

August 20, 2020

An Open Letter to:

John-Sebastien Jacques
Chief Executive Officer
Rio Tinto and Utah Kennecott Copper Corporation

Dear Mr. Jacques:

As residents, and civic groups, of the Salt Lake Valley concerned for the health of all residents, we request that Rio Tinto Kennecott place its extensive land holdings in Salt Lake City's Northwest Quadrant into a permanent conservation easement. Preserving this land would enhance the Kennecott Inland Sea Shorebird Reserve and demonstrate a commitment to public health and environmental sustainability.

You currently plan to allow development of this land as part of an inland port. By protecting this area from development, Rio Tinto Kennecott would safeguard our valley from 70,000 additional daily commercial truck trips and 150,000 additional daily private car trips which our modeling suggests would be generated at full build out. Damage to water quality and important wildlife habitat is almost inevitable.

Communities near inland ports elsewhere in the United States have suffered serious public health problems. Multiple studies of communities with inland ports elsewhere in the United States cite increases in numerous adverse health outcomes, including heart and lung disease, neurologic disorders, and increased cancer risk. As is the case with much urban environmental degradation, public health impacts fall disproportionately on low-income families and persons of color.

Rio Tinto Kennecott's long history of harming Utah's environment has required numerous legal actions to end polluting activities.

For decades, your operations in western Salt Lake County generated toxic selenium and arsenic groundwater plumes. An acid plume at the southern end of these operations rendered the water undrinkable for thousands of residents of South Jordan. (Utah Department of Environmental Quality, 2020). In 2008, the Salt Lake Tribune discovered that Rio Tinto Kennecott executives covered up potentially disastrous structural defects in tailings impoundments (Salt Lake Tribune, March 24, 2008), some of which may persist to this day.

Rio Tinto Kennecott has achieved great wealth mining metals at the main Kennecott Utah Copper operation and the Bingham Canyon Mine. These holdings, along with your 30 percent ownership of the Escondida Copper Mine in Chile, place you as one of the largest producers of copper in the world. Your company earned \$10.4 billion last year, according to the Rio Tinto Kennecott website. You have a sound financial base.

However, your wealth has come at a great cost to our community. Based on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Toxic Release Inventory of 2017, the Bingham Canyon Mine is the second-largest source of toxic releases in the United States. This inventory tracks 650 toxic compounds from various industries that leak into the environment. Forbes Magazine uses this inventory to rank U.S. cities and states. The Bingham Canyon copper mine is by far the largest single source of toxic releases in Utah (over 90 percent) as tracked by the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory and reported in the Salt Lake Tribune (November 13, 2017). Salt Lake County was second in the nation for the high volume of toxins released into the environment as cited in Forbes Magazine November 7, 2017 issue.

From the thousands of pounds of lead emitted from Rio Tinto Kennecott's smelter stack every year to the tons of fugitive dust, heavy metals, particulate matter, toxic chemicals, and nitrogen oxides emitted from your diesel equipment and other mining operations, Rio Tinto Kennecott has harmed the health of our densely populated community in many ways. These include exposing our children to neurotoxins and virtually all the diseases known to come from smoking cigarettes. Extrapolating from worldwide research, Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment estimates that over the course of 100 plus years, Rio Tinto Kennecott's pollution of the Salt Lake Valley has led to the premature deaths of tens of thousands of people.

Rio Tinto Kennecott continues to avoid taking responsibility for the environmental damage it has caused and may cause in future. Your company does not have a closure plan properly reviewed by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as required by law. Such a plan would detail the environmental harms your company has caused and ensure that considerable resources are guaranteed to remediate them when you cease operations in Utah. Yet, closure is expected within the next 20 years.

Rio Tinto Kennecott once planned to leave this land between I-80 and the Great Salt Lake in its natural state as partial mitigation of environmental damage. Why is that now not the case?

Protecting this land would not only protect the health of the people who labored for you, but also the habitat for many species, including *millions* of birds that depend on the lake and surrounding wetlands, one of the most important ecological systems in the western world.

Also, we are concerned that the land you intend to develop contains ancient villages and burial sites of Indigenous people, particularly from the Shoshone, Ute and Goshute tribes. Your development plans could destroy these sacred places just as your activities destroyed a 46,000-year-old similar site in Australia.

Based on a recent poll, nearly two-thirds of the residents of the Salt Lake Valley opposed the development of this inland port. Opposition is destined to grow.

The conservation easement we seek would be an even greater contribution to the future of our region than your much-admired state-of-the-art soccer stadium and world-class natural history museum. Land preservation can be part of a mitigation plan. So far, the legacy of Kennecott and Rio Tinto Kennecott is rooted in pollution and disregard for public health.

Rio Tinto Kennecott has profited from Utah's land for over a century. Now we ask you to preserve the land and to take a stand against more air and water pollution, and habitat destruction. That would be the greatest legacy you could give to future generations of Utahns--and birds of the world.