consisted of only partial information from some parts of the world. There is no doubt that Romania is not the only country with such problems. During a 1998 visit to Kyrgyzstan, MPC saw evidence of unstable impoundments of uranium tailings that threatened local populations and vital water resources.

Both the mining industry and governments have a responsibility to address this growing threat. Research dollars should be focused immediately on compiling an inventory of tailings facilities and environmental risk. Standards for safe construction of such facilities should be adopted worldwide, with a particular focus on defining locations where tailings dams should not be built due to the geological, environmental, or meteorological conditions, or their proximity to other natural resources, such as water resources.

LESSON #5

Prevention Before is Better Than Cleanup After

In the aftermath of the Romanian spill, many wanted to know how the river could be cleaned up. Unfortunately there is no easy answer. As the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has learned from its Superfund program, each cleanup has its own challenges. The costs and impacts are usually higher than can be predicted when an accident first occurs.

Therefore precaution is warranted. Communities and governments should carefully weigh the worst-case impacts of mine development before proceeding, and question the best-case models and assumptions that are typically presented in mine plans. They should also carefully weigh the other land values. Governments should reject mines that are poorly planned or proposed in inappropriate places.

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National Geographic Takes a Hard Look at Hardrock Mining in the West

In the March 2000 issue, *National Geographic Magazine* featured an article entitled "Hardrock Legacy," by noted environmental writer T.H. Watkins, that described the impacts of hardrock mining in the western United States. Watkins writes "Leaving Nevada I thought about those dead lakes shining in the desert sun, the dead birds I had seen in Spokane, the hundreds and thousands of abandoned mines still leaking poisons into the West's water, the sprawling chemical filth of the flats below the Anaconda smelter stack, the blowouts that still corrupt rivers and water tables. At what ultimate cost, I finally wondered, have we held so fiercely to this antique law, dreaming the long dream of treasure that I once saluted with such enthusiasm?"

DeMoss/MPC

In Montana, A Little Sunlight

In a precedent-setting ruling, a Montana district judge has ruled that the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) broke state law by placing a mining company's economic interests over environmental protection. According to the judge, mining giant Placer Dome, which owns the Golden Sunlight open-pit gold mine in Whitehall, Montana, must reclaim the mine site and partially backfill its open pit. The judge wrote, "There is nothing in the constitution or the [Metal Mine Reclamation Act] which allows a reclamation decision to be based on a threshold determination of whether a mine operator will make a profit. Yet that is the premise DEQ started with in its analysis of the partial pit backfill alternative." The decision stemmed from a 1998 lawsuit filed against the state and Golden Sunlight by Mineral Policy Center, the National Wildlife Federation, Montana Environmental Information Center, and Gallatin Wildlife Association. Jim Jensen, executive director of the Montana Environmental Information Center, said the ruling is good news because it shows that mining companies must pay to reclaim the lands they disturb, so taxpayers don't have to pick up the bill. For more information, call MPC at (202) 887-1872 or Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, at (406) 443-2520.

An Imperial Precedent

On January 14, 2000 Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt signed a ruling that could break new environmental ground. The ruling, prepared for Babbitt by Interior Solicitor John Leshy, made explicit that the Bureau of Land Management can deny a mine that threatens environmental and cultural resources. Solicitor Leshy stated that the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) requires that the department prevent "undue" degradation of public lands. In the past, BLM regulators have acted as if the right to mine superceded the protections mandated by FLPMA. However, the ruling requires that BLM balances mining "rights" against environmental rights. The ruling was written in response to the controversy surrounding the Imperial Project, an open-pit mine proposed in the California Desert. The massive mine would use cyanide to leach out the gold. In the ruling, Solicitor Leshy noted that FLPMA gave the California Desert lands in question special status. He also noted that the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation concluded that the mine would unduly degrade cultural resources located within the proposed mine site. The lands contain numerous sites that are sacred to the Quechan Indians.

If constructed, the mine could lead to irreversible environmental and cultural degradation. MPC and other environmental groups have long argued that FLPMA requires BLM to reject irresponsible mine proposals. We are looking forward to the BLM's rejection of this ill conceived mine. For more information contact MPC or Roger Flynn of the Western Mining Action Project at (303) 473-9618.

Stopping Illegal Mine Waste Dumping, Round II

During the last congressional session MPC and its allies fought a successful campaign to enforce limits on mine waste dumping on public lands, at least at new mines. Last year, as the Clinton Administration began to enforce these limits, mining industry allies in Congress sought to attach an anti-environmental rider to a year's spending bill that would have exempted all mines from waste dumping limits. Get ready for the next round. We expect similar anti-environmental riders to be proposed this year.

The 1872 Mining Law restricts the amount of public land that can be used for mine waste. Industry allies would like to exempt the industry from this provision of the law. MPC believes that the whole law should be changed—not just the parts that no longer suit the mining industry. The EPA's recent TRI report, which exposes the waste dumping practices of the industry, validates our position. Mining produces more waste than any other industry. The mining industry should produce less waste, not be allowed to dump even more.

We will need your help during this legislative session to prevent more waste dumping on our public lands. To get updates and alerts subscribe to our electronic newsletter, *MineWire* or check out our website at www.mineral policy. org. To take action, read "Call to Action" in this newsletter!

Strengthening Mining Rules, Round III

For three years we've been fighting for new rules to protect public lands from mining. This is the year our efforts could pay dividends. These new rules could protect water resources, limit mine waste dumping, and specify how ecologically and culturally sensitive lands could be protected. But we still have

two important hurdles to clear. We need to make sure that the new rules are strong and we need to defeat any congressional riders that would block implementation. Stay tuned via *MineWire* and MPC Alerts.

Going for the Gold

In the aftermath of the recent cyanide spill at a Romanian gold mine, environmental, human rights and community leaders have called for a public debate over the wisdom of holding large governments gold reserves. MPC, Project Underground and the Western Organization of Resource Councils have published a new issue paper that asks the following question: Why are governments promoting destructive gold mining projects by holding vast reserves of gold off the market? The report describes how some countries have made substantial economic gains by selling much of their gold reserves. It also exposes industry efforts to lobby citizens and governments to hold large gold reserves.

The report draws on the analysis, evidence, and opinions of investors, economists, and other commentators to show that gold may be in the process of becoming just another commodity. The report explores the potential environmental and social impacts of this shift and raises questions about the wisdom of current U.S. policies, and those of other countries.

