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## Campaign targets mining: Earthworks launches 'No Dirty Gold' drive

By **ADELLA HARDING**, Staff Writer

ELKO - Environmental activists launched a "No Dirty Gold" global campaign today that targets gold jewelry consumers to call attention to the worldwide gold-mining industry.

"This is not a boycott of gold," said Radhika Sarin, the international campaign coordinator for Earthworks, which is the new name for Washington-based Mineral Policy Center.

Rather, the campaign is an effort to reach out to consumers for their help in "demanding changes in the mining industry," Sarin said. "We want to raise the profile of gold mining. We want consumers to know both sides of the story."

The industry criticized the campaign and questioned the accuracy and tactics of Earthworks and Oxfam America, which are partners in the campaign.

National Mining Association spokeswoman Carol Raulston said the campaign is using "scare tactics and a lot of outdated and incorrect information."

"We strongly believe that all the people who work at U.S. mines and use products from these mines deserve better than this," she said.

Nevada Mining Association President Russ Fields said today he believes the campaign is "a clear effort to smear the gold industry. ... It's full of things that look to me to be inaccurate."

Fields said Nevada's mining industry is stringently regulated, and it's "not the dirty, dirty industry they're talking about."

Nevada is the third-largest gold producer in the world after South Africa and Australia, and northeastern Nevada rural communities depend upon the industry for jobs and to help their economies, Fields said from Reno.

Earthworks and Oxfam America kicked off their joint campaign near Valentine's Day because many people buy gold jewelry for the occasion, and 80 percent of gold produced is used in jewelry, Sarin said in a telephone interview from Washington, D.C.

Sarin said the campaign is global, but the initial efforts target consumers in this country, as well as reaching out to students on college campuses to remind them gold for their class rings comes from mining.

Activists will distribute cards in front of major jewelry stores that say "Don't tarnish your love with dirty gold," according to the announcement from Earthworks and Oxfam America.

The campaign also includes placing leaflets "in high traffic areas," Sarin said, and the launch of a new Web site called [www.nodirtygold.org](http://www.nodirtygold.org).

Sarin said the campaign is stressing the need for communities to be consulted before new gold mines are developed and to push for mining reforms to protect the environment.

"We're not saying we don't want mining anymore," she said, but the campaign wants attention on environmental abuses from the industry, as well as human rights abuses in developing countries that support gold mining.

"The U.S. industry is not responsible for the horrible things they allege," Fields said.

And Raulston said companies that mine in the United States use the same engineering and safety standards when they develop a mine in other countries, including those that don't have stringent mining regulations.

Earthworks and Oxfam also state in their announcement that the production of a single 18 karat gold ring weighing less than an ounce generates at least 20 tons of mine waste.

But Raulston said the campaign fails to explain that gold is necessary in the manufacture of computers, electronic equipment and in the telecommunications industry.

"If they were not impugning the efforts of people who work in the industry, it would be almost silly," Raulston said from Washington, D.C.

"The 'gold standard' for objectivity and factual information has been abandoned by these groups," National Mining Association President and Chief Executive Officer Jack Gerard said in a statement today.

The campaign's Web site lists the Western Shoshone of Nevada as one of the communities impacted by gold mining, and states that mining companies have been producing gold in Nevada for years without paying a royalty to the Indians.

Other communities listed are in Ghana, Peru, Argentina, Romania and Bolivia.

In addition, Earthworks and Oxfam announced today they were releasing a report called "Dirty Metals: Mining, Communities and the Environment" that they say details mining abuses in Peru, Indonesia, Ghana and parts of the United States.

Sarin said Mineral Policy Center is changing its name to Earthworks to reach out for more supporters, although Mineral Policy Center's name will remain as a division of Earthworks for the organization's legislative efforts.