

## *Western Shoshone Defense Project — Alert! Alert! Alert!*

We need to take a stand against U.S. and corporate destruction of indigenous lands and spiritual areas NOW. Using laws which continue to stem from the “doctrine of discovery” – where indigenous peoples were claimed to be “savages”, “pagans”, and “childlike” in nature, the United States continues to claim vast areas of native lands as “federal” or “public” lands – denying Indigenous Nations, like the Western Shoshone, the right to make decisions about the types of activities allowed in their traditional territories. Since the days of Columbus, the companies and a pack of elites have been profiting immensely from this fundamental discrimination against the original peoples of this land we call the United States.

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has told the United States to stop any new mine permitting on Shoshone lands - and the corporate entities – in particular Canadian-based Barrick and U.S.-based Newmont Mining have been told to respect Western Shoshone rights and stay away from mining in spiritual areas. Have they listened? No – mining expansions on Shoshone lands are on the rise again affecting burial areas, spiritual sites, cultural resources, water, wildlife and the natural environment.

When will the greed for gold end – and what is the cost of this insatiable hunger to all of us? The latest expansion proposal by Barrick Gold and Kennecott (Australian-based) – ironically named the “Cortez” project targets an area, which is the home of local Shoshone creation stories and extreme spiritual and cultural significance, Mt. Tenabo. Coincidentally, the mining industry has also discovered an immense deposit of gold in the area.

We need to say no - Help us protect this area on Western Shoshone lands from gold mining! The deadline for comments is coming quickly. Please do one of three things:

1. Sign the online e petition with Oxfam America:  
[http://act.oxfamamerica.org/campaign/shoshone\\_blm/iw35ek4odd8mnn?](http://act.oxfamamerica.org/campaign/shoshone_blm/iw35ek4odd8mnn?)

**Please sign the petition today!**

2. Send in your own letter by email, fax or mail– key talking points below
3. Sign and send in a postcard – attached.

If you want to do more, forward this email to others to take action now AND take the postcards or the information to meetings, events, etc. to distribute to your friends, colleagues and others.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION TODAY – What do we have to give thanks for in this “Holiday” season if we don’t stand alongside the first peoples of the land in their struggle to protect traditional territories???

Questions – need more info? Contact the Western Shoshone Defense Project at <mailto:wmdp@igc.org>wmdp@igc.org – 775-744-2565.

***Action Alert - Mt. Tenabo in Jeopardy***  
***December 21st deadline for comments***

**Mt. Tenabo and the surrounding environs are again under attack from gold mining. It is critical now for the Bureau of Land Management to hear the strength of opposition for this mine; see talking points and how to send your comments and concerns below.**

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has released a draft Environmental Impact Statement, EIS, which reviews the proposal by Cortez Gold Mines, a subsidiary of Barrick Gold Mining Co., to conduct new gold mining operations at the south end of Crescent Valley in central Nevada. The Project, although termed as an “expansion” of the existing Pipeline and Cortez mines, is really a new gold mine complex. It would be located on the slopes of Mt. Tenabo, a mountain sacred to the Western Shoshone Indians, who have lived in the area since time immemorial. This mine would:

Disturb (devastate) 6,792 acres of land, including a heap leach and waste rock facilities covering much of the Horse Canyon pass just south of Tenabo, and extending east into Grass Valley  
Blast the new Cortez Hills mine pit approximately 8,900 feet in length, 6,400 feet in width, and a maximum depth of 2,200 feet  
The pit would be within a few hundred feet of the White Cliffs at the base of Mt. Tenabo  
Expand an underground mine with a horizontal extent of 1,000 feet wide by 5,000 feet long  
Pump groundwater from around the pit with an average dewatering rate of approximately 1.8 billion gallons per year for ten years to keep it dry for mining  
Create a drop in the water table of 1,600 feet surrounding the pit, decreasing to 10 feet at 3-4 mile radius of the pit

Potentially impact the 50 springs and seeps in the project area with 28 in the Horse Canyon area; however, according to the BLM draft analysis none of the 28 springs are expected to be impacted. A pit lake will result after mining is completed with an eventual depth of about 1,000 feet, and according to the BLM draft analysis of acceptable water quality  
Of the 11 non-Cortex Gold Mine water rights, only one is expected to recover fully within 100 years after dewatering ceases

**It is important to keep in mind that the results of the environmental analysis presented by the BLM are only estimates.** In many mines across Nevada and elsewhere predicted and actual impacts have varied substantially. Thus, being critical and skeptical of anticipated impacts is essential to a good review of this project.

