



Risks of the proposed open pit gold mine at Cochrane Hill, along the St. Mary's River

A large, open pit gold mine is proposed along the edge of the St. Mary's River, near Sherbrooke, Guysborough County. Construction and operation of the pit would involve blasting, trucking, heavy machinery work, and the creation of permanent tailings ponds and piles, all posing a serious risk to the environment, and imposing negative impacts on the community. Many residents who live near the proposed mine site are against it, and thousands of fans of the St. Mary's River don't want to see it happen. Here's what you should know:

About the pit

- The open pit of the mine would be 950m x 450m x 170m, or about the size of 38 Olympic-sized swimming pools.
- 43.1 million tonnes of rock would be excavated, at a rate of 22,086 tonnes per day. This will involve loud blasting 2 to 3 times per week, and 6 or more C-train truckloads of ore per day more passing through Sherbrooke to take the ore to be processed in Moose River Gold Mines.
- Partially processed ore will be left on-site, creating a tall tailings pile. Bringing ore to the surface runs the risk of creating acid rock drainage, in which runoff from the tailings pile releases sulfuric acid and heavy metals into the river.
- Massive amounts of water will be needed (50,000L/day) to operate the mine and 500,000 cubic meters for start-up which would be withdrawn from the St. Mary's River or Archibald Lake.

About the river

- The St. Mary's River is beautiful and quiet, currently free of industrial activity. It has a long history of settlement, and currently the community is focused on economic development related to eco-tourism and recreation. The river is beloved by anglers, and has several protected forests along its shorelines.



Angler on the St. Mary's River (photo by Deidre Green)

- The river hosts a population of the endangered Atlantic Salmon, and is one of the best rivers in Eastern Nova Scotia to support species recovery. At times of the year with low water levels it cannot support an additional withdrawal – lack of water depth and the resulting high water temperature do not provide adequate conditions for fish (salmon and trout) and fish eggs to survive. The mine would also pose the risk of changing river water pH, and could introduce toxic levels of metals and other contaminants into the river.
- The river and its banks also hosts other species at risk, including Wood Turtle, and several bird species at risk. All would lose habitat when the mine is developed, and would risk injury and death with the increase in trucking in their habitat.

Who stands to gain? Who stands to lose?

- Junior mining company Atlantic Gold Corporation is proposing this project, to make money off the gold they can extract from the ore. They suggest that the project would create local jobs, but that may not be the case – workers could come from Atlantic Gold’s nearby mine site(s), or nearby cities.



Touquoy mine site, where ore from Cochrane Hill we be trucked to (photo by CBC)

- The site would be in operation for about 6 years, then “reclaimed.” After the reclamation work is complete, the company gets to walk away... the tailings pile and pond remain forever. If a spill or leaching from these causes contamination down the line, the company is not held responsible.
- The St. Mary’s River Association is the local community group that has poured more than \$1 million and countless hours of volunteer time into restoring salmon habitat on the river – that work would be jeopardized by the proposed mine.
- The community has been very clear about its vision for its future: the District of St Mary’s Municipal Council 10 year Strategic Plan, and St. Mary’s River Association Outdoor Recreation Development Plan for the St. Mary’s Watershed both have documented objectives for eco-tourism development, which is not compatible with this mining project.
- The proposed project would provide a short term gain for a foreign mining company, at the expense of long-term risks to river and the community.

Next steps

- The proposed mining project will undergo an environmental assessment, at which point the public can comment on the technical aspect of the mine project. No part of this process incorporates the will of the community into decision making, nor does it seriously consider alternative, sustainable development options for the area.
- Decision makers, including politicians at all levels of government, need to hear from people about this proposed project.

Please consider learning more about the project from the St. Mary's River Association, and contacting politicians to share your views.

You are invited to sign a petition against the project at [Change.org](https://www.change.org). Here are some reasons for signing, submitted by people who signed the petition:

“My children and grandchildren have been granted a long history of family who lived along the river. Please let their children be granted the ability to sit on its bank, near the family farm and share stories of this magical place.”

“Are these people insane? So much work has been done to protect the St. Mary's River why would anyone think a mine is a good idea?”

“Water is far more important than gold.”



Sheep Island, Glenelg Lake, close to proposed mine site (photo by Deidre Green)

Learn more about the proposed project and the risks its poses on the SMRA's web page: <https://www.stmarysriverassociation.com/>. See below for actions you can take...



St. Mary's River underwater photos by Gilbert van Ryckevorsel

If you are concerned about the proposed mine along the banks of the river, please share your concerns with the Councillors, MLAs and MP for the St. Mary's River:

MP = Sean Fraser Phone: 902-867-2919 sean.fraser@parl.gc.ca

MLA = Lloyd Hines Phone: 902-533-2280 lphines@ns.sympatico.ca

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