

La Paz, B.C.S. November 17<sup>th</sup> 2014

**Ing. Juan José Guerra Abud**  
**Secretary**  
**Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales**

The 34 undersigned human rights, environmental and civil society groups in Mexico and around the world, urge you, and all the government institutions responsible for handing out authorizations to the Los Cardones mine, to cancel any existing permits and deny any new ones.

The mine, which would be constructed in the Sierra la Laguna Mountains in Baja California Sur, Mexico, has been previously rejected three times by a wide spectrum of society, including politicians and authorities, and for good reasons.

As with any industrial scale open pit mine, the proposed Los Cardones mine will consume huge quantities of water. And this in a rapidly growing state with a limited water supply, and with climate change potentially reducing that supply even more.

In every phase of operation, from digging up ore to using chemicals to extract minerals from the ore, mines generate massive amounts of toxic waste that too often end up flowing into waterways. This past August, in the northern state of Sonora, an infrastructure failure at a copper mine caused 10 million gallons of copper sulfate acid waste to spill into the Bacanuchi and Sonora rivers. The toxins in this pollution turned the water orange, led to deaths of fish and livestock and cut off water supply to some 20,000 people.

The dangers of industrial scale mining are present for surrounding communities and the environment. These dangers are all the more acute when they threaten the limited water supply of an arid state.

The fact that the proposal is partly located within a UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve is additional justification for SEMARNAT to deny any permit for this mine. Animals such as the yucca night lizard, cape-pygmy owl and the ornate shrew make their home in these mountains.

Building a massive, open-pit mine in the reserve would generate millions of tons of waste rock, which would likely leach arsenic and other toxic metals. The creation of this 10-year mine would generate nearly 64,000 tons of waste material - every day.

Other concerning potential impacts include:

- The diversion of springs, a unique feature of the hydrology of Sierra La Laguna, which provide water to local residents.
- Depletion of groundwater: Mine operator Invecture has plans to construct a desalination plant and use seawater, but the plan involves the construction of beach wells that draw a mixture of sea and fresh water. This could result in depletion of and/or salt intrusion into the aquifers.
- Mine waste contamination of surface waters and groundwater: While the proposed location of the tailings dam is just outside the biosphere reserve, it is also located at the head of the watershed, which could result in downstream contamination. Just 13 miles below the proposed dam, new wells are being built to provide water to the already poorly supplied city of La Paz, a city with 230,000 inhabitants that is rapidly growing. The heavy metals held in the material behind this dam could filter into the aquifer supplying drinking water wells, jeopardizing the health and economic activities of thousands. Mine waste from both the tailings dam and the mine itself threaten groundwater, soil and vegetation in the area. (Even without the mine, the presence of arsenic can be detected from smaller-scale historical mining.)

In summary, the Los Cardones mine is proposed in an area that has international environmental importance, enjoys legal protections and contains a unique hydrology that is critical to the livelihood of local residents. A mine does not belong there. The majority of the population in Baja California Sur would be grateful that the Federal Government cancels and/or denies all the corresponding permits.

SINCERLEY,

**JESÚS ECHEVARRÍA HARO**  
**PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO ASESOR DE LA**  
**RESERVA DE LA BIOSFERA SIERRA LA LAGUNA**

**Organizations that support this request:**

1. **Agua Vale Más Que Oro**
2. **Amigos para la conservación de Cabo Pulmo A.C.**
3. **Asociación de Investigación y Conservación de Mamíferos Marinos y su Hábitat A.C.**
4. **Asociación de Usuarios de Agua de la Unidad de Riego del Ejido Todos Santos, A.C**

5. **Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental**
6. **Cine Club “DZIGA VERTOV”**
7. **Comité de Agua y Arsénico**
8. **Conciencia México, A.C.**
9. **Consejo Asesor de la Reserva de la Biósfera Sierra la Laguna**
10. **De Raite BCS**
11. **En Defensa del Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Rural Sustentable A.C.**
12. **Fundación Cántaro Azul A.C.**
13. **Fundación Trasviña**
14. **Grupo de Académicos de La Paz contra la minería tóxica**
15. **Medio Ambiente y Sociedad**
16. **Observatorio Ciudadano del Agua y Saneamiento de La Paz A.C.**
17. **Planetario “JOAQUÍN VELÁZQUEZ DE LEÓN”**
18. **Quaayaip**
19. **Red 7 de Febrero**
20. **Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparajá, AC..**
21. **Vida y Prosperidad Todos Santos, A.C.**
22. **Yo Reciclo A.C.**
23. **AIDA Justice**
24. **CIEL**
25. **Conference of Major Superiors of Men**
26. **Earthjustice**
27. **Earthworks**
28. **Friends of the Earth Netherlands**
29. **Greenpeace Mexico**
30. **Indigenous Peoples Links**
31. **Institute of Policy Studies, Global Economy Project**
32. **Mines Minerals & RIGHTS**
33. **MiningWatch Canada**
34. **Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team**