

International Lithium Group Stands in Solidarity with Peehee mu'huh / Thacker Pass Communities

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Today, an international working group of individuals from around the world who are directly facing the effects of lithium extraction or are a part of organizations working alongside these frontline communities, have released a statement in support of the directly affected communities of the proposed Thacker Pass lithium mine. They are demanding that all ground-breaking at the Thacker Pass mine site be halted and that the affected communities be treated with full right to withhold consent for the mine.

The international YLNM lithium group is composed of people from places in Chile, Serbia, Portugal, Nevada, California, Australia, Spain, and the UK who are facing the negative repercussions of existing lithium mining or who are fighting proposed lithium mines threatening to devastate their communities, cultural resources, and ecosystems. It is from this place of first hand experience of the harms associated with lithium mining that they internationally demand for ground-breaking operations to be halted at Thacker Pass and for the affected communities to be treated with complete right to withhold consent for the mine.

Ramón M. Balcázar is one of the members of the YLNM network, who works at the Plurinational Observatory of Salares Andinos in protecting Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia's salt flats from lithium extraction: "As we can see in Nevada, the expansion of lithium mining reproduces colonialism not only in Latin America but also in stolen lands in so-called developed countries. If this is the cost of having electric cars for the most polluting countries of the world, maybe we need to find other ways for clean and just mobility, and those ways are probably beyond green capitalism."

Prior to and after the Record of Decision on the Thacker Pass mine by the Bureau of Land Management in January 2021, large numbers of individuals from the various affected communities--such as the People of Red Mountain, the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe, The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, the Burns Paiute Tribe, and the agricultural communities within Orovida and Kings River Valley--have been loudly voicing opposition. Members from these multiple frontline communities that will be directly and significantly harmed by the Thacker Pass Lithium mine have been fighting to prevent its construction through various peaceful avenues.

One of these forces of community resistance is the Atsa koodakuh wyh Nuwu, or the People of Red Mountain, which is a group of Fort McDermitt tribal descendants who formed specifically to oppose the Thacker Pass mine and other lithium projects threatening their homelands. As Deland Hinkey from the group states, "Peehee Mu'huh is sacred land and we must protect sacred land. It is not too late for change. We all need to realize that we only have one Earth and she must be protected. Stop corporations like Lithium Nevada, who want to destroy Mother Earth for profit...Let's Protect Peehee Mu'huh."

Folks from the agricultural communities next to the mine have also been clear in voicing the harms the mine will cause them. As one of these community members, Jean Williams, in Orovada, NV states, “this mine at Thacker Pass is not being permitted for the well being of our farming community. The process they wish to use is questionable. The amount of sulfur to be brought in for processing has the potential for permanent harm to crops and cattle production. Our water may disappear with no guarantee from the mine to make it right.”

Despite their and other community members’ efforts, and the clear community un-consent for the mine, it was permitted by the Bureau of Land Management in a fast-tracked manner that neglected proper Tribal consultation and public process. The mine is currently on the brink of construction, with many members from affected communities actively still resisting it, as well as active litigation in opposition to the mine’s permitting from a local rancher, conservation groups, two federally recognized Tribes, and the Atsa koodakuh wyh Nuwu. It is still undetermined precisely when the mining company, Lithium Nevada, will be breaking ground, but they have stated intent to do so in the near future.

The international working group’s statement of solidarity and demand for the rights of the communities affected by the Thacker Pass mine was echoed by over a dozen other international organizations and individuals who also signed on to the demands in the statement. The sentiment of solidarity with those on Thacker Pass’s frontlines is global beyond the YLNM network.

In a time where proponents of the mine largely center their arguments around domestic production of lithium and preventing “outsourcing” of the harms of mining it onto other nations, the statement coming directly from those affected by lithium mining in these other nations speaks volumes in pushing back this narrative. It states loud and clear that communities, no matter where they are located, should hold complete right to withhold consent for mines that directly affect them, their cultural resources, sacred sites, water, land, and air. The YLNM lithium network and the greater global voices’ sweeping support and solidarity for those harmed by the Thacker Pass mine sends the message that a win for the community members fighting the Thacker Pass mine is a win for communities directly affected by lithium mining everywhere.

"Our planet is home to an astonishing multitude of plant, animal, human communities and living environments. Toxic and exploitative extractivist system keeps trying to separate us from our communities and Nature, and plunges us deeper into climate and socio-ecological chaos that it caused in the first place. A true and just transformation will be led by communities and imbued by our knowledge to meet the specific needs and realities of the places we inhabit and care for. Through this work in our respective places, we will be able to join paths towards regenerating the Earth community of justice and solidarity," Mirko Nikolić from the YLNM-Lithium Group

YLNLM Lithium Solidarity Statement:

