

Duty to Warn

A Sampling of 16 Earthen Dam Failures

(Not Mentioning the Hundreds of Leaky Tailings Dams or the Potential Catastrophic Breaches that will Likely Occur if Copper/Nickel/Sulfide Mining is Allowed in Northern Minnesota)

By Gary G. Kohls, MD – April 24, 2018

The following group of 5 photographs were taken after the catastrophic Teton River (Idaho) Dam failure that occurred on June 5, 1976. The earthen dam was 305 feet high and held back a 17 mile-long reservoir. The dam breach resulted in the worst man-made disaster in Idaho's history.

Two small Idaho towns downstream from the Teton River Dam, Wilford and Sugar City, were wiped from the map in the flood by a 10 foot-high wall of water. Thousands of farm animals were drowned as were several people. The towns of Hibbard, Rexburg and Roberts were also largely flooded, as was Idaho Falls. In some places houses were under as much as 10 feet of water.



The Teton River Earthen Dam Breach in Progress (June 5, 1976)



The Teton River Dam Breach the Day After



Rexburg, Idaho, the Day After



Idaho Falls the Day After

The remaining images below also represent the destructive power of earthen dam tailings ponds failures when they occur suddenly. The photos are just a few examples of a huge assortment of over 100 catastrophic, state-of-the-art earthen dam failures that have occurred just in the past couple of generations. To explore the details of any of them, click on: <http://www.wise-uranium.org/mdaf.html>

What should scare everybody that lives downstream from such earthen dams is the fact that there has been no significant change in how earthen dams are constructed, so there is no real hope that the catastrophes that have happened to these state-of-the-art dams in the recent past can't also happen to the planned 200 foot high dissolvable earthen dam that is planned to eventually encircle the tailings lagoon planned for northern Minnesota by the Canadian Penny Stock Mining Company PolyMet and its Swiss multinational resource-extracting (sociopathic) parent, Glencore.

PolyMet's and Glencore's copper/nickel/sulfide tailings lagoon will be located near the headwaters of the St Louis River. The important St Louis River has a number of small river towns, that are just as vulnerable to massive flooding and toxic contamination as the little downstream Idaho towns like Wilford, Sugar City, Hibbard, Rexburg and Roberts. Those towns had previously thrived and enjoyed life living next to the Teton and Snake Rivers, both famous for their fishing.

PolyMet's and Glencore's earthen tailings dam near Hoyt Lakes will be unrealistically holding back for eternity millions of cubic yards of liquid sludge that will contain any number of toxic heavy metals, and it will be constructed on an aged and already leaking LTV iron mine tailings lagoon. The easily soluble walls of the earthen dam will eventually rise to twice the height of British Columbia's Mount Polley dam that, like the Teton Dam, became increasingly unstable and liquid after heavy rains had raised the water level of the lagoon. Those walls then breached, spilling downstream in unbelievably forceful flooding, Polley Lake, Hazeltine Creek, Quesnel Lake, the Quesnel River and then the Fraser River, which flows to the Pacific Ocean. The numbers of dead fish and other aquatic creatures that can't survive such traumatic events will never be known.

Some of the photos below are unlabeled, but they are all available online.



Looking From Above the Mount Polley Lagoon Down at the normally tiny Hazeltine Creek and the Once Famous Salmon Fishery at Quesnel Lake (the dam walls are 100 feet high)



Wintertime View of Mount Polley's Tailing's Lagoon, Looking Upstream into the Lagoon

Coa



Birds-eye View of the Third Largest Coal Ash Disaster in the History of the US (the Duke Energy Company's Dan River (North Carolina) Coal Ash Earthen Dam Breach (Feb. 2, 2014))



An aluminium works toxic tailings pond dam breach (Hungary)





Brazil's Worst Environmental Catastrophe. Images are of the Rio Doce River and a Small River Town Downstream from the Breached Samarco Mine (November 5, 2015)