

Monitoring of Mining Wastes in Central and Southern Peru

Dick Kamp and Ann Maest, at the request of mayors from five towns impacted by mining and on the behalf of *Labor* in Lima and U.S. AID, conducted surface water, soil, and mining waste sampling in central and southern Peru in 1994. The project included designing and conducting environmental sampling; meeting with local and regional political figures to discuss the impact of mining on the environment; and analyzing results of sampling efforts. Dick and Ann, with assistance from local community groups, collected samples of tailings from Southern Peru Copper Company mines that dumped tailings directly into streams, and ultimately into the Pacific Ocean at Bahía de Ite; contaminated beach sand from Bahía de Ite, where many dead copper-encrusted brown pelicans were found on the beach; water samples from the Rio Montaro downstream of mining activity at the La Oroya complex in central Peru; and smelter waste and soil samples from the La Oroya complex area. Samples were taken to the United States for analysis. Reports of sampling results received substantial international press coverage in Newsweek and the New York Times and may well have influenced the cancellation of the sale of the then parastate La Oroya mining complex, the halting of dumping of tailings into local rivers and ultimately the Pacific Ocean, and Inter-American Bank and Peruvian governmental investment strategies. The analyses and reports on Southern Peru Copper Company served as a major basis for two lawsuits filed in the United States against SPCC in 1995-6 and 2000-2002. The smelter and mines are slowly cleaning up but still endangering public health from heavy metal and arsenic air pollution.