

The proposed project by Spanish Mountain Gold will negatively impact our environment, economy, society, culture, and our health. Not only for the life of the mine but for years to come.

Spanish Mountain Gold would like to open a huge extraction operation which will destroy our pristine back country wilderness by logging old growth trees, fragmentation for roads, increasing mine traffic, disturbing migratory wildlife, and its habitat, while placing endangered species at risk of extinction. Gold mining is one of the most destructive industries in the world. It destroys pristine environments and pollutes air, water and land with cyanide and mercury endangering our health and the ecosystem.

Spanish Mountain Gold plans to dig up and crush millions of cubic metres of rock, dowsing it with cyanide and other toxic chemicals to leech out only tiny quantities of gold. Just one ounce of gold generates twenty tons of waste with significant contamination of cyanide and mercury.

Mining sites are permanent toxicological problems for the surrounding ecosystem and human health. The exploration of mineral products negatively impacts three elements of our environment: atmosphere, water, and soil.

Gold mining creates mountains of toxic waste due to the nature and quantities of chemicals used for processing gold. The dust and vapours from the chemicals are toxic and can be radioactive causing an extremely dangerous problem to communities located nearby.

The operation of large mining equipment requires vast amounts of fuel increasing greenhouse gas emissions as well.

The most widespread and persistent form of water pollution caused by gold mining is by “acid mine drainage.”

Gold is found in rock rich in sulphide minerals. Once they are dug up and piled into mountains of waste rock or into impoundments as crushed tailings, the sulphite ore is exposed to oxygen and water. This exposure creates a chemical reaction producing sulphuric acid, a component of acid rain. However, in comparison to acid rain, the acid in mine waste is up to three hundred times more concentrated and highly toxic to living organisms.

“Acid mine drainage” causes a severe ecological impact by finding its way into streams and rivers which can virtually kill all aquatic life in its pathway, destroying adjacent environments as it continues downstream. Once acid mine drainage starts it is exceedingly difficult to stop and continues to increase acidity levels in these waters and destroy aquatic life for generations. Even after the mine closes, heavy metals will continue to leak into ground water and rivers for centuries poisoning fish, animals and birds that feed on them.

Spanish Mountain Gold plans to store the contaminated tailings ore waste behind a dam. The greatest environmental hazard lies in the dam storage of millions of tons of cyanide sludge. These dams do not prevent contamination of the surrounding environment. Toxic waste can easily seep into the soil and ground water or be released in a catastrophic spill.

In August 2014 such a spill occurred at Mount Polley mine located on the opposite side of Quesnel Lake where Spanish Mountain Gold plans to build its mine. This spill was the worst environmental disaster in British Columbia’s history. When the dam collapsed it sent 25,000 meters of cyanide laden waste into

nearby rivers and Quesnel Lake. The spill poisoned water supplies, killed fish, destroyed forest, land and tourism. The stench in the air was overpowering and massive amounts of dead fish and debris washed up on the shores of the once pristine Quesnel Lake, the deepest Fjord Lake in North America.

The long-term effects from the release of the toxic chemicals to humans and animals are still unknown. The wastewater included arsenic, mercury, sulfur, and sodium cyanide. Mercury has proven to damage kidneys, liver, brain, heart, lungs, and the immune system. Sodium cyanide exposure can be fatal, affecting the brain, heart, and lungs.

Mines must operate wastewater treatment plants to remove cyanide and mercury and other toxins from the water used in mining.

Spanish Mountain Gold's Water Management Plan is to have the runoff diverted around the tailings facility then directed into Cedar Creek and Boswell Lake. After ten years a diversion channel is planned which would then redirect the Boswell Lake catchment runoff to Winkley Creek.

It is extremely concerning that Spanish Mountain Gold plans to direct the runoff from their wastewater treatment plant into both Cedar Creek and Winkley Creek. These are two of the most densely populated areas on Quesnel Lake where residents get their drinking water. Leaks and failures from water treatment plants pose a huge risk to human health.

There is great cause for concern on how Spanish Mountain Gold will affect our rich biodiversity, pure water sources, rare old growth interior rainforest and endangered species.

The endangered population of the Sockeye and Coho salmon have already been threatened by the pollution from the Mount Polley tailings dam failure. Bears, wolves, and birds rely on the salmon returning for sustenance, and these consumers bring them back into the forest providing rich nutrients important for our ecosystem. The loss of any of these individual spawning populations from potential contamination or mine spills would be devastating.

Another threat that the mine poses is on the endangered species of the "Mountain Caribou". The loss of land and fragmentation of the old growth rainforest, and water contamination due to mining activities put the diminished herd at significant risk. Preserving the ancient rainforest and not disturbing wildlife habitat and migration is crucial for the endangered species to survive extinction.

We live in a pristine environment with unparalleled access to stunning back country offering countless yearly activities: fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, swimming etc. It is a wilderness destination for tourism with breathtaking scenery, clean lakes abundant with fish and home to many animals including caribou, moose, bear, deer, and rare interior rainforest. Spanish Mountain Gold wants to open a huge extraction operation in our backyard which will cause severe damage to our environment and community by destroying the back country wilderness, disturbing migratory wildlife, loss, and fragmentation of old growth rainforest to increase mine traffic and pollute our ground water and streams.

We do not want to risk or lose our water source, put our health in jeopardy or lose our homes just to benefit distant shareholders. It is crucial that we protect our ecosystem against such destructive activities.

Our communities and resources are more valuable than gold and we want to sustain them for our community and families to enjoy for generations.

The negative impacts will affect thousands of people who live, play and work in this area. The mine will only employ fifty people for its fourteen-year lifetime.

The primary interest of this company is for profit and profit alone. They leave out the full cost of rehabilitation, reclamation, impact on health and billions of tons of earth and vegetation poisoned by cyanide and mercury and other toxic metals. No mention is made about the destruction of nature and the waste land that Spanish Mountain Gold will leave behind.

The once unspoiled environment in which we live has already witnessed a catastrophic event which has tainted its natural beauty and contaminated our diverse ecosystem.

To allow another mine to be built in our backyard would be a travesty. It will present a continual threat to our way of life and undue stress as we struggle to regain what we have already lost.

Please reject the Spanish Mountain Gold Proposal so we can protect the air that we breathe, water that we drink and our diverse ecosystem.

Thank you.

Diana and Bill Mason