

SUMMIT ON
REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS FOR CLOSURE OF HISTORIC, ABANDONED MINES

To be convened at
The Colorado School of Mines
Thursday, November 17, 2016

Sponsored by: The Payne Institute for Earth Resources, the Hennebach Program in the Humanities, the Department of Mining Engineering, all at the Colorado School of Mines, and the Keystone Policy Center.

The Colorado School of Mines will convene a high-level summit on the closure of abandoned, historic mines. Some mines have been kept in care and maintenance status, perhaps for economic reasons or in perpetuity. And some mines have been abandoned or unsuccessfully closed – with emergent and latent environmental, political, and societal impacts possible to appear in the future. In many cases, such historic mines were operated prior to the implementation of current laws and regulations, and postponement in closure may negatively impact the reputation of the current industry and raise major questions for communities in the granting of social license to mine for future mines.

The focus for this summit is on successful mine closure of abandoned, historic U. S. mines, primarily (but not solely) in the western US. The summit will have a particular focus on the reasonable closure expectations, motivated by the problem of the geological, environmental, social, and economic impact of these abandoned, historic mines. The environment and community sustainability must be important components of closure and reclamation of these abandoned, historic mine sites – something that has not always been true in the past. Society must recognize and appreciate the importance of minerals to our daily lives - minerals which come from today's modern, environmentally conscious mining industry. Sustainable closure with minimal active management is desirable for all stakeholders, but to achieve this we need to identify holistic and integrated environmental and societal aspects to achieve effective and acceptable closure.

Successful closure requires an integrated approach including:

- Understanding of the status of surface and underground workings, water and materials
- Understanding of the current state and federal programs regarding mine closure and governing long-term shut-down conditions, and how these might be enhanced or refined
- Monitoring environmental changes throughout the closure and reclamation process at each mine
- Management of long-term risk and liability issues
- Understanding the social, economic, and political contexts of the communities located near or downstream from abandoned mines.
- Development, demonstration, and implementation of new methods and technologies
- Engaged stakeholders and constituency groups that include:
 - Mining companies
 - Impacted communities
 - Watershed organizations
 - Federal, state, county, municipality and tribal agencies
 - Professional organizations and consultants
 - NGOs
 - Universities
- Recognition of the limited or lack of existing legal grounds for third parties to embark on closure activities at abandon mines without becoming legally liable for the existing historic liability under the terms of existing regulations.

The Colorado School of Mines therefore is convening a Summit to be attended by representatives from these stakeholders and constituency groups. We intend to address the need for successful closure of the abandoned, historic mines by proposing tangible frameworks that will guide all stakeholders in holistic planning and undertaking tangible actions that will begin systematic remediation of existing abandoned, historic mines in the western US.

Interested in participating? Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com>.

Questions? Contact Dr. Priscilla Nelson, Department Head of Mining Engineering at pnelson@mines.edu or visit the web site of the Payne Institute for Earth Resources at <https://inside.mines.edu/Payne-Institute-Home>.