

PRESS RELEASE

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Core Member of the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment

BVDA CALLS FOR FREE WATER AND FUTURE HEALTH CARE COSTS FOR ENTIRE COMMUNITY

Homestake-Barrick Gold has now hired a director of US Corporate Responsibility, Rebecca Darling, who met with a small group of community members and promised those present that the company planned to begin living up to its commitment to honor the *United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, a voluntary document originating under the leadership of the late Kofi Anan, and authored by John Ruggie, who now serves on Barrick Gold's Corporate Responsibility Advisory Board.

Under its new emphasis on corporate responsibility, Barrick Gold has made reparations to women raped at their mining operations in Papua, New Guinea; the company is working to contain a cyanide spill in Argentina; it has signed on to an out-of-court settlement for Tanzanian villagers in relation to killings at its North Mara mine; and in New Mexico, the company will meet soon with the Village of Milan "to discuss the administrative aspects of Homestake [Barrick Gold] re-initiating the provision of water for Murray Acres' residents," a community near the site with about a fifth of the total residents in the area. In addition, in a letter to the group, a company representative stated that "Homestake [Barrick Gold] continues to be interested in purchasing properties in the area, contingent on funding." It is noteworthy that the Barrick Gold Corporation has netted over \$18 billion dollars in the last decade.

BVDA is now asking Homestake-Barrick Gold to extend these initial efforts to all residents in the area--about 110 families in total. Also, the organization is requesting Homestake-Barrick Gold honor the other requests the organization outlined in its December 2017 letter*, and begin discussing ways to create a fund to cover health costs of residents who may develop lung cancer in the future as a result of long-term exposure to radon from the still unremediated site.

Letter available here.

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Additional Background

In December, 2017, the Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance or BVDA (Core Member of the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment or MASE) along with 5 other environmental groups

sent a review and history of the Homestake (subsidiary of Barrick Gold) Uranium Mill Tailings Superfund site north of Milan New Mexico to 5 different governmental entities including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the US Department of Energy (DOE), and the US Attorney for the District of New Mexico.

In that review, BVDA explained the 40-year history of the site including that from 1974 to 1986 the Homestake site was regulated by the State of New Mexico in accordance with its status as an Agreement State for uranium milling as authorized by the NRC. In 1975, the State of New Mexico requested that the EPA study the site and in 1983, the site was placed on EPA's National Priority List (NPL). In 1986, the State of New Mexico relinquished its regulatory authority as an NRC Agreement State back to the NRC, which now monitors the site under a 1989 Corrective Action Program and 10 CFR Part 40 for Title II Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA). EPA monitors the site through its Superfund NPL Program and the State of New Mexico issues Groundwater Discharge Permits.

Early on in the Superfund site's history, some of the families adjacent to the site sued Homestake-Barrick Gold and, as part of a Department of Justice Agreement entitled *United States of America v. Homestake Mining Company* a stipulation required Homestake-Barrick Gold to hook residents up to a municipal water source and pay residents' water bill for ten years at which time the site was supposed to be remediated. This did not compensate residents for the trespass of contaminated water onto their property or for the taking of their clean water, but it did cover immediate drinking water needs. Residents in the surrounding communities were, and are still, exposed to radon in the ambient air at far higher levels than considered safe by the EPA, and community members have been unable to meet their agricultural needs due to the contamination that has now seeped into 4 and possibly 5 aquifers. After 10 years, the residents also had to begin paying for municipal water themselves because the contamination was not remediated but the stipulation and, thus, Homestake-Barrick Gold's legal obligation had ended. Today, projected dates for cleanup are 2022 but for 30 years each time one of the projected cleanup dates neared, a Corrective Action Plan has been revised by Homestake-Barrick Gold and that target has been extended.

In the review, BVDA and allies asked for three things:

1. Pay residents back for the water they were forced to purchase because of the failed cleanup.
2. Drill and operate a municipal well for the community from an unpolluted source so that domestic water would once again be free and good to drink as the municipal water source had many problems and many residents were still hauling water to drink.
3. Drill new wells for those property owners who want them and have legal water rights so they can resume previous agricultural activities.
4. Buy out those families who want to leave--giving them the value for their property they would have had without the environmental catastrophe.