

The Power of Partnership

**When Environmentalists, Communities and Unions Come Together,
We Can Protect Our Environment, Our Communities and Our Jobs**

AFTER MANY YEARS OF CORPORATE PROPAGANDA TELLING AMERICANS THAT WE CAN'T HAVE GOOD JOBS AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES ARE FIGHTING BACK. ACROSS THE COUNTRY, ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND UNIONS ARE JOINING FORCES TO HOLD CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE AND ENSURE GOOD JOBS, SAFE WORKPLACES AND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS. FROM CLEANING UP POLLUTING INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES TO OPPOSING IRRESPONSIBLE INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS, UNIONS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE STRONGER WHEN THEY WORK TOGETHER.



Rally held at the Utah State Capitol in March 2003 organized by the coalition.

A Community Victory, Thanks to the Steelworkers and Sierra Club

The community of Salt Lake County, Utah knows first-hand that irresponsible corporate behavior threatens both workers and communities. Kennecott Utah Copper, owned by Rio Tinto, operates a vast industrial mining operation in Salt Lake County employing 1,300 workers.¹ For decades, Kennecott dumped mining waste including lead and arsenic into the creeks and flood plains near the mining operation.² Over time, neighborhoods were built on the flood plains contaminated by waste from the massive Kennecott mine.³

In 1995, after nearly ten years in the courts, Kennecott agreed to pay \$37 million as part of a negotiated settlement to help clean up the polluted site.⁴ But when the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District of the State of Utah and Kennecott developed the 'clean up' proposal, their plan included dumping contaminants into the nearby Jordan River!⁵

When the United Steelworkers of America, which represents the majority of Kennecott employees, learned of the plan they alerted the community. The Steelworkers collaborated with the Utah chapter of Sierra Club, Utah Jobs with Justice and other allies to help call attention to the dumping plan.⁶ They formed a diverse coalition of duck hunters, farmers and other community members who shared concerns about the mine's environmental pollution.

The coalition quickly mobilized, holding a news conference, organizing several large rallies and testifying at hearings. The

coalition's activities galvanized support from state and local politicians, and increased public pressure and media attention to Kennecott's anti-environmental actions.⁷ An important victory for Kennecott workers soon followed when the Steelworkers negotiated a new contract, ending an eight month labor dispute and providing workers with significant improvements over previous labor agreements.⁸

In the spring of 2004, Kennecott agreed to an improved clean-up plan that did not include dumping waste into the Jordan River.⁹ The coalition's visibility also compelled a state committee on water quality to begin monitoring selenium in the Great Salt Lake,¹⁰ a chemical found in Kennecott's waste¹¹ and shown to be harmful to wildlife.¹²

Today, the battle to protect the environment and Kennecott's workers continues. While the modified clean-up plan is improved, environmental groups and the union share a concern that heavy rains could cause retention ponds to overflow and further contaminate the region. Although a contract for Kennecott's workers was a great first step for employees, the union continues to urge Kennecott to respect workers' rights.¹³

The collaboration between the Steelworkers and Sierra Club built a stronger community and laid the foundation for holding Kennecott accountable for its environmental and labor practices, now and in the future.

"Social justice for workers and the members of the communities where we live and work can be obtained effectively when we form alliances with others who share our concerns. Collectively we can transform the political system so that it responds to human and environmental needs instead of corporate greed."

-TERRY BONDS, STEELWORKERS DISTRICT 12 DIRECTOR

Environmental and Workers' Rights Organizations Work Together to Protect Communities

Environmental advocates, unions, community groups and concerned citizens can work together to effectively leverage their strengths to hold corporations accountable and achieve common goals. For example:

- Sierra Club and the Steelworkers jointly intervened in clean air permit proceedings to call for improvements at the Rocky Mountain Steel Mill in Pueblo, Colorado that would increase efficiency and profitability at the mill and help clean up the air for everyone.
- The Steelworkers and other unions are working with Sierra Club in a broad community coalition to pressure ASARCO to clean up lead pollution from a smelter in El Paso, Texas.¹⁴
- The Steelworkers joined with Sierra Club and other community groups to conduct water testing and hold press conferences calling attention to pollution from AK Steel facilities in Middletown, Ohio and Rockport, Indiana.¹⁵



Photo by Edward Snow

Unions and environmentalists have worked together in many communities to protect places like the Great Salt Lake pictured above.

Fighting for the Future...How You Can Get Involved

American Rights at Work, Sierra Club, and their members and supporters know that if workers cannot form unions, creative partnerships like these would not be possible. By working together, we can hold companies accountable for their violations of labor and environmental laws. Join our fight for a better America!

About American Rights at Work

American Rights at Work is a national workers' rights organization advocating for the freedom of workers to form unions and negotiate with employers over the terms and conditions of their jobs.

- Visit www.americanrightsatwork.org to learn more about workers' rights abuses, the inadequacy of U.S. labor law, and discover ways to take action to protect workers' rights.
- To partner with American Rights at Work, call (202) 822-2127 or email outreach@americanrightsatwork.org.

About Sierra Club

Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, whose members work together to protect communities and the planet.

- Visit www.sierraclub.org/partnerships to find out about environmental issues in your community and how you can support local and national campaigns and actions.
- To learn more about workers and environmentalists working together, contact Sierra Club's Environmental Partnerships Program at (202) 547-1141.

¹ "Our People." Kennecott Utah Copper. 3 March 2005. <http://www.kennecott.com/whatitslike.html>; ² "Kennecott South Zone/Bingham." US EPA. 8 February 2005. <http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/ut/kennecottsouth/index.html>; ³ Ibid.; ⁴ "NRD claim." Southwest Jordan Valley Groundwater Project. 4 March 2005. <http://www.jvwcd.org/swjvgwp/claim.html>; ⁵ Brent Israelsen. "Workman Slams Water Plan." *Salt Lake Tribune*. Tuesday Nov. 25 2003. ; ⁶ Diane Heminway, USWA Environmental Projects Coordinator. Interview, 2/11/05; ⁷ Israelsen, op. cit.; ⁸ "Publications." USWA United Steelworkers of America. 16 March 2005 <http://www.uswa.org/uswa/program/content/578.php>; ⁹ "Southwest Jordan Valley Groundwater Cleanup Project, State of Utah natural resource damage trustee." Utah Department of Environmental Quality. 16 March 2005. http://www.deq.utah.gov/issues/nrd/Comment_Response_Summary_83104/index.htm; ¹⁰ Southwest Jordan Valley Groundwater Project, op. cit. <http://www.jvwcd.org/swjvgwp/selenium.html>; ¹¹ "Kennecott North Zone/Tailings." US EPA. March 4th, 2005. <http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/ut/kennecottnorth/index.html>; ¹² "Selenium." National Wildlife Health Service. 8 March 2005. http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/pub_metadata/field_manual/chapter_44.pdf; ¹³ USWA, op. cit. <http://www.uswa.org/uswa/program/content/578.php>; ¹⁴ US EPA Region 8. Letter from Regional Administrator, Gregg Cooke; ¹⁵ US EPA, Toxic Release Inventory