

MINING NEWS



By PRT Staff

HudBay Minerals Takes Over Rosemont Mine Project

In June, Canadian-based transnational mining company HudBay Minerals reached an agreement to take over Augusta Resources and its Rosemont open-pit copper mine project. According to MiningWatch, a watchdog organization focused on mining activities in Canada, HudBay has demonstrated "a profound disrespect for the environments and communities where it operates." HudBay Minerals is currently being sued for negligence in Canadian courts in connection with violent crimes at its former nickel project in eastern Guatemala, including the murder of an indigenous Mayan land rights activist by mine security guards. In Manitoba, the company has failed to adequately con-

sult indigenous communities; operated a dirty smelter that was Canada's largest point source of mercury and other toxic emissions until it closed in 2010; and failed to adequately rehabilitate closed mine sites.

A Hazardous Month

Three recent mining spills, caused by tailing "ponds" that overflowed or were breached, have contaminated waterways and affected water supplies for downstream residents:

August 5 - In British Columbia, 10 billion liters of wastewater and 5 billion liters of solid tailings waste escaped the impoundment at Imperial Metal's Mount Polley mine. The creek that received the brunt of the flow was completely obliterated, and some of the waste backed up into Polley Lake. These spills were highly toxic mine waste, containing sulfuric acid and heavy metals such as arsenic, copper and lead. The spills went directly into the surrounding streams and rivers causing drinking water restrictions for downstream residents and threatening salmon runs, which traditionally provide half the winter food supply for First Nations. After the spill, there were reports from fishermen of skin falling off of salmon.

August 7 - An acid spill from the Buenavista copper mine in Cananea, Mexico, about 25 miles south of the U.S. border, sent 10 million gallons (40,000 cubic meters) of toxic waste water into portions of the Bacanuchi and Sonora rivers. Mine officials have been criticized for their delay in reporting the massive acid spill to authorities. According

to Carlos Arias, director of civil defense for the northern state of Sonora, the spill was caused by defects in a new holding pond, where overflow from acids used to leach metal out of the crushed rock is stored. Arias said a pipe either blew out or lost its positioning, sending the sulfuric acid downstream. The spill affected the water supply of seven municipalities, including the Sonora state capital, Hermosillo, which is home to nearly 800,000 people. There are reports indicating that the contamination has killed fish and cattle, and is affecting milk production.

August 10 - In the municipality of El Oro, Durango, Mexico, the Magistral Mine tailings dam spilled about 2 billion cubic meters of cyanide solution downstream into La Cruz Creek, when heavy rains caused an overflow of the dam. Residents reported the death of cattle that drank the contaminated creek water.

ASARCO Expands Operations Locally

The Buenavista mine is run by Grupo Mexico, whose American subsidiary, ASARCO, is nearing a deal to gain full ownership of the Silver Bell copper mine in Marana, Arizona. Asarco, which also operates the Mission Mine near Green Valley, has been subject to major environmental misconduct charges in the past relating to its mining operations.