



## Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance

BVDA was founded in 2006 by residents of the Milan, N.M. area, who live next to and downstream of the Homestake/Barrick Gold uranium mill tailings facility. BVDA advocates for comprehensive cleanup of groundwater contaminated by uranium mining and milling facilities in the Ambrosia Lake-Milan area. BVDA also advocates for compensation of residents downstream of the Homestake tailings facility.

### Impacts to the Community

- Residents living around the site experience greater health problems than those living in other areas. Health problems include various cancers, asthma, severe migraines, gallbladder diseases, and thyroid diseases.
- Property values of the area have fallen, leaving family's investments in land and housing worthless.
- Communities have lost rights to their own wells and water supply and must now pay for water.
- Families experience intense stress with knowing they are raising their children in a hazardous area harmful to their health.

## Homestake-Barrick Gold's On-site Uranium Mill Tailings

BVDA members have charted how groundwater contamination from the Homestake tailings has spread throughout the area since first discovered in 1961.

They have also documented how a succession of clean-up plans approved by federal and state agencies have failed to halt the migration.

They have found:

- **22,000,000 tons of radioactive mill waste** in two piles, one of which is 90 feet high and 200 acres in size
- Unlined Waste pile **leaking contaminants directly** into groundwater
- That the tailings were flushed with clean drinking water from the San Andres-Glorieta aquifer for 15 years, contrary to best practices, **with minimal results**
- **Uncovered tailings which release radon at levels 2 to 3 times higher** than acceptable cancer risk standards.

The Homestake site is owned by Barrick Gold, a multi-billion dollar company that can afford to invest in the removal and relocation of its mill tailings as a cost of doing business. Past promises by the company to restore the groundwater have not been kept, and state and federal regulators have failed to enforce Homestake's clean-up obligations.

# DEMANDS OF THE BLUEWATER VALLEY DOWNSTREAM ALLIANCE

**1. Relocate the tailings to a safer off-site location.** A full cleanup is not possible if the unlined tailings piles are left on-site. Removing the piles will protect neighboring residents from radon levels which the EPA says are higher than its acceptable cancer risk standards by 2-3 times at the site boundary. An off-site repository will more effectively isolate the tailings from our scarce surface and groundwater sources, a precious resource for New Mexico's future generations. Tailings were relocated away from the Colorado River at the old Atlas Mill site near Moab, UT, and EPA is planning a similar relocation away from the Little Colorado River watershed near Cameron, NM.

## **2. Continue groundwater treatment until the tailings are relocated**

Homestake-Barrick Gold's 1989 Corrective Action Plan and subsequent revisions have failed to address our concerns with cleaning up the groundwater contamination in our wells. They continue to be threatened by leakage from the unlined tailings. We want a complete characterization of the tailings piles and flushing impacts. We demand complete remediation or total isolation of the contamination source - the tailings.

**3. Protect our water quality.** EPA has compiled evidence of our water quality before the milling began. We want our clean water back. but that cannot be achieved until the tailings have been relocated or completely encapsulated. It is unacceptable for the NMED, the EPA, and the NRC to release Homestake-Barrick Gold from this obligation.



Milton Head BVDA member demonstrating pollution flows.  
Photo: M. Varela

## Contact Information

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