

Gaudielle of Calico says, “We are evaluating mining it as an underground mine, where we put either a shaft or ramp by the deposit and extract the minerals from underground, and hoist it to surface.” He adds that “it would be very difficult to permit an open pit mine in Oregon right now. That’s our spin on it.”

Hansen says the fact that Calico Resources is not proposing an open pit mine — as previous companies have done for that site in the past — and that the gold mine will be all underground mining and backfilling makes it “a little more palatable from that perspective.” That said, he adds, “There is still a lot of concern from our point of view.”

About 40 percent of the rock removed from the mine would be mixed with cement and used to backfill the mine, according to Gaudielle. Vaughn Balzer, who works in reclamation at DOGAMI, compares the process to an earthworm moving through the earth, “chewing at one end and spitting out at the other,” filling in its tunnel as it goes.

The rest of the mine tailings would be dry stacked (de-watered instead of stored in a pond) and put on the ground, changing the contour of the land, Gaudielle says. Calico has stressed that the mine will be consistent with “‘sustainable development’ principles,” but Hansen says that’s greenwashing: “How taking vast amounts of dirt and soil from the earth is going to be environmentally friendly, I don’t know.”

Gaudielle also stresses Calico management’s history of safety — “There’s always hazards involved in a mining operation,” he says. A Northwest News Network investigation into the Lucky Friday silver mine collapse in Idaho that killed a miner in April revealed that hazardous conditions in the mine could have been prevented. It doesn’t put confidence in federal oversight that a federal Mine Safety and Health Administration report on a previous, similar accident at the mine that could have prevented the lethal collapse apparently never made it from the federal agency to the mine managers. But Gaudielle says Calico will promote a safety culture, and he says the mine could employ more than 100 people in Malheur County.

Gaudielle also points to awards the management group has won in its mining of one of the largest surface coal mines in the U.S., a mine called Black Thunder in Wyoming owned by Arch Coal. Arch Coal is one of the coal companies that has controversially been attempting to build a coal export terminal on the Columbia River just as Oregon strives to go coal-free.

Calico has begun core-drilling exploration on the site. Gaudielle says, “One drill rig is running on the site, and a second is on its way.” The company got its permits from DOGAMI to begin exploration but still would have to get permits from state and federal agencies like the BLM and the DEQ to develop the mine. This particular site has been drilled and explored for gold many times over the years, according to a technical report on Calico’s website. Grassy Mountain contains an estimated more than 900,000 ounces of gold. That’s more than \$1 billion worth of gold for Calico at today’s prices.

“Right now we control about 3,800 acres of federal land through unpatented mining claims and three patented claims of about 61 acres that the core deposit sits on,” Gaudielle says. “We also have leased about 1,300 acres of private land that is very near the project.” He says the company hopes to process the gold on a mill site very near to the mine, “depending on the permitting process.”

Processing the gold is where the nasty chemicals like mercury and cyanide come in. In the past, gold from open pit mining was processed by heap leaching. Balzer says that process involved piling the ore on plastic- or clay-lined pads then dripping cyanide over the gold. But he says he believes Calico Resources plans to use a closed-tank system for its processing and chemicals.

Hansen says, “They have said it’s going to be a closed loop process, but it’s a pretty heavily intensive chemical process.”

Gaudielle says that he thinks Oregon’s law, similar to that of other Western states when it comes to chemical process mining, is strong enough. “Oregon has a mining law that was legislated in the 1990s for hardrock mining

and as far as I know it has not been tested,” he says, adding, “So it’s sort of an open question. But our feeling is that we are able to meet all the requirements.”

Mines like Grassy Mountain must post bonds in case they go bankrupt or pack up and leave.

Hansen says it’s not just the mining itself that is a concern for the environment. He cites road building as a problem as well. “It’s a basic conservation biology issue — any time you have roads cutting off a wildlife corridor or migration, that’s going to limit their migration and cause undo stress on the species,” Hansen says.

Gaudielle says that Calico will meet all permitting regulations and “work to mitigate any concerns that the public has,” which includes, he says, working with ONDA. “We are seasoned, experienced mine builders,” Gaudielle explains. “We intend to operate the mine as part of the community.”

Professor Mark Reed at the UO has his own concerns about mining. “We don’t really use gold for much,” he says. “It’s used for a store of value, a place to put money.” But other things that mining gives us, “copper, silver, lead, zinc — do have applications we make use of daily,” he says. “This for me always raises the question of damage to environment versus our apparent need for the material.”

According to the 2011 GAO testimony on abandoned mines, “one factor that contributes to costs for reclamation of federal lands disturbed by mining operations is inadequate financial assurances required by BLM.” The GAO reported that the “financial assurances that were provided for 52 operations were about \$61 million less than needed to fully cover estimated reclamation costs.”

Reed says, “No mine for any of these metals should be operated unless it’s rich enough and large enough to truly pay the environmental costs. That calls for such a high standard of evaluation up front, before it’s mined, that it’s pretty hard to execute, which is not to say it can’t be done.”

He says, “You can never truly pay for all of those costs, there’s always going to be some sort of environmental degradation even if you use every known way to prevent it.”

Part 2 will address a proposed uranium mine in Eastern Oregon.



Life

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THE MEANING OF LIFE
October 1 (10 a.m.–2 p.m.)
What’s the meaning of life? Some philosophers say the question doesn’t make sense, some say that it’s the only question that matters. Maybe we can’t know the meaning of life, but we certainly know what it’s like when life feels meaningless. Is it possible to think clearly about such ultimate questions? What can philosophy contribute to the search for meaning? Instructors: Cheyney Ryan (Philosophy) and Jim Earl (English) Cost: **\$45** (includes book and lunch)

POETRY: WHITMAN AND DICKINSON
October 8, 15, 22, 29 (9:30 a.m.–noon)
Two great American poets, contemporaries in Civil War America—but as different as one could imagine: the extroverted, transcendental, sensuous, democratic epic prophet of America, Walt Whitman; and the introverted, puritan, world-renouncing, individualistic lyric poet of Amherst, Emily Dickinson. Together they have come to define American poetry. Instructor: Karen Ford (English) Cost: **\$90**

CULTURE OF TOLERANCE
November 5, 12, 19, 26 (9:30 a.m.–noon)
Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain was a surprise best-seller in 2002. What could be more timely today than to learn about Islam and cultural tolerance? Discover the astonishing history, literature, and architecture of Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages. Instructor: Jim Earl (English) Cost: **\$90**

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
December 3 (10 a.m.–2 p.m.)
The UO’s Knight Library is a treasure-house, and is open to all citizens. The department of Special Collections has medieval manuscripts, maps, photographs, Oregon history, rare books, and more. For people who love books—reading or writing them—Oregon’s greatest library should be a destination, especially Special Collections. Discover what a truly great research library has to offer Oregon’s reading and writing public. Instructors: James Fox (Knight Library) and Barbara Altmann (French) Cost: **\$45** (includes book and lunch)

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