Environmental campaigners and taxpayer groups have attacked the direct and indirect subsidies that governments provide to the mining industry through land-giveaways, royalty deals, tax breaks, and other measures. Yet, when it comes to gold, they have not yet given adequate scrutiny to what may be the most profound government favor to any industry, anywhere. The report is available on MPC's web page or by contacting MPC.

DeMoss/MPC

(Right to left) MPC Campaign Director Alan Septoff, Dirk Van Zyl of Mackay School of Mines and Grant Davis of the Bay Institute testify at a recent Congressional hearing on abandoned mine reclamation.

World Bank Says: Close Ok Tedi

In a recent report, the World Bank says BHP's troubled Ok Tedi Mine in Papua New Guinea should be closed immediately on environmental grounds. The bank urges the Government to consult the Ok Tedi community and to draft a closure plan for the mine "without delay." The World Bank says even if the mine is not closed immediately, a shutdown plan to mitigate ecological and economic impacts should be drawn up. BHP has stated that if they had it to do again they would not have operated the mine because it does not meet their new environmental ethic. Despite the mine's environmental damage, the PNG Government appears reluctant to close it. Whenever the mine closes, environmentalists need to guard against a worst-case scenario—no cleanup plan and no cleanup funds.

Chronicle of a Cyanide Spill, Kyrgyzstan

A new documentary film has been released describing the impacts of the cyanide spill outside the Cameco operated Kumtor mine in Kyrgyzstan. The following summary is offered by Natalia Ablova, Director, Bureau of Human Rights and the Rule of Law, Biskek, Kyrgyzstan.

The film, "Gold Accident," by Zamir Eraliev tells one of the most tragic stories in the modern history of the small landlocked country of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan is a country rich in natural beauty, but the mountain country was vulnerable and unprepared for the impact of big mining projects with insufficient environmental oversight.

On 20 May 1998 a truck with two tons of sodium cyanide crashed into the Barskoon River, which flows into the

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Reform Barometer

ON TARGET

- Mining Companies Forced to Report Toxic Releases
- Washington Post, CNN, New York Times link Romanian Spill to U.S.: "It Has Happened Here"
- NWF Exposes Billion Dollar Cleanup Liability of Mines Today
- Due To Water Impacts Washington State Board Blocks Proposed Crown Jewel Gold Mine
- National Geographic Showcases Mining's Impacts

NEUTRAL

- DOI Legal Ruling, BLM Can Block Irresponsible Mines, Will They?
- Mining Companies Launch Sustainability Initiative, Will It Get Results?

NEEDS FIXIN'

- More Mine Problems in Nevada: 29 Mines in Bankruptcy, Unregulated Mercury Releases, Problems With Groundwater Mount
- Mining Industry is Biggest Toxic Polluter in U.S.

Noted Lehman Brothers analyst Peter D. Ward is unequivocal in his conclusion:

"We believe that central banks and private investors throughout the world are re-evaluating the role of gold in their portfolios."

Unfunded Mine Cleanup Costs at the Zortman-Landusky Mine in Montana: $90 million

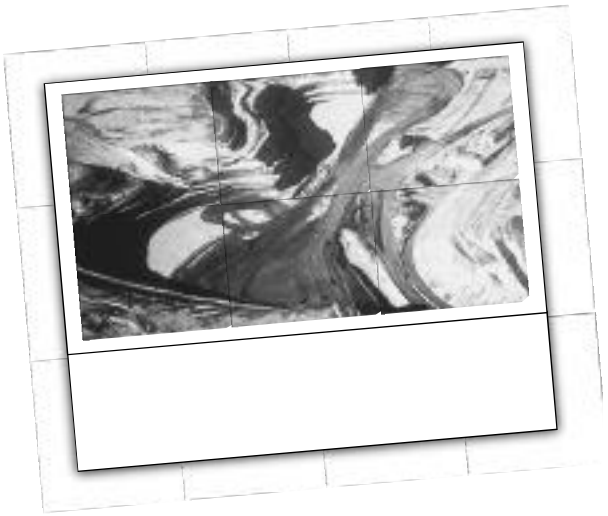
Cleanup Bond Posted by BHP at the Ok Tedi Mine in PNG: $0

Number of abandoned mines in U.S.: 557,000+

Number of mines on Superfund Cleanup List: 67

Estimated cleanup cost of abandoned Summitville Gold Mine in Colorado: $170 Million

Approximate amount of waste produced by mining every year: 2 Billion Tons ,
more than any other U.S. industry



Mining Hotspots: Mining Disasters of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Places where modern mining has had disastrous environmental impacts . . . and mines that may be

Royal Oaks Giant Mine, Canada
In Yellowknife, Royal Oaks Giant Mine has left behind 270,000 tonnes of arsenic trioxide. There is no proven cleanup technology or plan for the huge volumes of toxic waste. Royal Oaks went bankrupt last year, leaving unfunded cleanup costs estimated at $250 - 900 million.

Zortman-Landusky, Montana, USA
A horrifying history of cyanide leaks, spills, acid drainage, surface and ground-water contamination, and wildlife fatalities. This Montana gold mine abandoned by Pegasus in 1998, is one of the worst mining polluters in U.S. history. The cleanup may cost taxpayers over $90 million. This is a poster mine for what's wrong with U.S. mining laws.

Grouse Creek, Idaho, USA
Once touted as a "state-of-the-art" mine, Brohm's Grouse Creek gold mine is located next to the largest wilderness complex in the lower 48 states. Intermittent, yet persistent cyanide leaks have poisoned the local Jordan Creek with cyanide levels over 12 times the standard level for fish and aquatic life. Jordan Creek is home to endangered chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout. The mine's tailings impoundment now holds 450 million gallons of cyanide-laced water with an additional 4.3 million tons of heavy metals lying at the bottom of the mining dam. Both pose a future threat.

Gilt Edge, South Dakota, USA
Brohm Mining's Gilt Edge mine began generating acid pollution in 1992, killing local streams. The mine already has a history of cyanide spills. The pollution problems are so severe that it may become a Superfund toxic waste site. Now abandoned, cleanup could cost U.S. taxpayers over $20 million.

Summitville, Colorado, USA
In 1992 this cyanide process gold mine in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado spilled cyanide, heavy metals and acid drainage into the Alamosa River, killing a 17 mile stretch. The cleanup is likely to cost U.S. taxpayers over $170 million. What's more, U.S. mining regulations have not been modernized to prevent this from occurring again.

Thompson Creek Mine, Idaho, USA
Thompson Creek Mining is building one of the world's largest tailings dams, expected to hold over 200 million tons, a mere 2000 feet above and 5 miles away from the Salmon River, a critical habitat for salmon and other wildlife. There is a risk of both acid drainage and a tailings dam failure given the proximity of this mine to the epicenter of the 1983 Mt. Borah earthquake, which measured 7.3 on the Richter scale.

