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NEVADA GOLD MINES DROPS PLANS TO EXPAND LONG CANYON MINE

Potential Harm to Wildlife, Cultural Resources Prompts Decision

RENO, Nev.— [Barrick Gold \(controlling interest in NGM\) announced as reported in the Elko Daily Free Press](#) that "...company has decided not to pursue permitting for Phase 2 mining at Long Canyon in Elko County..." Both the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation and a coalition of citizens' conservation and public accountability groups (Great Basin Resource Watch, Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter, Wild Horse Education, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada) separately formally filed 31 water [protests in April of 2020](#) against the enormous water allocation applications by NGM. The protest action stalled the mine expansion and ultimately forced a reevaluation by NGM. The applications would have allowed the mine to pump on average 45,000 acre-feet per year (over half the annual water use by the Truckee Meadows Water Authority) for 20 or more years removing over 300 billion gallons of water from the deep aquifer.

This aggressive pumping campaign would significantly affect springs and wetlands in the region including the Johnson Springs Wetland Complex (JSWC), comprising 88 individual springs with a combined total long-term average flow of 1,715 gallons per minute. This will cause significant harm to hundreds of species of wildlife, including sage grouse, endangered Relict Dace and numerous game species, such as mule deer, pronghorn and elk.

The Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation raised significant concerns when the Long Canyon Mine was first proposed almost 10 years ago, and this expansion will further degrade cultural and spiritual resources in the area. The region surrounding the mine has a history of continued occupation in the form of camp and village sites, hunting and fishing grounds, ceremonial areas and sacred sites, food gathering areas, and places important for passing on traditional knowledge.

"Nevada Gold Mines's decision to withdraw from the mine expansion signals a recognition by the company that the mine is fundamentally incompatible with the highly valued springs and cultural areas," said John Hadder, Executive Director of Great Basin Resource Watch. "Even the company can't find a defensible mitigation for the damage that the massive groundwater pumping that the mine expansion would have caused," he said.

"The imperiled fish, mule deer and greater sage grouse that rely on these springs can breathe a sigh of relief," said Patrick Donnelly, Great Basin director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "The water that's sustained biodiversity in northeast Nevada will keep flowing, for now. We'll stay vigilant on protecting these irreplaceable springs and the wildlife that depend on them to survive."

Long Canyon Mine was approved in 2015 and has been operational since 2016. The gold mine has stripped away the hillside on the east side of the Pequop Mountains, above Johnson Springs. However, excavation of the mine pit stopped in 2023.

The expansion plan would have excavated the existing open pit and proposed an underground mine well below the water table, which would require a massive amount of groundwater pumping to keep the mine workings dry.

Studies show this pumping would completely dry up Johnson Springs and could lower the water table, reducing spring flow at Ralph's Warm Springs. Destroying these springs would likely violate state and federal laws. Nevada Gold Mine's plan to develop a new mine plan that would allow the expansion and spare the springs has not been forthcoming.

The area is important to the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, which have called this part of Nevada home for millennia.

"The Johnson Springs and Big Springs complex is itself a sacred site of worship that is culturally connected to other significant and recognized cultural areas including the Swamp Cedars Area to the south in Spring Valley," said the late Chairman Rupert Steele of the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation. "Protection of the cultural values and ongoing spiritual practices that depend on these springs and wetlands requires protection of the springs' and wetlands' water sources as well."

"Water is life in the Nevada desert," said Laura Leigh, president of Wild Horse Education. "We also have the last large wild horse herds in the country, and more mining disturbances than any other state. We are encouraged by the decision not to pursue the decision not to pursue this specific project. However, we must remain vigilant."

"Nevada is the driest state in the nation, and our ecosystems, of which we all are a part, depend on using it cautiously. This project would have had a catastrophic ripple effect felt most strongly by Native communities and wildlife that recognize the importance of water and land protection." said Olivia Tanager, Director of Sierra Club's Toiyabe Chapter. "This is a win worth acknowledging."

Great Basin Resource Watch is a Nevada based nonprofit that works with communities to protect their land, air, and water from the negative effects of resource extraction.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.7 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

The Toiyabe Chapter serves Sierra Club members in Nevada, Tahoe, and the eastern Sierra, protecting the air, water, and land resources of our state, and providing quality outdoor experiences.

Wild Horse Education is a national nonprofit devoted to stopping abuse on and off the range, and to ensure our wild horses and burros are managed as an integral part of public lands for generations to come.