

Toxic Open-Pit Gold Mines History and Timeline

Todos Santos and Citizens of Baja California Sur 2014/2015

Faced with a new gold mine located near aquifers that supply the area of Baja California Sur with water, the residents of this area are taking the 2014 Sonoran spill very seriously. Not only did this happen to their fellow countrymen by this same mining company, but it also has the potential to gravely impact them, their land and water source. Knowing that action needed to be taken quickly, the people of the state of Baja California Sur met first to educate themselves and others about this proposal, and then to take the necessary steps of action to oppose it. Social movements, individuals, and organizations enable citizen fronts to conduct mass events and protests. It is important to remember that a successful fight is won in many stages.

To accomplish this three different organizational aspects are needed: legislative activists, organizational/event activists, and public education activists. For Todos Santos these include Frente Ciudadano en Defensa del Agua y la Vida, Sociedad Organizada por Sudcalifornia, Agua Mas Vale Que Oro, including the citizens of Todos Santos. Even though they have no official organization, they have been on the front lines when action is required to make a difference.

The people of Todos Santos have been encouraging the various organizations to work together along with the people to ensure that the overall goal is being successfully addressed: To permanently ban any mining operations which threaten the future of this area of the world, be it on land or in the sea.



Local Action Taken – Timeline

*August 4, 2014 many people gathered in the parking lot at Ayuntamiento in Todos Santos (their local government offices) to lead a protest march (by car) to TV Azteca in La Paz (the state's capital) where they chanted, "No al a mina, el agua es la vida," which means: "No to the mine, water is life". They denounced mining investor Ricardo Salinas Pliego, President of TV Azteca. They proceeded to the Malecon in La Paz where they met to rally with the local people. That night everyone who would be affected by the mining project signed a petition to notify all involved parties that the public sector did not approve of the project.

Meanwhile, **Layne, the company that was contracted to conduct the drilling for a desalinization plant for the mine in Las Playitas near Todos Santos began drilling, prior to obtaining proper permits.** The town officials of Todos Santos called on **Conagua** to evaluate the site and subsequently close it due to illegal drilling. To their disappointment they didn't get any results.



*September 3rd, 2014 the Sud-delegado of Todos Santos, dissatisfied with the lack of support of Conagua, called for the townspeople to rally to close the entrance to the wells until the illegal drilling was stopped. The entrance to the drill site was blocked and workers from Conagua were forced to close the site since no permits had been obtained by the drilling company. The people won this small victory of many battles to come.

*September 12, 2014, the townspeople of Todos Santos organized a rally at the town plaza to sign a pact to officially oppose the mining project. Originally scheduled for the 5th of September, the event was rescheduled to the following week due to the impending Hurricane Norbert.

***The 'Pacto de Todos Santos' was a successful rally for residents of Baja California Sur. Many hundreds of people from all areas of the Southern Baja tip gathered together in Todos Santos to sign the Pact opposing the mining project. Altogether, 2,600 signatures were collected.**

It was event for the youth and the older generations to unite, and to state in one voice that mining is NOT welcomed in BCS, and that the future of this land is to remain in good health for generations to come. There were passionate responses from the public when representatives of the area spoke. The Delegado did an excellent job addressing the people and speaking from the heart on this important issue.

*September 14, 2014, Category 4 Hurricane Odile made landfall and wreaked havoc on the Baja peninsula, causing damages and destruction to many roads, homes, businesses, communications, water, and electricity. With this natural disaster happening, still the people of Todos Santos got together immediately to plan their next course of action in opposing the mining operations.

Many of the people located in the region recognize that had the Los Cardones mine been in operation the force of this hurricane would have caused widespread contamination to virtually everything that resides in the shadow of the Sierra de Laguna. As it was, many homes, ranches, and farms were washed away or destroyed by the raging waters flowing from the mountainous Sierra de Laguna Biosphere (mountainous) Reserve. Had this water contained tailings or chemical toxins from a mine all of the inhabitants and the environment of the area would have suffered exponentially more than from a natural disaster.

*October 2, 2014 – The Citizens of Todos Santos met with the Delegado in response to **Guerra Abud's public approval of the Los Cardones Mega Gold Mine**. In the interview with Mr. Abud he would not even specify the type of mineral the concessions were for.