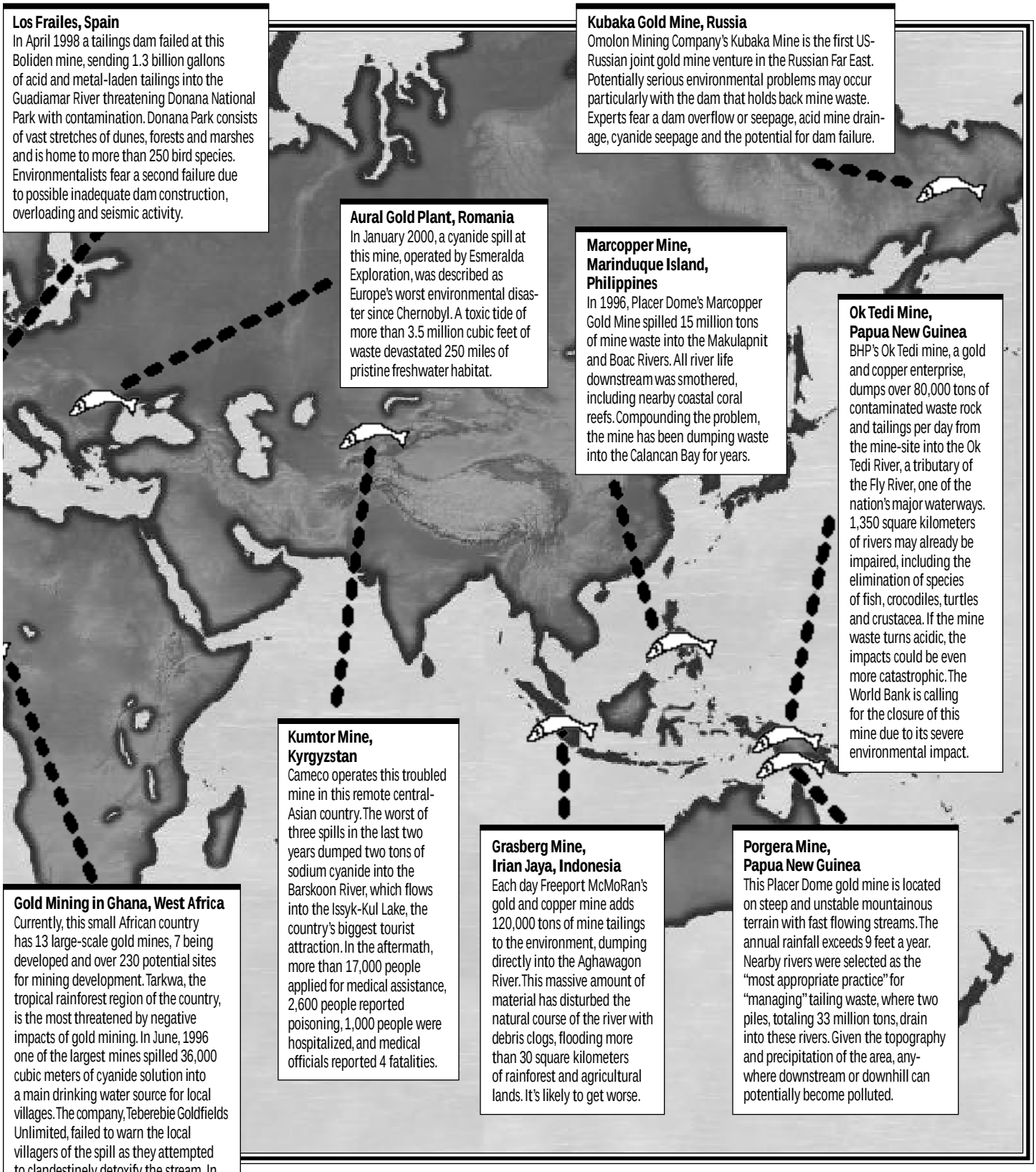
Modern Mining in Nevada, USA
There are 73 hardrock metal mines operating in Nevada. Citizens face a myriad of environmental problems at many of the state's mines: de-watering of the Humbolt River basin, cleanup problems at 29 bankrupt mines, and an estimated shortfall of $360 million dollars in company funds for mine cleanup. On top of all this, it turns out that Nevada's gold mines are releasing large quantities of mercury into the environment, with no regulation or oversight.

Amazon Region, South America
Through a presidential decree, the Venezuelan government has opened up the Imataca Reserve to mining, an area protected from mineral industries since 1961. This untouched forest is 3.5 million hectares in size and home to Canaima National Park, a World Heritage Site, and Guri, Venezuela's largest reservoir. Already there are 700 mining allocations underway. This action has created strong opposition with environmentalists and indigenous peoples.

Cuajone and Toquepala Copper Mines, Peru
Southern Peru Limited's copper mines have contaminated the River Locumba with 94,000 tons of tailings a day. Where it empties into the Pacific, the Locumba exceeded US aquatic life standards for copper, arsenic and molybdenum. Total copper concentrations in the brackish water at the river's mouth measured 24 times the chronic copper exposure for aquatic life.

Omai Gold Proje Guyana
In August 1995, at t Cambior run mine, waste dam failed, s more than 860 mill gallons of cyanide- tailings into the Ess River, the nation's p waterway. The spill fish, produced pani Guyana's seafood m and caused major p for the many peopl who depend on the for drinking water, fishing, irrigation, a transportation.

isasters of tomorrow *by Erin Colie*



Los Frailes, Spain
In April 1998 a tailings dam failed at this Boliden mine, sending 1.3 billion gallons of acid and metal-laden tailings into the Guadiamar River threatening Donana National Park with contamination. Donana Park consists of vast stretches of dunes, forests and marshes and is home to more than 250 bird species. Environmentalists fear a second failure due to possible inadequate dam construction, overloading and seismic activity.

Kubaka Gold Mine, Russia
Omolon Mining Company's Kubaka Mine is the first US-Russian joint gold mine venture in the Russian Far East. Potentially serious environmental problems may occur particularly with the dam that holds back mine waste. Experts fear a dam overflow or seepage, acid mine drainage, cyanide seepage and the potential for dam failure.

Aural Gold Plant, Romania
In January 2000, a cyanide spill at this mine, operated by Esmeralda Exploration, was described as Europe's worst environmental disaster since Chernobyl. A toxic tide of more than 3.5 million cubic feet of waste devastated 250 miles of pristine freshwater habitat.

