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Re: Long Valley Exploration Drilling Project #59294

I am concerned about KORE Mining's proposal to extract gold from the Long Valley Caldera region of the eastern Sierra Nevada. It's my favorite recreational destination in the country. As is too often the case, the corporation presents an optimistic forecast of the benefits of its operation while suppressing facts about the economic, environmental, and health costs - most of which will outlast the operational lifespan of the mine. The nature of the operation is particularly worrisome.

Extracting precious metals from such low-grade ore typically involves leaching with soluble cyanide compounds to sequester the gold to then be chemically separated. I expect such work will be performed over liners intended to prevent the toxic solution from entering the soil, as well as surface and groundwater supplies. However, such precautions have failed in the past. The process also requires that the ore is pulverized to make leaching faster and more efficient. What is to become of those mill wastes?

Gold and silver are not the only metals found in the ore KORE Mining intends to process. According to the United States Geological Survey, lead, zinc, and mercury level are significant (more abundant than gold) in the typical epithermal deposit. On average, lead is 15 ppm compared to KORE Mining's 2020 estimates of approximately 0.6 ppm of gold. Such deposits are associated with trace amounts (perhaps comparable to the amount of gold) of arsenic, mercury, and selenium, to name a few. The latter two are particularly insidious as they concentrate in tissue, thereby creating long-term, compounded health problems.

Perhaps KORE Mining has plans to mitigate the bi-products of its operation. I hope it will reveal those intentions. However, the very process that makes it fast and efficient to extract gold assures that metals such as lead, mercury, and zinc, as well as arsenic and selenium, will continue to leach into the environment long after KORE Mining has suspended its operation after the seven-year life of the mine. I ask again, what is to become of the mill wastes? They cannot be allowed to pile on the surface. Besides scaring a majestic landscape, linings will fail in time, and winds will blow material into waterways and other locations where no protections are in place. This waste rock cannot be returned to the open-pit mine from which it was extracted. Leaching of metals will continue into the groundwater in perpetuity.

Normally, we don't worry about the abundance of these dangerous metals that exist in our environment. It may require millions to tens of millions of years for natural physical and chemical weathering to break down solid rock and release these elements. KORE Mining plans to do it in seven years. The process may be faster still, aided by increasingly acidic rainfall that dissolves the rock and releases the metals. Sulfide minerals associated with epithermal deposits further acidify the water passing through the heap leach field (or filled open-pit mine), thereby mobilizing more metals and further acidifying the water. It's a process that drives itself.

There is an enormous cost to such runaway environmental degradation that carries a real economic and health price as well. KORE Mining attempts to seduce the local economy with jobs and tax revenue, but can they tell the

people who will bear the burden of the liabilities how much it will cost? Most of those jobs will be gone in seven years, and the environment will suffer over time as not to support agriculture and recreation at levels the region presently enjoys. Moreover, the lead and mercury released into the soil and water harm cattle, wild game, and fish, and will find its way into the human food chain. Can KORE Mining demonstrate that the community it impacts will remain healthy and prosperous in the wake of its work? KORE Mining might reasonably reply that it is impossible to calculate all of the potential consequences of its proposed project but that underscores the recklessness of the proposal.

Too often, people in the position of making such decisions are provided an incomplete set of facts. Communities in the eastern Sierra Nevada enjoy a healthy, sustainable economy that depends, in part, on the health of the environment - an environment that is threatened by KORE Mining's extractive industry. The latter is not sustainable. By KORE Mining's forecast, it will operate and provide jobs and revenue for the region for seven years. What is KORE Mining's obligation after that? Will it compensate the community for the loss of tourism, the decrease in hunting and fishing licenses, and stunted crop yields? Will KORE Mining pay the medical bills for people suffering from lead, mercury, and selenium poisoning? What about the diminished quality of life? All these undisclosed liabilities are a result of irreversible environmental damage caused by mining. It would not be fair to individuals across the nation to subsidize KORE Mining's activities through increase medical and insurance costs and cover only a fraction of the damage done.

There needs to be a candid discussion about the consequences of this mining proposal. If there is, I think people will recognize that they stand to lose much, much more than KORE Mining offers the community. KORE Mining's motivation is primarily, if not singularly, profit. That too, may be a goal of the people living in the impacted region surrounding the mining operation. However, there is reason to fear that the fortunes of the community will be negatively impacted long into the future as a result of KORE Mining's presence. Many of the ghost towns of the west once associated with the economic boom mining promised withered after the ore deposits were depleted and had no other industry to sustain them. Based on the available information, I oppose KORE Mining's proposal to extract Long Valley Caldera's mineral resources.

Regards,

William Nelson
BHS Chemistry - retired