

3/7/23

General Motors

Attn: Fred Gersdorff, Senior Manager of Socially Responsible and Sustainable Supply Chains,
and Tina Winkelblech, Director of Commodities and Raw Materials
100 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48243

Subject: SIRGE Coalition's and People of Red Mountain's Concerns: Indigenous Rights
Violations Relating to Thacker Pass

Dear Mr. Gersdorff and Ms. Winkelblech,

The Securing Indigenous Rights in the Green Economy Coalition (SIRGE) is an Indigenous led coalition that advocates to implement transformative solutions to secure the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the global transition to a green economy. The primary goal of our work is to elevate Indigenous leadership and center the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples in the energy transition through constructive dialogue. Our coalition includes the following organizations: [Cultural Survival](#), [First Peoples Worldwide](#), [Batani Foundation](#), [Earthworks](#), and [Society for Threatened Peoples](#).

We are writing to you in light of General Motors' recent \$650 million joint Equity Investment and Supply Agreement with Lithium Americas to develop the Thacker Pass lithium mine at Peehee Mu'huh in Nevada. We support and affirm People of Red Mountain (PRM), an Indigenous organization of Fort McDermitt tribal descendants that was formed to protect Thacker Pass as a sacred site, who have raised significant and urgent human rights and Indigenous Peoples' rights concerns regarding the proposed mine. Furthermore, the recent lawsuit filed by Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, Burns Paiute Tribe and Summit Lake Paiute Tribe shows that the proposed Thacker Pass lithium mine lacks a social license to operate among directly affected Indigenous Peoples.

We note that in your human rights policy, GM has stated its commitments to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and ILO 169 in its operations. We also note that in your Supplier Code of Conduct, you require suppliers to respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)."

Our concerns are as follows:

- Indigenous Peoples Rights

- This mine is proposed on a sacred site known as Peehee Mu’huh. Peehee Mu’huh is a Paiute name that translates to “Rotten Moon” and references two massacres that were inflicted on the local Indigenous Peoples. The local Indigenous Peoples consider the site sacred due to massacres and the resulting remains of human ancestors. In a spiritual system that highly values ancestors, the ability to visit ancestors at the proposed mine site is a religious expression. Thus, this site is an irreplaceable component of the directly affected communities' modern spiritual and cultural practices. The proposed mine would irreparably destroy 5,695 acres of sacred land, desecrate graves, annually consume 2,600-5,200 acre feet of water, and result in hundreds of years of post-mining water pollution over its projected 40 years of construction and operations.
- Social License to Operate
 - Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) is a key component of Indigenous Peoples’ rights. Regarding the Thacker pass lithium mine, the directly affected communities were not informed prior to the completion of federal permitting of the mine. Significant community opposition to the project began in 2021 when a [petition opposing the mine was signed by a majority of McDermitt Tribal members](#). Opposition has been supported through a resolution of the National Congress of American Indians (#AK-21-027) in opposition to the mine, and one from Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada (30-ITCN-21). There is no consent for the project and, therefore, no social license to operate from directly affected communities.
- Women's Rights
 - Of particular concern is the likelihood of increased gender based violence that would result in the construction and operation of the mine. Indigenous Peoples have demanded action to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The correlation between extractive projects and increased community violence is well documented. [A 2019 Department of Justice report found a 70% increase in aggravated assault associated with the introduction of extractive industry to a community](#).

In addition, it is encouraging that General Motors is a member of the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) which requires the company to ask its suppliers to be audited against the IRMA standard. The IRMA Ready standard for proposed mines is expected to be formally approved by the end of the year and thus Lithium Americas’ proposed mine is ineligible for an IRMA audit at this time. However, Lithium Americas has shared to the public that they are using the IRMA self-assessment tool to analyze impacts without sharing the findings of such an assessment. It would be beneficial to this process of analysis to open conversations with the directly affected communities.

In light of the above, SIRGE and People of Red Mountain request a meeting with you to learn more about your efforts to implement your ESG commitments and to share perspectives about Indigenous rights concerns of directly affected Indigenous Peoples.

We also request that:

1. GM require its suppliers and partners to implement FPIC policies in accordance with UNDRIP, which is not the case with the proposed Thacker Pass mine project.
2. GM require Lithium Americas to publish the findings of their IRMA self-assessment.
3. GM pause investment in the Thacker Pass Mine to conduct due diligence on their Indigenous Rights risk exposure in the project.
4. If Lithium Americas is unable to respect FPIC, as enumerated in UNDRIP, GM rescinds their investment from the Thacker Pass Mine.

General Motors will benefit by recognizing their ongoing human rights and supplier code commitments to Indigenous Peoples by being able to report high alignment with their ESG commitments.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Gary McKinney, People of Red Mountain
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SIRGE Coalition
Executive Committee



Galina Angarova, Executive Director, Cultural Survival
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Pavel Sulyandziga, Chairman, Batani Foundation
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Payal Sampat".

Payal Sampat, Mining Program Director, Earthworks
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Wiedmer".

Christoph Wiedmer, Co-Director, Society for Threatened Peoples Switzerland
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