Marcopper Mine, Marinduque Island, Philippines
In 1996, Placer Dome's Marcopper Gold Mine spilled 15 million tons of mine waste into the Makulapnit and Boac Rivers. All river life downstream was smothered, including nearby coastal coral reefs. Compounding the problem, the mine has been dumping waste into the Calancan Bay for years.

Ok Tedi Mine, Papua New Guinea
BHP's Ok Tedi mine, a gold and copper enterprise, dumps over 80,000 tons of contaminated waste rock and tailings per day from the mine-site into the Ok Tedi River, a tributary of the Fly River, one of the nation's major waterways. 1,350 square kilometers of rivers may already be impaired, including the elimination of species of fish, crocodiles, turtles and crustacea. If the mine waste turns acidic, the impacts could be even more catastrophic. The World Bank is calling for the closure of this mine due to its severe environmental impact.

Kumtor Mine, Kyrgyzstan
Cameco operates this troubled mine in this remote central-Asian country. The worst of three spills in the last two years dumped two tons of sodium cyanide into the Barskoon River, which flows into the Issyk-Kul Lake, the country's biggest tourist attraction. In the aftermath, more than 17,000 people applied for medical assistance, 2,600 people reported poisoning, 1,000 people were hospitalized, and medical officials reported 4 fatalities.

Grasberg Mine, Irian Jaya, Indonesia
Each day Freeport McMoRan's gold and copper mine adds 120,000 tons of mine tailings to the environment, dumping directly into the Aghawagon River. This massive amount of material has disturbed the natural course of the river with debris clogs, flooding more than 30 square kilometers of rainforest and agricultural lands. It's likely to get worse.

Porgera Mine, Papua New Guinea
This Placer Dome gold mine is located on steep and unstable mountainous terrain with fast flowing streams. The annual rainfall exceeds 9 feet a year. Nearby rivers were selected as the "most appropriate practice" for "managing" tailing waste, where two piles, totaling 33 million tons, drain into these rivers. Given the topography and precipitation of the area, anywhere downstream or downhill can potentially become polluted.

Gold Mining in Ghana, West Africa
Currently, this small African country has 13 large-scale gold mines, 7 being developed and over 230 potential sites for mining development. Tarkwa, the tropical rainforest region of the country, is the most threatened by negative impacts of gold mining. In June, 1996 one of the largest mines spilled 36,000 cubic meters of cyanide solution into a main drinking water source for local villages. The company, Teberebie Goldfields Unlimited, failed to warn the local villagers of the spill as they attempted to clandestinely detoxify the stream. In the meantime, people, aquatic and forest life, as well as agricultural lands were all severely impacted by this spill.

Mining Tops Polluter List, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

TRI has provided citizens and government agencies with new information about the environmental impacts of mining. For instance, the new TRI data shows that the mining industry's releases of mercury were by far the largest of all other industries that report under TRI. One Nevada mine alone reported releasing over 80,000 pounds of mercury in 1998. Nine thousand of those pounds were released directly into the air. According to EPA staff, this single mine is equivalent to the mercury emissions of 40 average coal fired power plants and is one of the single largest sources of mercury releases in the nation.

The effects of these toxic chemicals can be devastating to our environment. In a 1987 study the EPA rated problems related to mining waste as second only to global warming and stratospheric ozone depletion in terms of ecological risk. The report concludes "with high certainty" that the release to the environment of mining waste "can result in profound, generally irreversible destruction of ecosystems." Earlier, in a 1985 report, the EPA stated that mining for hardrock minerals, asbestos, and phosphate alone generates 1-2 billion metric tons of waste each year, and that "perhaps 56% of the waste generated could be considered potentially hazardous to human health or the environment."

The EPA first established the TRI program in the aftermath of the 1986 Bhopal chemical accident. The TRI provides U.S. citizens with information about toxic releases in their communities. TRI requires industrial facilities to disclose the levels of pollutants they have discharged annually into the air, water, and land or transferred to other sites for incineration, recycling, and disposal. Citizens and companies can use information from TRI to increase public awareness, decrease waste, increase preparedness, and limit the chances of future accidents.

In the absence of strict environmental protection with regard to hardrock mining, TRI data may be particularly important. Informed public action can exert positive influence on corporate decision-makers and government officials to develop effective environmental safeguards—safeguards that are much needed and long overdue.

TRI and Congress

For most other industries, TRI releases have generated public and political pressure to decrease waste production. Yet this year, Congress will be considering two issues that could actually promote more waste dumping from mines. First, mining industry allies in Congress may attempt to change the 1872 General Mining Law to legalize the unlimited dumping of mining waste on public lands. This waste would include toxic waste reported in TRI. Second, Congress may try to weaken or halt new environmental safeguards. These new safeguards are designed to control the disposal of some TRI mining wastes.

"TRI has focused all of us—industry and citizens—on environmental matters."

Wayne Forman, Agrico Chemical, USA Today, *May 26, 1993*

It's Cleanup Time, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Nevada, allow companies to "self-bond" which allows a company to simply promise to pay for cleanup rather than actually provide resources for cleanup before mining begins. Self bonding can have disastrous results when the company becomes insolvent, or declares bankruptcy, because the public then funds the cleanup.

Other states negotiate reclamation bonds with the companies in a way that assumes the company will complete the restoration of the mine. This may be true in some circumstances. Often, however, the reclamation bond is needed when the mining company disappears, and is not around to participate in the cleanup efforts. Therefore, it should be assumed that the state or federal government will manage the mine cleanup and additional costs for this need to be factored into the reclamation bond.

There is hope. Jim Kuipers, author of the study and a certified mechanical engineer who works with Center for Science and Public Participation, ferreted out the best practices in each state. Using these, he produced a new model for reclamation bonding. He uses this model to assess weaknesses in each of the western states' bonding programs and in the federal program. He then makes specific recommendations that describe how to improve these programs. His prescription, if taken, will likely protect the public from getting socked with the cost of mine cleanup and result in a cleaner environment.

As mineral prices remain at historic lows, a new round of bankruptcies and foreclosures may be inevitable. But whatever the price of metals, reclamation bonding policies must be updated to take into account the fact that taxpayers and the environment should be protected, irrespective of the fate of the mining company.

MPC and its state partners will be campaigning for reforms in both federal and state mining regulations to make sure that mining companies can't walk away from their messes. And where the regulations are strong, MPC will be campaigning for full enforcement. It's time for mining companies to take full responsibility for restoring our land and water resources.

