The More You Know, The Less Gold Glows

Troubled Waters: Facts

• Every year mining companies dump 180 million tonnes of toxic mine waste, also called tailings, into oceans, rivers and lakes. That is the equivalent of 1.5 times the amount of municipal solid waste that the United States sent to landfills in 2009.

• Mine waste contains as many as three dozen dangerous chemicals including arsenic, lead, mercury and processing chemicals such as petroleum byproducts, acids and cyanide.

• Currently, 10 companies dispose of their mine waste into sources of water at one or more of their hardrock mines, and 27 more have proposed aquatic solutions to their waste problem.

• The top four mines that dump tailings into bodies of water account for 86% of the 180 million tonnes dumped into bodies of water each year. Those mines are
  o Freeport McMoRan and Rio Tinto’s Grasberg mine in West Papua, Indonesia, which accounts for approximately 80 million tonnes of tailings;
  o Newmont Sumitomo Mining’s Batu Hijau mine in Indonesia, which accounts for approximately 40 million tonnes;
  o Ok Tedi Mining Ltd.’s Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea, which accounts for approximately 22 million tonnes; and
  o Cliff’s Mining Company’s Wabush/Scully mine in Labrador, Canada, which accounts for 13 million tonnes of tailings.

• There is no economically viable way to clean up the polluted waters, and in some cases no engineering solution.


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