

the fight for thacker pass

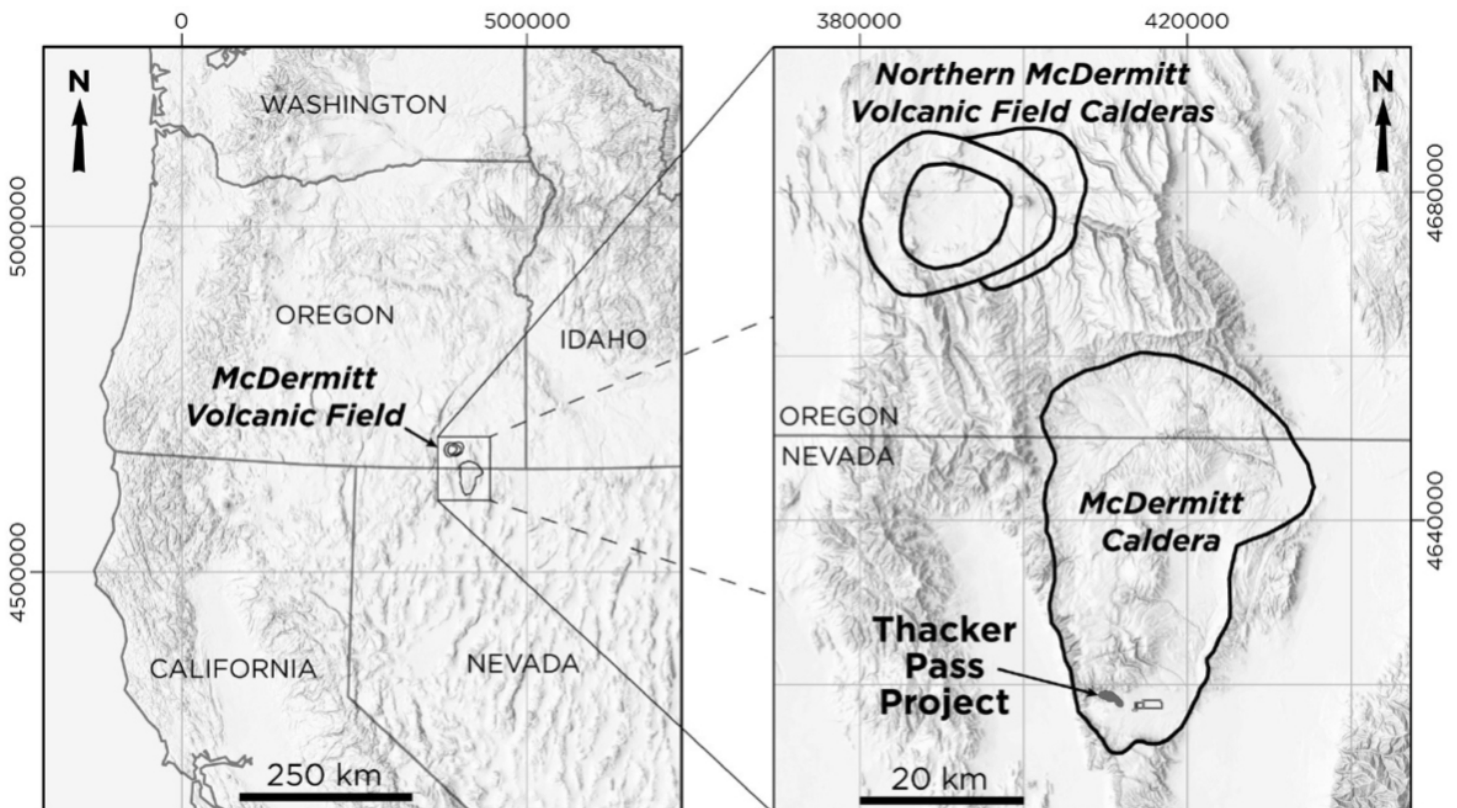
“When you think about it, we have to stand for sovereignty...and if we are afraid...that’s too bad. Our Children and our ancestors...they are saying ‘fight the fight’ forget about being afraid about going into battle....”