Copies of the report are available on Mineral Policy Center's web site, www.mineralpolicy.org or by contacting MPC.

ATTENTION ALL MINING COMPANIES IO

Taxpayer Funded Mine Cleanups, 5 Easy Steps!

Shift the burden of paying for cleanup onto taxpayers! Others do it and you can too!

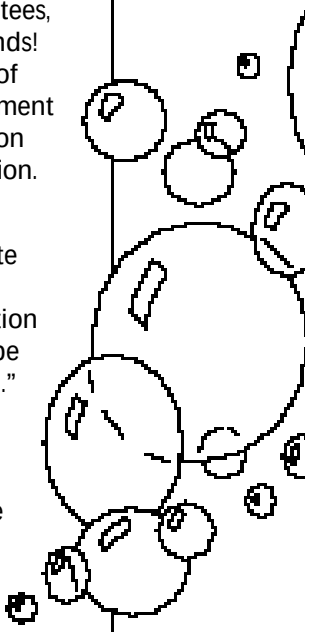
1. **Simply grossly underestimate the environmental impact of your mine!** And whatever you do, don't predict that acid is likely to be generated from your mine or that it could potentially pollute water resources. If you do, then your company will have to set aside money to prevent the acid pollution or clean it up! Downplay the fact that acid waste is the greatest environmental threat posed by mining and don't be concerned that over 12,000 miles of rivers and streams and 180,000 acres of lakes in the U.S. have already been polluted by it. Taxpayers will deal with that!

2. **Plan only for a partial cleanup!** If you dig a massive mine pit that extends below the water table and make no plans to refill the pit to above the water table, then you can "clean up" the mine more cheaply! Don't worry that such schemes don't actually solve the problem—again, taxpayers will deal with it!

3. **Exploit soft regulations and regulators!** For example, the state of Nevada allows self-bonding. That means a mining company simply "promises" to pay for cleanup. No guarantees, letters of credit or other financial instruments change hands! Is this why 29 of Nevada's mines are today in some stage of bankruptcy? It seems likely! In Montana, the state Department of Environmental Quality approved a soft mine reclamation plan that actually violated the law and the state constitution. (Did we say E-A-S-Y?)

4. **Manipulate outdated mining regulations!** Most state and federal mining regulations are outdated and allow questionable practices! For example, many mine reclamation plans are premised on the idea that water resources will be protected by a system referred to as "perpetual treatment." The idea is that water will be treated forever. Don't be concerned with the fact that these systems are bound to break down! Don't fret over the fact that all "perpetual treatment" does is kick pollution problems into the future when the "perpetual treatment" fails! When the system fails, your company is likely to be long gone and a new group of regulators will be left to sort out the pollution headaches.

5. **Declare bankruptcy!** Create a corporate subsidiary and when the cleanup bills get too expensive, go bankrupt. This protects the profits that have already been made or passed on to the corporate parent.



Alaska:
Keep Fishing

In an announcement that bodes well for the protection of oceans and fisheries, Couer d'Alene Mining Company has announced it will no longer pursue its proposal to dump mine tailings into the ocean in southeast Alaska. The plan for submarine tailings disposal was proposed at the Kensington gold mine near Haines, Alaska. Area fishermen and conservation groups opposed the ocean dumping plan because it would have created an enormous pile of waste on the ocean floor in one of southeast Alaska's richest salmon fisheries. Strong organized local opposition as well as skepticism from the EPA sent the company a clear signal that Alaskans would not take lightly the contamination of their water. Couer d'Alene Mining is still proceeding with its proposal to mine and area residents remain concerned about likely water quality impacts from any proposed mine. For additional information, call Tim June, Lynn Canal Conservation Society, at (907)766-2295.

Arizona:
Teeing Off

A coalition of groups, led by Save Our Lovely Valley Environment (SOLVE), has asked the EPA to investigate the failure of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's (ADEQ) to enforce a 1990 EPA order that required Phelps Dodge and the town of Clarkdale to halt the discharge of water contaminated with tailings (mine waste) into the Verde River. The 1990 EPA order required the company and the town to stop discharging the town's sewage wastewater onto the tailings. ADEQ has not enforced the order, the wastewater discharges have not stopped, and the river continues to be polluted. Phelps Dodge has been trying for many years to build a golf course and housing development on top of the huge tailings pile, which sits immediately adjacent to the Verde River. This development plan would allow the company to effectively transfer its tailings liability to the homeowners and golf course owners. The development would sit adjacent to the Tuzigoot National Monument (an ancient archeological site), and a state wildlife refuge.

Irresponsible mining has impacted several Native American tribes.

Buy Now, Don't Pay Later

MPC and a coalition of local and regional organizations opposed to the proposed Carlota copper mine, in central Arizona, have sent a letter to U.S. Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck requesting that money from Land and Water Fund be used to buy the patented in-holdings in the Tonto National Forest, where the mine is proposed. The letter urges Dombeck to protect Pinto Creek Canyon, which includes an 8.8 mile segment of Pinto Creek eligible for Wild and Scenic River Designation. It also urges the protection of Haunted Canyon, which was nominated in 1999, along with Pinto Creek, for Unique Waters Status as provided under the Clean Water Act. Also downstream is Roosevelt Lake, a prime source of Phoenix drinking water and the state's second most popular tourist attraction.

The mine is proposed by Cambior,which is infamous for the huge cyanide and tailings spill at its Omai Gold Mine in Guyana. For the past year Cambior has been under extreme economic pressure, trying to stave off bankruptcy stemming from its gold hedging program. Cambior has the kind of environmental record that should prevent it from being allowed to operate a mine on public lands.

MPC

Navajos Issue Call to Save the Peaks

In its winter session, the Navajo Nation Council passed legislation supporting efforts to stop mining on the San Francisco Peaks and calling for a boycott of stone washed jeans which are made using pumice extracted from open-pit mines. Navajo Nation President Begaye said, "Navajo people cherish the sacred sites and always continue to protect them from further destruction. We are glad to form allies with the Sierra Club and the Dine' Medicine Man's Association to advocate for the cause. It is our hope the Navajo people will also raise their voices in opposition to the further desecration of our sacred mountains." It is worth noting that similar resolutions have come from several Navajo Chapters, the Hualapai Tribe, City of Flagstaff and Coconino County. The Save the Peaks Coalition can be reached at phone: (520)774-6103; email: andy.bessler@sfsierra.sierraclub.org.

