

Raura Mining Company Perforates Glacier within the Cordillera Huayhuash Reserved Zone

The Cordillera Huayhuash is known for the mountain Yarupaja, the second highest peak in Peru at 6617 meters, its stunning landscapes, and its trekking circuit which is among the top most important trekking circuits of the world. In an effort to conserve biodiversity and the sources of fresh water within the range, the Huayhuash was declared a Reserved Zone within the Peruvian system of Natural Protected Areas (SINANPE) in 2002 (*Resolucion Ministerial 1173-2002-AG*). Local communities have also taken initiative to protect the range by developing four private conservation areas that are now officially recognized by the Peruvian state. While this area has been designated as a priority for conservation at the local as well as the national level, in April of this year the Ministry of the Environment (MINAM) observed that the mining company CIA Minería Raura S.A. is puncturing glaciers in their exploration efforts for the Diablo Mudo Exploration Project located in the Department of Ancash (like a state), Province of Bolognesi, and within the Cordillera Huayhuash Reserved Zone.

In Peru the Supreme Decree 020-2008-EM, article 31, subsection 2, states that mining activity cannot be realized “on glaciers or within 100 meters of the border of a glacier” (translation mine). Clearly the mine violated this law. Additionally the Raura Mining Company is undertaking its exploration activities without the proper authorization from the National Water Authority (ANA) for the use of water. Furthermore, according to the MINAM report, the Raura Mining Company is not complying with its environmental management standards as outlined in their own Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the exploration project (the EIA was authorized by the Ministry of Energy and Mines through the Resolution 004-2010-MEM/AAM). These observations make it clear that CIA Minería Raura S.A., the company responsible for the Diablo Mudo Mining Project, are infringing upon laws that regulate mining activity in Peru.



An exploration drill obviously perforating the glacier. WGS84 UTM Zone 18s 282555E 8861436N –altitud 4848. Date: March 29 2011. Photo: Marco Arenas.



Five weeks later, the drill is no longer in the glacier (although the previous hole is visible in the ice) and the drilling is still well within 10 meters of the edge of the glacier. Date: May 9 2011. Photo: Timothy Norris.

The liquid effluent from these operations enters the upper reaches of the Ocshapata watershed which then flows to the Achin River and finally passes through a rich agricultural zone on the Peruvian coast known Pativilca before it enters the Pacific Ocean. The Ocshapata River lies within the territory of the community of Pacllon, a small ranching community located in the district of Bolognesi. In December of

2010 the community took a water sample to a laboratory and found that the concentrations of lead and zinc were above the maximum permissible limits for mining activity in Peru (*Decreto Supremo* 010-2010-MINAM). The community of Pacllon took two more water samples in May of 2011 with the assistance of a local NGO. The results from these samples confirmed the result for zinc from December of 2010. Additionally it was found that the concentrations of cadmium, manganese, nickel, and aluminum (all considered toxic at high levels) are above the national standards in Peru for drinking water (*Decreto Supremo* 002-2008-MINAM).

It is well known that Peru is a mineral rich country and that the benefits from natural resources flow to the nation, not just benefitting the state, but also the residents of the Andes, the Amazon, and the Pacific Coast. It is also recognized that legislation governing mining activities in Peru is still young and needs further attention. But in no way should this situation allow a mining company like CIA Minería Raura S.A., which is a Peruvian owned company, to evade the existing legislation and realize its activities without complying with its own environmental protection plan outlined in their environmental impact statement. It is time to demand from all mining companies that existing environmental regulations for mining activities are respected.

- Francisco Raimondi de Mayolo

Poscript:

This press release was originally made public in Peru in June of 2011. The mine later approached the community of Pacllon and proposed performing water quality testing together. In October of 2011 four more water samples were taken that confirmed the results again and also showed that concentrations of zinc, nickel, cadmium, manganese, and aluminum had increased since the May 2010 results. In the first months of 2012 the mine decided to retire their exploration activities at Diablo Mudo. While there were several other factors involved in this decision, problems with land titles and access agreements for example, it is likely that the observations made by the ministry of the environment (MINAM) and the subsequent discovery of elevated levels of contaminants downstream of their operations played a role.

Tim Norris – January 2015

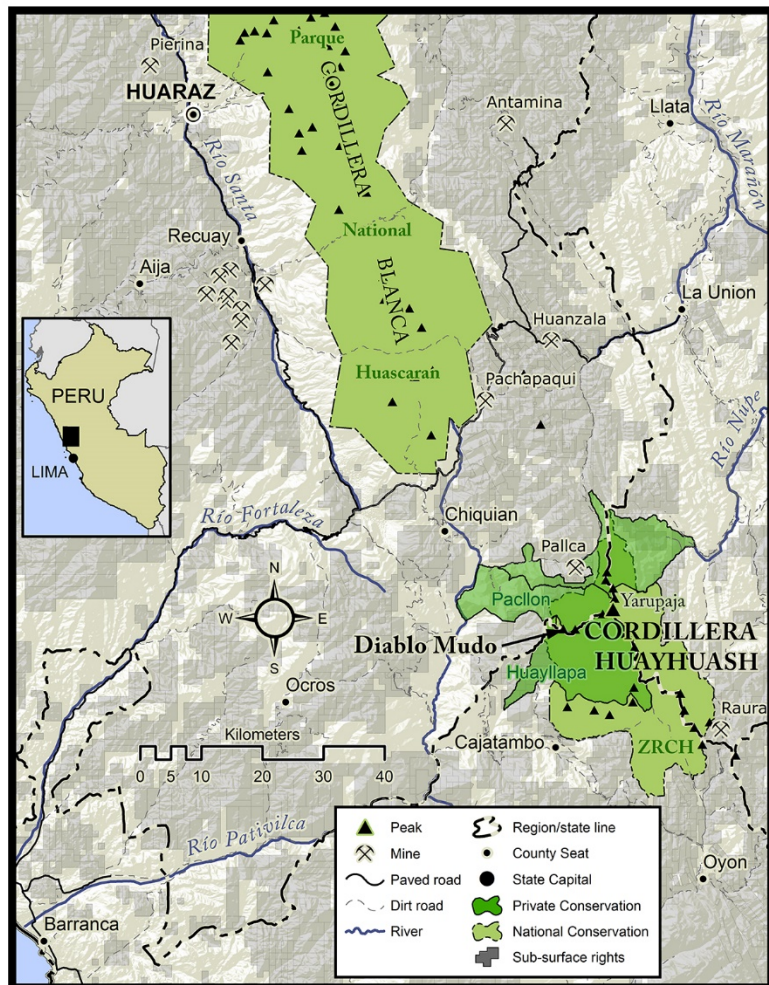


Figure 1: Map of the Cordillera Huayhuash and the surrounding area. Sources: INGEMMET and SERNANP online databases (2014), SRTM (2014).