*October 8, 2014, people gathered in the Parque Los Pinos in Todos Santos to caravan to the offices of SEMARNAT in La Paz. The caravans arrived and were greeted by La Paz locals who had already begun. It started with a group entering the offices of SEMARNAT demanding that Sudcalifornianos be heard about the objections to the Los Cardones mining proposal and ANY mining projects that threaten the area. The people expressed their concerns about the recent toxic spill from the mine in Sonora, and what their fellow countrymen have had to endure due to the contamination of their area.

When these people who gathered there were not satisfied with the answers being provided by SEMARNAT they went to the offices of Congress and demanded to be heard. And they were heard. The session began and the gathered citizens pleaded their case. The results from this meeting were that they

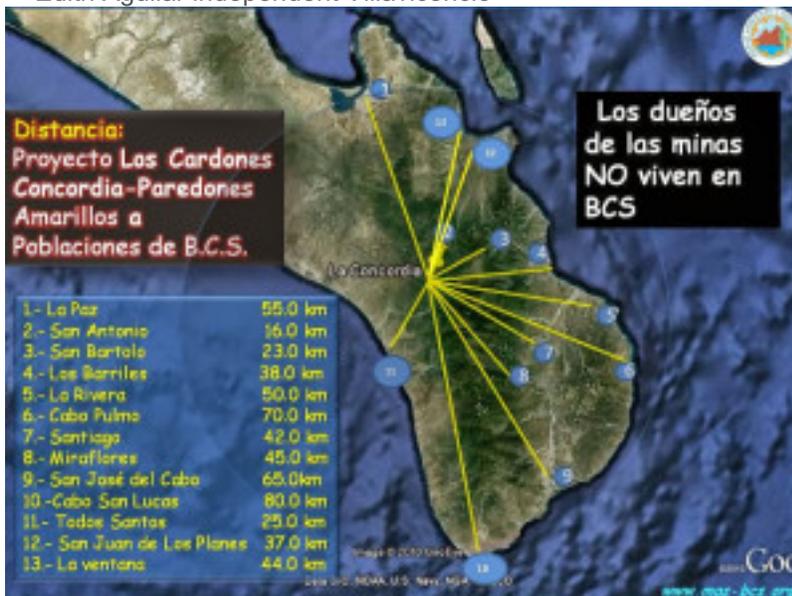
would sign the PACTO de Todos Santos on the following day in La Paz.

Another win for the people. A committee will be formed of citizens and members of the Congress to go to speak to the official headquarters of SEMARNAT in Mexico City. The next action was to lock down the building at SEMARNAT. The building and parking lot were cleared of people and the gates to the offices were locked until they had an agreement to be heard from the local level of SEMARNAT. When they got their agreement the citizens reopened the gates to the SEMARNAT offices.

*October 10, 2014, The Citizens of Todos Santos returned to Congress to hear the representatives state their positions regarding the mining operations, forming the committee to investigate and oppose the mega mining project, up to the Federal level if necessary.

The PACTO de Todos Santos will not be signed until all 21 Legislators are able to sign it. The Committee includes:

- Luis Martín Pérez Murrieta
- Deputy Jesus Verdugo Salvador Ojeda
- Jisela Paes Martinez
- Carlos Castro Ceseña
- Edith Aguilar independent Villavicencio



October 23, 2014 The Diputados along with mining company and citizens from Todos Santos visit the Los Cardones mine site. The visit was late in the day and only saw a few of the sections, which showed where they would remove the Earth and the site for the tailings pond. The citizens of Todos Santos were quieted; while pro mine persons were allowed to ask their questions.

On October 28, 2014 – Desarrollos Zapal announced that the company will be suspending the project due to the negative perception of the public. They want to teach the public about their view of responsible mining. One must recall that the Los Cardones promotional video shows the Piedras Verdes Mine as its peer site. This area has already suffered contamination to the surrounding area and the inhabitants. Guerra Abud came to La Paz and held a press conference at SEMARNAT stating that the project is only halted due to the company and not an official suspension. He also stated that President Pena Nieto will not be reviewing the mine as asked by the people of the region (due to the company's suspension.)