Colorado:

Cyanide Ban, Going for Irresponsible Gold

A group composed of individuals from the Colorado communities most affected by open-pit cyanide gold mining, the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM), has taken steps towards a ballot initiative that would ban new cyanide process mines in the state. The state has a history of problems with mines. In San Luis, a mine operated by Battle Mountain Gold mine was plagued by cyanide management problems during a brief period of mine operation. Since closure it has been leaking pollution into the Rito Seco. The Summitville mine disaster resulted in the ecological death of a 17 mile stretch of the Alamosa River. Today, the only operating open-pit cyanide process gold mine in Colorado is near Victor (see below). The Colorado initiative is modeled after a similar 1998 Montana initiative, which successfully banned any new open-pit cyanide process mines or expansions of operating ones. ARM can be contacted at: Alliance for Responsible Mining, PO Box 1515, Alamosa, Colorado 81101; phone and fax: (719)274-0322; email: sagrado@vanion.com.

A Town Fights Back

AngloGold has begun the process of its eighth expansion of the Cripple Creek and Victor mine. The seventh expansion occurred just a year and a half ago. Citizens for Victor!, the community group that has acted as a watchdog for many years, fears the new proposal will increase the negative impacts on the town of Victor, which is less than a quarter mile from the mine. Blasting at the mine will likely cause irreparable damage to the buildings in the historic town. Citizens for Victor! continues to push for an agreement with the mine to limit the expansion.

Montana:

Libby, Libby, Libby

Libby, a small town in northwestern Montana, has been in national news for what is arguably the greatest public health disaster from a modern mine that the U.S. has ever seen. For decades, this town of 2500 people was host to the mining company W.R. Grace (made infamous in the book and movie "A Civil Action") while the company operated a vermiculite mine. The vermiculite ore body was also heavily laden with tremolite, an extremely hazardous form of asbestos. Although this mine closed in 1990, it is now believed that up to 200 local residents have died from the complications of lung cancer, asbestosis and other lung diseases. Approximately 350 others have also been diagnosed. Some of the victims were mine workers. Some were spouses who washed work clothes. Still others were children of workers. Libby residents have demanded full cleanup of the mine site. Additionally, they want independent health screenings to be performed on all area residents. The EPA is currently in Libby studying the risk posed to Libby residents from asbestos in their homes, yards, water and air. In February, several Libby residents traveled to Washington, DC to express their opposition to the mislabeled "Fairness in Asbestos Compensation Act," a bill pending in the U.S. Congress. The bill, supported by the asbestos industry, limits the public's ability to receive adequate compensation. Call Bonnie Gestring, Montana Environmental Information Center, at (406)443-2520 for more information.

Millions More Needed for Mine Cleanup

In February, members of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre tribes of the Fort Belknap Reservation in northern Montana traveled to Washington, DC to push for a full cleanup at the abandoned Zortman-Landusky gold mine, located immediately adjacent to their reservation. The Canadian mining company, Pegasus, which operated the project, went bankrupt in the late 1990s and left behind a mess—open pits, waste rock piles and water pollution. The state of Montana holds a bond of approximately $30 million from the company, but it is projected that cleanup may cost $120 million. Contact MPC Northwest Circuit Rider, Aimee Boulanger, (406)585-9009 for more information.

Protecting the Endangered Rock Creek

Rock Creek, which flows into the Clark Fork River in Montana, was named by American Rivers one of the nation's "10 Most Endangered Rivers." The creek, which flows from the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness on the Montana-Idaho border, is threatened by the proposed ASARCO Rock Creek copper-silver mine. The creek is one of the area's last remaining bulltrout spawning streams. ASARCO and Sterling Mining Companies actually propose to mine underneath a federally designated wilderness area. The mine would create a permanent 100 million-ton mine waste dump alongside the Clark Fork River. Residents in Sandpoint, Idaho who live downstream of the proposed mine voiced their strong opposition to the proposal at a community meeting held in February. Residents are concerned about the long-term health and economic impact on the Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille. For more information, call Mary Mitchell, Rock Creek Alliance, at (208)265-8272.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Nevada:
It's Time to Protect Nevada's Water

In December, Great Basin Mine Watch, a Reno-based conservation group, filed an appeal of the decision by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to allow the Wind Mountain Mine to close its cyanide heap leach pads by leaching the remaining contaminant laden fluid and seepage into the ground. The Wind Mountain Mine is located 75 miles north of Reno and 12 miles south of Gerlach in the San Emidio Desert. "This proposal allows Wind Mountain Mining to directly dump the waste from their heaps into the ground. The heaps contain over 700 tons of salts and enough selenium to render the groundwater unusable" said Tom Myers, Director of Great Basin Mine Watch. "How unreasonable is it to ask that the BLM and state protect the waters of Nevada?" Great Basin Mine Watch can be reached at: phone: (775)348-1986; email: tom@black-rock.reno.nv.us.

Stream contaminated with heavy metals near the Zortman-Landusky mine in Montana.

Watching Water Trends at Carlin

The Carlin Trend, west of Elko, Nevada, is an area with some of the largest gold mines in the country. Three Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) will have a significant impact on the future water resources of the region, including the new Leeville Mine project, and the Betze-Post Mine Supplemental EIS. Because there are eight existing and proposed mines in the region, cumulative impacts are a significant concern, particularly the dewatering of the aquifer. This area includes about six streams which provide habitat to the endangered Lahontan cutthroat trout, dozens of additional streams, and hundreds of springs and seeps. A critical question is how to protect water resources for decades and centuries into the future. For more information contact Great Basin Mine Watch at: phone: (775)348-1986; email: tom@black-rock.reno.nv.us.

MPC

New Mexico:
It's Time For Superfund

The EPA is seeking to list the Questa, NM, Molycorp molybdenum mine as a Superfund site; but the listing is being held up by Governor Gary Johnson. The governor is receiving pressure from Molycorp, a subsidiary of Unocal, to fight the listing. The citizen's group Amigos Bravos argues that given the track-record of Molycorp and the damage done to the Red River and the surrounding area, that nothing less than a Superfund listing will be adequate. Amigos Bravos have asked that calls and letters in support of the Superfund listing be sent to Governor Johnson at: phone: (505) 827-3000; fax: (505) 827-3026; e-mail: gov@gov.state. nm.us; or mail: Governor Gary Johnson, Office of the Governor, State Capitol Building, Santa Fe, NM 87503. Amigos Bravos can be reached at: Amigos Bravos ~ Friends of the Wild Rivers, PO Box 238, Taos, NM 87571; phone: (505) 758-3874; fax: (505) 758-7345; e-mail: bravos@taos.newmex.com; website: http://www.amigosbravos.org.

