

Diamond Mining: Harmful to the Environment

By Tavin McLeavitt

1 The diamond mining industry directly affects an estimated 10 million people around the world. Eleven nations are currently considered major producers of diamonds, and several other countries also currently operate diamond mines. While some companies and countries have made a fortune from diamond mining, the diamond mining industry as a whole has a long history of abusing human rights and exploiting workers. The industry's devastating impact on the environment is another reason why diamond mining should be banned.

2 During any mining process, the soil, water, and air surrounding a mine become polluted. Diamond mining is no different. Large quantities of soil must be removed, reducing available natural land resources. For example, the process of removing soil along the coast forever changes shorelines, which has a wide-ranging impact. In addition, any mine's expansion encroaches on natural animal habitats, decreasing wildlife populations.

3 Diamond mining also affects water supply and quality. Water is used to extract diamonds, but water is a scarce resource in Africa, where many of the world's diamond mines are located. Many countries cannot afford to trade a necessity like clean water for a luxury like diamonds. Canada's Northwest Territories provides an example of how water is affected by diamond mining. Companies have drained twenty lakes, causing massive changes to the environment and disrupting the natural habitats of many species. Caribou in the Northwest Territories appear to be migrating away from traditional habitats that have been disturbed by diamond mining operations.

4 Finally, energy sources used to operate diamond mines create greenhouse gases. Diesel fuels, electricity, and hydrocarbons used in diamond mining all release harmful carbons into the air. These chemicals cause smog, climate change, and other environmental hazards yet to be discovered. The long-term environmental impact is simply not worth the financial gains a few corporations and countries desire.

Diamond Mining Companies Find New Ways to Preserve the Environment

by Shaunna Rangel

5 The diamond mining Industry is not the environmental villain it is often portrayed to be. Although any mining operation for any important mineral can disturb delicate ecology, diamond mining companies have proven to be responsive to public concern and have worked hard to reduce the impact of their search for what could be argued as the world's most precious and symbolic resource. World governments are cooperating to ensure environmental safety and preservation around diamond mines. In some cases, areas surrounding the mines are actually improved!

6 A number of wildlife preserves have been established to protect and breed species of animals endangered by diamond mines. For example, the Diavik Diamond Mine in Canada has implemented an advisory board to study ways to protect the fish near the mining area. The program was so successful that it has widened to include the arctic deer. In South Africa, the national parks system has worked together with the Peace Parks Foundation and the diamond industry to set up a conservation area for wildlife near the Venetia Diamond Mine.

7 Governments are trying to reduce waste and reuse resources while mining for diamonds. Environmental management companies closely monitor the mines and routinely publish reports on their environmental impact. Many of the mines even do more than the minimum required by regulated standards. A number of mine operators restore topsoil removed from a mining site. Researchers are working on new, less water-intensive methods of diamond extraction. Measures to use energy sources that do not emit dangerous carbons into the air have been put into place, and the levels of chemicals that reach the air are closely monitored. With support and regulation from governments, the mining industry can safely continue to benefit a large number of people who live in the countries where diamonds are mined.

Prompt

While opponents of diamond mining believe that the hazards associated with the industry should lead to a ban, proponents argue that companies are sufficiently improving practices and addressing public concerns. In your response, analyze the two articles to determine which position is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from both articles to support your response.