Public Talking Points for
State Agency Committee, NASEM, local government, letters to your paper, your family, etc!
6-1-22

Submit your comment to the NASEM now. They will begin writing their report mid July: https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/potential-impacts-of-gold-mining-in-virginia In the upper right hand corner click on "Provide feedback on this project".

Submit your comment to the State Agency Committee before September 30, 2022:
https://townhall.virginia.gov/L/comments.cfm?generalnoticeid=2368

- Industrial gold mining hasn't been done in Virginia for nearly 75 years, and Virginia's **regulations** are not adequate to protect our waters from such operations

- There is a gold-pyrite belt spanning from Fairfax to Halifax counties, and a Canadian company has been doing **exploratory drilling** for gold in Buckingham County since at least 2016 - all of which was done without the County Administration's knowledge - and has indicated they have secured other property for metals mining in at least one other Virginia county

- Virginia's **geography and climate** increase the hazards to the James River watershed and other watersheds - groundwater and surface water resources that millions of people rely on for drinking water

- In a nutshell, **10 major concerns**:
  1) Dewatering of mines impacting water table for miles around
  2) Airborne toxins impacting local area
  3) Leaching of toxins into groundwater
  4) Acid Mine Drainage
  5) Catastrophic mine waste (tailings) dam failures
  6) VA has no regulations on the use of cyanide
  7) Forever toxic sites, leaving the forever burden to the taxpayers
  8) Virginia's rainfall is a huge problem – let alone the climate crisis with increasingly devastating storms
  9) Local governments enticed by tax revenue that will never cover the true costs
  10) Negligible number of local jobs – most are specialized, imported from elsewhere

- Gold and other elemental metals mining, especially in areas having geography like Virginia's, requires the process of **dewatering**, which would drain the water table for miles around, affecting the water availability in existing private drinking wells and would create discharge into the James River watershed (and other watersheds)

- The process of pulverizing the ore in order to extract the metals also poses a threat to nearby air and soil quality - as it becomes **air-borne**, further impacting communities in proximity to such operations.

- Digging into the land unearths **naturally occuring heavy metals and radioactive materials**, which, when left alone do not pose the problems of exposure.

- The processing of gold and other elemental metals utilizes **cyanide**, adding to the hazards for local surface and ground-water that nearby communities and downstream communities rely on as main water resources

- **Acid Mine Drainage:** Mining exposes sulfides in rock, which react with water and air to form sulfuric acid. Once the process starts it's impossible to stop until the acid generating material is depleted, which can take thousands of years. Some Roman mines in Spain still drain acid.

- There is typically **99% waste** from gold mining. It can take over 20 tons of waste to produce one gold ring.

- The most dramatic mining disasters occur when the vast **waste storage (tailings) dams** break. The dams are made from the pulverized ore and need to be in place forever, as there is no further processing of the very toxic wastes. Our eastern seaboard rainfall is an inherent problem, as is the increasing severity of weather.

- The **risks** to our drinking water, land, and air far outweigh any possible benefit of industrial scale gold mining.

- There is already plenty of **gold available**, with the majority of it locked away in vaults for investors to speculate on. Keep it safely in the ground, causing no harm.

- The immense **cost of cleanup** from industrial gold mines often falls to taxpayers.

- The **promise of jobs and tax revenue** for the local community and the state are illusory at best. The bulk of the jobs would go to specialized

workers from elsewhere. The equipment is all specialized and would be imported. The company would get the profits, leaving the community and state with the risks, reparations and forever-toxic wastes.

- Virginians do not want to **sacrifice** our drinking water and agricultural lands for an unstable and transitory industry with a devastating track record around the globe.

- **Social and environmental injustice:** Industrial gold mining in Virginia would impact communities across the Commonwealth, while disproportionately impacting communities of color and low income.

- Virginians have the **right and responsibility to protect** our health, water, land, and air. We can no longer allow our communities to be sacrificed so that the few may profit.

- **Prove it First!** Before granting any permits, let the mining applicant prove that at least one other community has been caused no harm by similar proposed activities. Let's first require of mining corporations a common sense burden of proof of safety and environmental justice.

- Buckingham County residents are pursuing a **unique approach to protecting** the health, safety, and general welfare of the residents and natural environment of the county with a proposed local ordinance.

- **This ordinance** declares 4 main points:

  1) Asserts the right and responsibility of **local self-governance** to make decisions locally to protect our communities.

  2) Recognizes the fundamental rights of residents and ecosystems of the county to be **free from toxic trespass,** which we know industrial mining would bring.

  3) Applies a **common-sense burden of proof** of safety and environmental justice to corporations seeking to engage in metallic mining within the county.

  4) Requires a metallic mining company to "***Prove It First***". The company would first have to provide proof of at least one metallic mine that did not cause harm – inspired by past Wisconsin and pending Minnesota law.