South Dakota:
Brohm, Up in Smoke

Here's yet another scandalous case where taxpayers are likely to be stuck with the cost of cleaning up mines. The Brohm mine, an open-pit cyanide process mine owned by Brohm Mining Corporation, went bankrupt in the late 1990s and left behind a mess that included significant water contamination. The company left behind only a $6 million bond for cleanup. However, cleanup estimates are now at least $27 million, with additional funds needed for long-term water

Community Nuggets,

CONTINUED

treatment. In an unusual development, the Governor of South Dakota approached the State Legislature and requested that money for the state tobacco settlement be appropriated to clean up the Brohm mine mess. The South Dakota legislature has apparently turned down his request. We at MPC suggest that mining companies are a more appropriate target for recovering the cleanup costs. The EPA is currently considering whether or not to list the site as one of the nations most contaminated under the Superfund program. For more information contact, Jack Cole, Spearfish Canyon Preservation Trust at (605)584-3778.

Washington:

Logic Reigns at Crown Jewel

The state of Washington's Pollution Control Hearing Board overturned a decision by the Washington Department of Ecology to permit the proposed Battle Mountain Gold Crown Jewel gold mine. The board found that the water rights held by the mining company were illegal, and that current analysis of the water impacts of the proposed mine was insufficient. The board was not persuaded that the insufficiencies were addressed by the posting of a bond, stating, "this approach is tantamount to entering a busy interstate highway on an exit ramp against the traffic. The availability of insurance in that circumstance is no more comforting than the proposed bonding here. The focus of our environmental laws must be on preventing pollution and habitat degradation... The long-term engineered solutions proposed in this case are legally insufficient." The Crown Jewel mine would be Washington state's first open-pit cyanide process gold mine. The challenge to the water permits was brought by the Okanogan Highlands Alliance, the Colville Confederated Tribes, the Washington Environmental Council and the Center for Environmental Law and Policy. In mid-March the state Department of Ecology announced it would not appeal the decision but Battle Mountain Gold would. For more information, contact Dave Kliegman of the Okanogan Highlands Alliance at (509)485-3361.

Lessons from the Disaster on the Danube,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

LESSON #6

The Same High Environmental Standards and Practices Should Be Followed Worldwide

It may be hard to believe, but some countries allow the dumping of mine waste, or tailings, directly into rivers and seas. This practice should be outlawed worldwide.

We need to learn from the mistakes that led to one of the worst mine disasters in history. We need to focus on prevention and face the very real possibility that a spill with similar impacts could occur in hundreds of other places around the world, from both active and abandoned mines.

Campaign Reports,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

biggest lake in the country, the Issyk-Kul. Doctors reported that four people died and several thousand were poisoned. In response to the poor response of the company and government, residents of Barskaun, Tamga, Tosor and other villages have held several protest demonstrations.

The authors investigate this story of hope and frustration, patience and betrayal, with balance and accuracy. One sees evidence of the company's denials despite its moral obligation to remedy the damage, how the government yields to pressure and acts to suppress citizen protests, how civil society grew and responded throughout the ordeal, and how the citizens retained their dignity. Contact MPC for more information.

Tycho Sierra

Protestors demonstrate against the environmental devastation caused by the cyanide spill in Romania.

Silviu Ghetie

Ten days prior to the Romanian mine spill, cyanide was found in eight wells in the nearby village of Bozinta Mare. No action was taken at that time. Esmerelda Exploration continued to pump toxic waste into the breached dam until two days after the spill occurred. Above, workers attempt to repair the 25 meter dam wall that gave way on January 30, 2000.

Call 2 Action:

#1. Stop the Dumping on Our Public Lands!

Tell Senator Harry Reid (D-NV), Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) and your senator that you do not want any more waste dumped on our public lands. The mining industry should be seeking to produce less waste, not dump more. Tell them you want stronger environmental safeguards against irresponsible hardrock mining. (See "Campaign Reports" on page 6 for more details.)

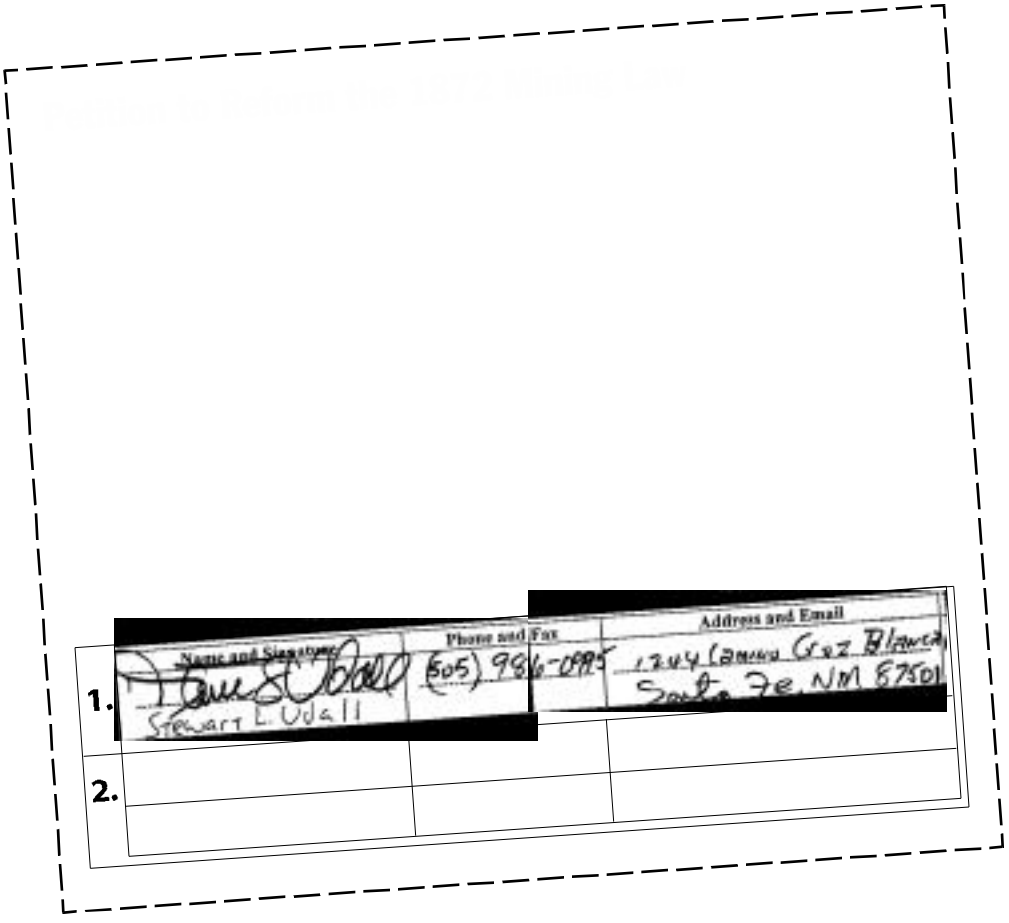
The Capitol Switchboard number is (202) 224-3121.

