Maximizing sustainable mine closure outcomes requires a business-connected approach that takes full advantage of ongoing human and economic occupation of former mine sites. This has occurred in many successful mine closures around the world, particularly in well-populated regions. However, current mine closure regulation, planning and implementation frequently focuses on the minutiae of environmental remediation.

These two perspectives present inherent tensions and contradictions that, left unresolved, will lead to suboptimal mine closure plans that will be difficult to reset when new ideas and economic options emerge. Companies, communities and regulators faced with mine closure scenarios can choose to explicitly place future economic and sustainable occupation of mine sites at the forefront of mine closure visioning. This approach can leave open future options for creative human enterprise.

Mine site repurposing may actually reduce or eliminate liability concerns. If planned and brokered into second and third derivative businesses, economic options emerge. However, it is often the case that the mining companies and government regulators are not able to identify any of these options, because such ideas and experiments are simply beyond their competency and conservative mindsets.

Mines extends an invitation to contribute to this conversation about repurposing of mining assets, and to include consideration of potential constraints on repurposing opportunities, including:

1. Outstanding legal liabilities
2. Restrictions on land use
3. Water commitments
4. Contaminated areas – resolve CERCLA and State law environmental liability and oversight
5. Budget (including human resources)
6. Existing infrastructure requiring repairs/remediation
7. Local leadership and strategic plans for communities and county
8. Ultimate ownership
9. Regulatory and policy restrictions
10. Permit requirements (including need for environmental covenants)
11. Realistic understanding of time and resources required to resolve issues and make decisions
12. Mechanism for developer cost recovery – public funds, tax increment?
13. Changing Agency personnel can be a problem with long term programs
14. EPA and state to waive all claims of the landowner and successor purchasers in a consent decree and covenant not to sue – contractual protection beyond AAI
15. What more????????????

Please SAVE THE DATE. And let pnelson@mines.edu know if you are interested in receiving additional information!

Thanks – Priscilla Nelson (pnelson@mines.edu) and Linda Figueroa (lfiguero@mines.edu)