Case Studies in ARD Management and Mine Closure

Rio Tinto US Sites

Rich Borden and Vicky Peacey
Rio Tinto
Proactive ARD Management for Mine Closure

- Proactive ARD management should seek to eliminate or at least reduce long term water treatment liabilities before they are created.

- Mine plans should focus on the strategic management of different mine materials to create sustainable landforms which are able to support beneficial post-mining uses.
## ARD Management Strategies used / considered at Rio Tinto Mines and Projects

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Barneys Canyon Gold Mine
Waste Rock Segregation

- Visual classification of the waste

- Sampling confirmed that mean sulfur concentrations increased from 0.3% to 1.3% on average immediately across the color transition

- Designation was made by trained loader operators
Closure of Oxide Waste Rock Dumps
Barneys Canyon Sulfide Repository

- 3 m oxide waste rock
- 1 m fine-grained topsoil
- +10 degree south facing slope planted with deep rooting perennial species
- Runoff directed away from repository footprint

Open Pit Backfilled with Sulfide Waste Rock
NBCS Sulfide Repository (open pit)
Melco Sulfide Repository
Paste pH and Conductivity in 1999 (Before Dump Recontouring and Capping)
Alluvial Groundwater Down Gradient of Waste Rock and Repository (Since 2004)

- Mean pH – 7.4
- Mean Alkalinity – 320
- Mean TDS - 720
- Mean Sulfate – 140
- All Metals below USEPA water quality criteria for aquatic ecosystems and livestock guidelines
Closure of Barneys Open Pits

- **NBCS Pit** – Backfilled with sulfide waste rock and covered
- **SBCS Pit** – Backfilled with oxide waste rock
- **Melco Pit** – No water accumulation in pit
  - Above water table and no significant surface inflow into pit
- **East Barneys Pit (Flooding)**
  - Pit Lake pH = 7.9, alkalinity = 250 mg/L, TDS = 620 mg/L, sulfate = 130 mg/L, all metals below USEPA acute and chronic water quality for aquatic ecosystems and stockwater guidelines
- **Barneys Pit (Flooding)**
  - Pit Lake pH = 7.9, alkalinity = 190 mg/L, TDS = 410 mg/L, sulfate = 110 mg/L, all metals below USEPA acute and chronic water quality criteria for aquatic ecosystems and stockwater guidelines
Ridgeway Gold Mine Mineral Waste Management

• Decision was made after several years of mining to segregate all waste rock with >0.5% sulfur

• Strategy to maintain acid generating tailings under saturation with an engineered cover using materials mined at LOM

• Used the Tailings and Open Pits to manage sulfide bearing waste rock

• Flooding and saturation of acid generating waste rock, tailings and sulfides on pit walls
Ridgeway Gold Mine Mineral Waste Management: Tailings
Ridgeway Gold Mine Mineral Waste Management: Open Pits

North pit

South pit
Ridgeway Results

- Tailings cover is maintaining saturation and maintaining reducing conditions in tailings
  - Runoff does not need any treatment
- South Pit is almost completely flooded and is maintaining a neutral pH with low metals concentrations without lime addition
  - An aquatic ecosystem comparable to natural lakes in the region has been established
  - Water meets discharge criteria
- North Pit lake is currently being filled
  - Lime addition to maintain neutral conditions
- All site water is now being directed to the North Pit Lake to increase rate of flooding
- North Pit Lake on track to discharge water without water treatment when filled
Eagle Mine: Designing for Closure

Source: Kennecott Eagle

North
Eagle Mine: Designing for Closure
Eagle Mine: Designing for Closure

**UNDERGROUND MINE**

- 100% development rock backfilled into underground workings (secondary stopes)
- Closure involves rapid re-flooding, and submergence beneath water table

**TAILINGS**

- High acid generating potential
- Subaqueous in-pit disposal of fresh un-oxidized tailings
- Hydrogeologic containment
Successful Implementation of Proactive ARD Management Strategies for Closure

• Compatible with the chemical, physical, environmental and regulatory setting of the mine
• The strategy should be designed and implemented before a problem develops
• Strategies must be compatible with the life of mine plan and day to day operations
• ARD management costs should be fully integrated into economic models used by long-term mine planning
• Successful proactive ARD management requires buy-in from entire mine
• Monitoring and Feedback is required to ensure successful implementation and to ensure that the management strategy is leading to the intended results for optimal closure results