**The permanent impact to the cultural and spiritual practices of the Western Shoshone is undeniable.** Mt. Tenabo has been, and continues to be, used by Western Shoshone people as a central part of their religious practices and worldview. Western Shoshone visit the mountain and the valley below (the location of the mine pit) for prayer ceremonies, gathering of sacred plants, fasting, and vision quests, among other uses. The Mountain also contains Western Shoshone gravesites. All of these values and uses will be destroyed by the Project. In addition, the massive pumping of groundwater will dewater sacred springs and streams on and around Mt. Tenabo. *From the draft EIS, "Although not quantifiable, the project area and the region surrounding the project area have been home to local Indian groups for centuries, and the resources in the area, the value placed on those resources, and potential effects to those resources are intertwined with the culture of local Indian tribes more so than any other population in close proximity to the project area."*

**There is no need for another gold mine in Nevada, especially one that will destroy such invaluable resources.** The BLM has never denied a big mining project in Nevada. This is one BLM must deny.

In Summary:

The BLM has ample authority to deny this Project, as it will cause “undue degradation” of religious, cultural and environmental values. The Project will permanently and irreparably destroy current and future religious practices and values of Western Shoshone people. The BLM should prevent any impacts to area springs, waterholes and streams from dewatering.

The Draft EIS fails to fully review impacts to these and other critical resources and should be re-done.

## How to take action

The BLM’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement is online at:  
[http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle\\_mountain\\_field/blm\\_information/national\\_environmental/cortez\\_hills\\_expansion.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field/blm_information/national_environmental/cortez_hills_expansion.html)>[http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle\\_mountain\\_field/blm\\_information/national\\_environmental/cortez\\_hills\\_expansion.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/battle_mountain_field/blm_information/national_environmental/cortez_hills_expansion.html).

**If you write a postcard or letter to BLM, mail it to:**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
Battle Mountain Field Office  
Attn: Steve Drummond, Cortez Hills Project Manager  
50 Bastian Road  
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

**If you send an email, it must be emailed before December 21st – email it today!**

<[mailto:stephen\\_drummond@nv.blm.gov](mailto:stephen_drummond@nv.blm.gov)>[stephen\\_drummond@nv.blm.gov](mailto:stephen_drummond@nv.blm.gov)

Sign the online petition with Oxfam America – (see below)

**Background on Mt. Tenabo**

Mt. Tenabo is located in central Nevada, approximately 20 miles south and a little west of the town of Crescent Valley. It stands at the intersection of three valleys, a familiar landmark along major Newe trails, one coming up Grass Valley from the south and another coming from the west through Carico Lake Valley and Reese River Valley.

It is an area is an enormously rich cultural and spiritual locus for the Western Shoshone people since time immemorial. Mt Tenabo Is a significant landmark on an important north south trail, Dinabo is a place of food and medicine gathering, a place for refuge and spiritual guidance, a place whose springs feed the wildlife that feed the people.

Mt. Tenabo is located in central Nevada, approximately 20 miles south and a little west of the town of Crescent Valley. It stands at the intersection of three valleys, a familiar landmark along major Newe trails, one coming up Grass Valley from the south and another coming from the west through Carico Lake Valley and Reese River Valley.

There is abundant archaeological evidence of Newe occupation since "prehistoric" times, this evidence of Newe occupation extends through the historic mining period from 1863 to the 1940's, with several historic camps documented containing both grinding stones and more modern "trash." A map of Nevada from the late 1860's identifies the area of Cortez as Shoshone wells, and the natural spring at this site was later developed by Chinese workers, whose camp was adjacent to this area. Another Chinese camp is buried beneath arsenic laden tailings near the Cortez ghost town.

