September 8, 2015

Dear Members of Congress,

The Gold King mine waste spill into the Animas River in Colorado has focused national media and political attention on a broader issue – the hundreds of thousands of abandoned and inactive mines that are actively polluting surface and groundwater, and occasionally threaten catastrophe. This particular spill was tragic, but it was not an isolated event.

These older mines are inherently problematic today because they were not built or operated with proper reclamation plans or long-term environmental liabilities in mind. Today, our mining technology and understanding of the industry’s impacts are vastly superior to that of 150 years ago. Yet rather than use that knowledge to better protect the environment we are instead building mines thousands of times larger than Gold King that we know will pollute water for thousands of years and require expensive water treatment forever.

Who will pay for this liability ten, twenty, or thirty generations from now, when the mining company once responsible is no longer legally identifiable and no private or corporate money is available? Under the 1872 Mining Law, future taxpayers will shoulder this enormous financial burden. This is one reason among many why we urgently need to modernize this law. If mining companies cannot clean up after themselves, they should not be allowed to operate in the first place.

Many inactive mines are not abandoned. They have current owners who should be held accountable for the environmental performance of their properties. Others, however, were left behind long ago and have no responsible parties to be charged with cleanup. Modernizing our mining law should tackle both scenarios.

We need full accountability for those who own or once owned problematic mines, and to ensure that truly abandoned mines can be cleaned up through a dedicated funding stream. Under the 1872 Mining Law, federally owned hardrock minerals remain the only category of extracted resources that can be taken for free from public lands. This anything-goes, nineteenth century approach to mining must end. Modernizing the 1872 Mining Law means:

- Protecting watersheds by creating a dedicated funding source for abandoned mine cleanup;
- Protecting future generations from perpetual mining pollution;
- Protecting communities’ health and economies, and the environment, by allowing federal land managers to balance mining with other potential land uses, and to deny inappropriate mine proposals;
- Establishing strong environmental standards for hardrock mining operations and reclamation;
- Provide a fair return to the American taxpayer for the minerals extracted from our public lands.

Approximately 40% of western watersheds are polluted by mining, much of it from the estimated 500,000 abandoned and inactive mines that litter the West. The Gold King
spill has shed a spotlight on the urgency of the risk that mining -- past and present -- poses to our drinking water, our watersheds, and our economy.

Fortunately, Congressman Raul Grijalva and Senator Martin Heinrich are taking the lead on hardrock mining and reclamation reform, and we applaud their efforts. We call on you to stand behind meaningful mining law reform that would bring real solutions to the problems posed by both historic and modern day mining operations.

Sincerely,

Alaska Inter-Tribal Council
American Rivers
Amigos Bravos
Arizona Mining Reform Coalition
Brooks Range Council
Center for Alt. Mining Development Policy
Clean Water Action
Clean Water Alliance
Colorado Citizens Against Toxic Waste
Copper Country Alliance
Earthworks
Environment America
Environment New Mexico
Environmental Protection Information Center
Fair Jewelry Action
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
Friends of the Clearwater
Friends of the Cloquet Valley State Forest
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Kalmiopsis
Gila Resources Information Project
Golden Eagle Audubon Society
Grand Canyon Trust
Grand Riverkeeper
Great Basin Resource Watch
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Groundwater Awareness League
High Country Conservation Advocates
Idaho Conservation League
Idaho Rivers United
Information Network for Responsible Mining
Inter-Tribal Association of Arizona

Anchorage, AK
Washington, DC
Taos, NM
Tucson, AZ
Fairbanks, AK
La Crosse, WI
Washington, DC
Rapid City, SD
Canon City, CO
Copper Center, AK
Washington, DC
Boston, MA
Albuquerque, NM
Arcata, CA
Santa Fe, NM
Minneapolis, MN
Washington, DC
Duluth, MN
Washington, DC
Grants Pass, OR
Silver City, NM
Boise, ID
Flagstaff, AZ
Vinita, OK
Reno, NV
Durango, CO
Green Valley, AZ
Crested Butte, CO
Boise, ID
Boise, ID
Norwood, CO
Phoenix, AZ

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Rachel Conn
Roger Featherstone
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Al Gedicks
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Allyson Siwik
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John Hadder
Shelley Silbert
Nancy Freeman
Allison Melton
John Robison
Mark Blaiser
Jennifer Thurston
Verna Monenerkit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
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<th>Contact Person</th>
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<tr>
<td>Klamath Forest Alliance</td>
<td>Orleans, CA</td>
<td>Kimberly Baker</td>
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<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>Madeleine Foote</td>
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<td>Susan Gordon</td>
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<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>Ani Kame’enui</td>
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<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
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