



October 31, 2013

TO: Nevada Mining Oversight and Accountability Commission
FR: Bob Fulkerson, State Director, PLAN
RE: Methyl Mercury from Nevada Mining

At the MOAC meeting of June 26, 2013, I raised [serious allegations](#) that the mining industry was largely responsible for methyl mercury poisoning of Nevada waters and fisheries. I cited UNR research suggesting that mercury emissions from tailings facilities and active heap leach operations are now probably **double** the amount of mercury being released into the air, compared to that being reported under state requirements. I said that the technology exists to decrease mercury pollution from these sources, but neither the mining industry or the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection seems to care.

In response to questions about this from this committee, the NDEP administrator basically blamed sources other than current Nevada gold mining for contaminating Nevada's fisheries and waters.

And she said that the NDEP mission of promoting economic development prevented her agency from coming down too hard on mining. Since none of the economic development authorities have environmental protection in their mission statements, why should NDEP's mission include economic development?

More importantly, I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to get to the truth about mercury contamination in Nevada. Please place the issue of unregulated fugitive mercury emissions from mining tailings and heap leach operations on your next meeting agenda. We can suggest specific experts for you to invite.

According to the EPA's [Toxic Release Inventory](#), mining accounts for 98% of all toxic pollutants released in Nevada. Every day, methyl mercury from active gold mines is polluting our water and contaminating our fish and wildlife. Please don't let it continue to happen under your watch.

And in anticipation of today's agenda regarding reclamation, in which we're sure to hear rosy assurances of success, the [General Accounting Office reported](#) recently that: "We determined that 57 hardrock operations (in 12 western states) had inadequate financial assurances—amounting to about \$24 million less than needed to fully cover estimated reclamation costs." Nevada's share of that \$24 million is \$23,853,662 (more than 99.4% of the total of the 12 western states.) And, according to the Environmental

MOAC DATE 10/31/2013
PRESENTED DURING PUBLIC COMMENT
Exhibit PLAN Handout
Page 1 of 2

Protection Agency, the cost for cleanup of abandoned hardrock mines could run as high as \$54 billion. Much of that cost could ultimately be borne by U.S. taxpayers.

Meantime, every year the industry takes billions in gold and other hardrock minerals without compensating taxpayers as a whole, states like Nevada, or covering cleanup costs. This must change.