-Chairman Arlan Melendez

Reno-Sparks Indian Colony

June 29, 2023

(source: Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Youtube)



Screenshot of Lithium Americas website 12-9-21.

The wild and peaceful high desert land around Thacker Pass has been under threat for quite some time. According to Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Chairman Arlan Melendez there are 74 mine claims leases in the State of Nevada. A few Earth Firsters have gone out over the years to lend their hand when needed, gotten to know local Indigenous people and immersed themselves in the beauty of the place. The threat is lithium mining, an extremely invasive, extractive and absolutely vile polluter of whatever poor piece of land is the target. We have detailed more about mining of critical minerals elsewhere in this issue, as well as a short story about ocean mining. This is our generation’s next green washing capitalist frontier.

There should be no surprise that the government is also in line with corporations who are pursuing this, closely supported by green solution types like Elon Musk, a corporate jokester who has openly joked on Twitter about doing coups if he wants to. The complete lack of regard for local Paiute and Shoshone people has been made allegedly legitimate by the colonial court system when in September of 2023 the 9th circuit court of appeals rejected claims that the site is a sacred site. It is in fact the site of multiple massacres, one which was pre-colonization. Thacker Pass is the site of a Sept. 12, 1865 massacre that killed at least 31 Northern Paiute men, women, and children by the 1st Nevada Cavalry. We respect Native sovereignty and assert that Thacker Pass is a sacred site and should be treated as such, in

reverence and with the respect owed to the dead. In continued offense against Indigenous sovereignty, Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland and President Joe Biden are continuing to allow this destruction on Native lands.

While the construction begins tearing apart the ground and Native elders have been bullied and harassed with SLAPP suits, things are definitely heating up at Thacker Pass. Unfortunately, one of the more vocal groups on the ground making themselves available to help is Deep Green Resistance (DGR) who are largely known to be anti-trans. At EF! we have become aware that many people hold views, as they have expressed on our social media platforms such as Instagram, that we are too caught up with “identity” politics, that we should hold true to Our Name!. Currently the cute and rowdy crew who most outwardly claim EF! as our wild family are predominantly Queer, Trans, and cis-het folks who love and call trans friends our closest friends, family and lovers. So the kinda shit that DGR is pulling does matter to us. And it’s hard to even approach a narrative description about this land defense because of that, we don’t want to get distracted from the issue at hand, the impending threat of lithium mining at Thacker Pass. But we will call that shit out when we see it.

The situation is developing and ongoing and we invite people with meaningful contributions to this to let us know so we can help bring these stories forward for the next issue. Until then, keep an eye on various social media platforms that are reporting on this issue. Let’s all work to keep mining off Indigenous lands. In the next section we will attempt to summarize the issues of lithium mining as well as give more of a timeline of events. Online sources such as Native News Online and Indian Country Today as well as the Reno Gazette Journal are all good sources to continue to get up to date news about this issue.

Lithium is a light-weight metal, used historically to manufacture ceramics and glasses, greases, and nuclear weapons. Lithium’s combination of high storage capacity and low weight makes it ideal for use in batteries, especially for electric cars, as well as other electronics such as cell phones and computers. Lithium-ion batteries are also used for energy storage on electric grids.

Lithium is mined in two primary ways: from salty brines and from hard rock ore. Most of the lithium mined today comes from brine mining in Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. Mining lithium from hard rock involves extensive processing. The ore needs to be first excavated from open pits before it’s crushed, milled, heated to a very high temperature, then intensively leached, usually with sulfuric acid, before another round of heating, filtration, and drying.

One aspect that makes this story hard to grasp is the

science. Personally, it is very intimidating to read about terms and processes that I don’t understand. I think this gap in knowledge also makes it easy for these companies to prey upon the general public and push these damaging technologies further. If people don’t really understand what’s going on, and see someone in a position of authority from a mining company, they are maybe more likely to accept whatever they have to say because that person must be an expert and know what they are talking about. That is where the work on organizers comes into play, demystifying and calling attention to the truth of these matters and the effects that these mining projects will have on the earth and the surrounding communities who call these places home and hold them sacred.

Although it was not covered too in depth, just a quick feature to make sure people knew what was going on and that this is a major issue not only on the horizon but currently happening was the point of this recap.