International Lithium Group Stands in Solidarity with Peehee mu'huh Communities

YLNLM (Yes to Life No to Mining) Lithium Group stands in solidarity with the People of Red Mountain, the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe, the agricultural communities within Orovida and Kings River Valley, and all people on the frontline facing harm from the Thacker Pass mine project. We demand that Peehee Mu'huh / Thacker Pass--and the whole communities whose well-being are inextricably connected to it--not be sacrificed for alleged global warming mitigation against their will through the breaking of ground at the site. As the People of Red Mountain and members of the agricultural communities have articulated many times in many different forms, the construction and operation of the Thacker Pass lithium mine would cause irreparable harm to a culturally significant area/sacred site on traditional Paiute and Shoshone land, to agricultural livelihoods, and to individual and communal ways of life. YLNLM lithium group comes from a variety of perspectives and lived experiences regarding the already-existing harms of lithium extraction on communities worldwide, and we stand in solidarity with the communities that would be affected by the Thacker Pass mine in asking the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to prevent ground-breaking operations and in demanding that affected communities be respected as holding complete right to withhold consent for the mine.

YLNLM Lithium is an international working group of individuals from around the world who are directly facing the harms of lithium extraction or are a part of organizations working alongside these frontline affected communities. We constitute a solidarity network for sharing experiences, perspectives, knowledge, and resources among those affected by lithium extraction in many different places around the globe. We are currently made up of folks from Chile, Serbia, Portugal, Nevada, California, Australia, and Spain. We share a commitment towards advocating for the respect and well-being of all communities and ecosystems, peoples and other natural beings (non human others), facing lithium mines. We envision a transformation which is centered around and guided by the prioritization of community rights, needs, and well-being.

Sign-ons (From within YLNLM network):

Organization: Salva la Selva
Name: Guadalupe Rodríguez
Location: Spain

Organization: Earth Thrive
Name: Zoe Lujic
Community: Zastitimo Jadar & Radjevinu
Location: UK/Serbia Serbia, Jadar & Radjevina

Organization: Center for Interdisciplinary Environmental Justice- Decolonize4Climate
Locations: Mexico, California, Texas

Organization: Rettet den Regenwald/Rainforest Rescue

Name: Klaus Schenck

Location: Germany

Organization: Zaštitimo Jadar i Rađevinu/Protect Jadar & Radjevina

Name: Marija Alimpic

Location: Loznica, Serbia (opposing Rio Tinto's lithium mine in Jadar, Western Serbia)

Organization: Denver Justice and Peace Committee (DJPC)

Name: Rebeca Zuniga

Location: Denver, U.S

Organization: Observatorio Plurinacional de Salares Andinos (OPSAL)

Name: Ramón Morales Balcázar / Verónica Gostissa

Location: Chile, Argentina & Bolivia

Organization: Igapo Project

Name: Corinne Ferrarons

Location: France

Organization: Latin American Network of Women Defenders of Social and Environmental Rights

Name: Eva Vázquez

Location: Latin America

Organizations: OPSAL & Colectivo de DDHH Empoderate

Name: Vivian Lagrava

Location: Bolivia

Organizations: Agricultores Quebrada de Soncor & OPSAL

Name: Rudecindo Espíndola Araya

Location: Chile

Organizations: OPSAL & Comunidad Colla de Copiapó

Name: Elena Rivera Cardoso

Location: Chile

Name: Patricia Marconi

Organization: OPSAL and Fundación Yuchan

Location: Argentina

Name: Bárbara Jerez Henríquez
Organization: OPSAL (Plurinational Observatory of Andean Salt Flats)
Location: Chile

Name: Verónica Gostissa
Organization: OPSAL (Plurinational Observatory of Andean Salt Flats)
Location: Argentina

Name: Jacqueline Quintana
Organization: OPSAL (Plurinational Observatory of Andean Salt Flats)
Location: Chile

Name: Ingrid Garcés
Organization: OPSAL
Location: Chile

Name: Mirko Nikolić
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Name: Hannibal Rhoades
Beyond Extractivism Lead, The Gaia Foundation
Location: United Kingdom
Email: hannibal@gaianet.org

Organization: DECOIN

Name: Carlos Zorrilla
Location: Intag, Ecuador

Note: “From Ecuador's cloud forests under threat of large-scale copper mining, we support your struggle”

Organization: Biofuelwatch
Name: Frances Howe and Gary Hughes
Location: UK/USA

Sign ons (beyond YLNM network):

Organization: MiningWatch Canada
Name: Jamie Kneen
Location: Canada

Organization: Great Basin Resource Watch
Name: John Hadder
Location: United States

Organization: Environmental Assembly of the Jujuy Province
Name: Nestor Omar Ruiz
Location: Jujuy, Argentina

Organization: European Network on Indigenous Peoples (ENIP)
Name: Andy Whitmore
Location: collective from various European countries

Organization: London Mining Network
Name: Richard Solly
Location: London

Name: Dr. James J. A. Blair
Location: Pomona, California, USA

Name: Cristián Flores Fernández
IRI THESys & Geography Department at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Location: Berlin, Germany

Organization: Earthworks
Name: Raquel Dominguez
Location: United States

Organization: Human Rights and Environment
Name: (Chairwoman) Sr. Patricia L. Ryan
Location: Puno, Peru

Organisation: People & Planet
Name: J Clarke
Location/country: United Kingdom