Like all mountains it catches the clouds whose snow and rain feed the groundwater table and various creeks and streams. The sole spring at Shoshone wells is the only water source on the west side but several creeks flow off of its east side into Pine Valley including Horse Canyon creek, Willow Creek and Four Mile Canyon Creek (flowing off of Mt Tenabo's unnamed neighbor to the east). Medicine and food plants are found around the mountain and include doza, Indian tobacco, watercress, and yomba. Plants also provide for abundant wildlife including mule deer (over a dozen of which came

within a 1/4 mile of the Shoshone camp during the April 2003 Spring Gathering.) ya-ha, rabbits, bobcats, mountain lions, and many species of hawks, eagles and birds. An active sage hen (hucha) dancing ground (lek) is on the eastern flank of the mountain and I believe there is another in Grass Valley towards Mt Tenabo's southern end.

Pinion trees and juniper have long been sources of food, fuel and medicine for the Newe. Pine trees close to the "Shoshone well" are known to local Shoshone as a place where pitch was gathered to waterproof baskets and for other uses. Gathering of these things by local Newe continues to the present day. Hunting, trapping, and gathering of food and medicine occur throughout the area of Mt Tenabo. Pine forests around the mountain were almost entirely cut down in the 1870's to make charcoal for the mine smelters, but historic miners burrowed underground with shafts, leaving the soil covering the ground intact. Over time mother earth healed the damage and the pinion forest has grown back and matured. What will the trees grow on if the new mine is created?

When Cortez proposed a new mine in the early 1990's, the Danns and the Western Shoshone Defense Project (WSDP) opposed this because of both the unresolved land title issue and the fact that this mine would require dewatering, threatening the most precious resource out there, the water. In order to operate, the Pipeline mine must drop the water table over 800 ft at the mine site, pumping anywhere from 20,000 to 30,000 gallons of water per minute, 24 hours a day from wells over 1,000 feet deep. This deep groundwater meets drinking water quality standards, with slightly elevated levels of fluoride as it is warm geothermal water. The mine then pumps it to a series of shallow ponds and trenches laid out in an arc several miles from the mine where it soaks this water back into the valley floor. Unfortunately the soil in the valley floor is full of salts, leftover from the evaporation of inland lakes and seas. When the clean water is filtered through the salty soils it is contaminated and no longer meets drinking water standards when it reaches the water table. The WSDP and its allies in Great Basin Mine Watch predicted this would happen, but the State and the BLM have allowed it to continue to this very day.

In addition to water contamination as a result of dewatering, we continue to be concerned that pumping at the Pipeline mine is affecting groundwater in the Cortez mountains. Computer modeling done by Cortez indicated that there would be no waters affected by the pumping farther than a few miles from the mine site, no surface springs or creeks were predicted to be affected. However as soon as the pumps were turned on at Pipeline in September 1996, the old pit lake 7 miles across the valley at the older Cortez mine began to dry out until finally disappearing after remaining at a static level for a decade. Initial studies indicated the water table in the bedrock around Cortez was dropping. The WSDP and Minewatch pressured the BLM and mine to look into this. Cortez commissioned a study in 1998 to study this. Its conclusion was that pumping at Pipeline might be affecting the water table but it was one of several different scenarios the report discussed. Its final conclusion was that they needed a lot more data to understand what was going on. A follow up study conducted in 1999 reached the same conclusion that they needed more information. Unfortunately we know of no additional studies after 1999. This is especially important because in analyzing the impacts of the Pipeline Mine, the BLM relied upon these models to state that no surface waters and especially the springs around the flanks of Mt Tenabo and its adjacent mountains would not be affected by the pumping. If indeed the pumping is draining the bedrock in the Cortez Mountains, that means many springs and creeks are at risk and that their computer model was fatally flawed. Of course this would be inconvenient information for Cortez so it is no surprise that aren't looking for the answers.

*Western Shoshone Defense Project*

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