#2. Reform the 1872 Mining Law!

We're continuing to collect signatures in support of comprehensive reform of the antiquated 1872 Mining Law, to be delivered to Congress and the President. Stewart L. Udall, former secretary of the Interior and MPC founding board chair was the first signatory of our Petition. We have gratefully received hundreds of signatures, but we need more! If you haven't signed on please do. There are three options for signing on:

1) Sign and send the statement below to MPC, 2) Call to receive the petition via fax or mail, or 3) Sign up via Take Action! on the web: www.mineralpolicy.org

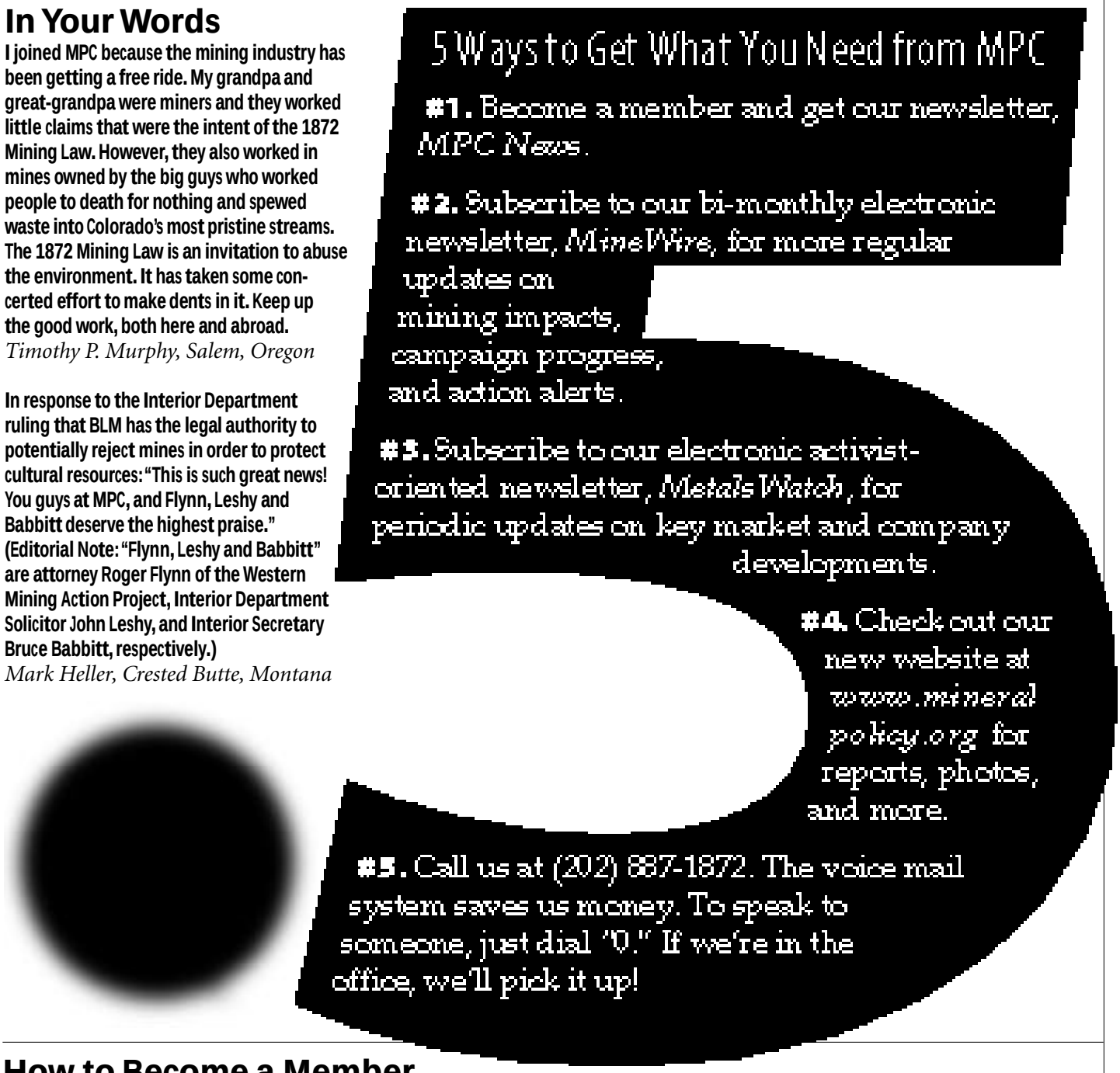
Make a few phone calls and sign this petition! Two easy steps that can make a difference today!



In Your Words

I joined MPC because the mining industry has been getting a free ride. My grandpa and great-grandpa were miners and they worked little claims that were the intent of the 1872 Mining Law. However, they also worked in mines owned by the big guys who worked people to death for nothing and spewed waste into Colorado's most pristine streams. The 1872 Mining Law is an invitation to abuse the environment. It has taken some concerted effort to make dents in it. Keep up the good work, both here and abroad.
Timothy P. Murphy, Salem, Oregon

In response to the Interior Department ruling that BLM has the legal authority to potentially reject mines in order to protect cultural resources: "This is such great news! You guys at MPC, and Flynn, Leshy and Babbitt deserve the highest praise." (Editorial Note: "Flynn, Leshy and Babbitt" are attorney Roger Flynn of the Western Mining Action Project, Interior Department Solicitor John Leshy, and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, respectively.)
Mark Heller, Crested Butte, Montana



How to Become a Member

Send in the envelope stapled into the center of this newsletter or give us a call (202) 887-1872 x204. Soon it will be possible to give via our website.

Thanks

Many thanks to all of you who renewed your MPC membership. A sincere welcome to all those new members who responded to our fall membership drive!

MPC news
MINERAL POLICY CENTER NEWSLETTER

WHAT'S INSIDE

"The Tisza is dead."

Bransislav Blazic, Environment Minister of Serbia, after cyanide spilled from a Romanian gold mine, polluting the Tisza and then the Danube River which empties into the Black Sea. The spill has been called the worst environmental catastrophe since Chernobyl, as reported in The Washington Post, *February 15, 2000.*

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