



# North Sulawesi Watersports Association

Division of PATA North Sulawesi

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## Press Release

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Regarding new developments and activities of the mine under the joint management of PT. Meares Soputan Mining (MSM) and PT Tambang Tondano Nusajaya (TTN) in Toka Tindung, North Minahasa District, North Sulawesi, the *North Sulawesi Watersports Association* (NSWA) is concerned about the potential for significant long-term negative environmental, social and economic impacts to our industry and region. NSWA is not convinced that the process to review and make a wise and fair decision is ready and we are advocating for the Government to define and implement a fair and open process on this issue. A letter already sent by the Ministry of Environment to PT MSM/PT TTN suggests that their AMDAL might not be valid and that it is therefore in need of review.

Several of MSM's claims regarding the scientific study conducted for its AMDAL have been challenged by respected scientists:

### MSM claim no. 1

***"The Lembeh Strait current data from our information also travels from Sth to Nth and hence this mitigates the possibility of any effect on this important marine area...."***

Scientists who have extensive knowledge of currents in and around the Lembeh Strait completely disagree with this statement, as do the local dive operators who have extensive knowledge of the sea conditions in the Strait.

### MSM claim no. 2

***"The chemical analysis of the tailings discharge is in compliance with the highest environmental standard in Australia and Indonesia, so the tailings will be as clean as can be. The solid components of the tailings has a chemical content which is equivalent to samples of sea floor muds taken in the area".***

The NSWA asks what exactly it is about the chemical content that matches the seafloor muds - does the amount of heavy metals and their chemical species match them? Also, what about the "liquid" component of the tailings? (If that is full of heavy metals that quickly absorb to the solids and then sink to the bottom, this negates MSM's whole premise.)

### MSM claim no. 3

***"Sediment won't come above 140m from the detailed modeling completed to date.....The near surface currents are more complex especially near shore and hence why the tailings must be discharged at depth."***

It would be logical to assume that the deep currents are also complex, unless MSM can show us that it has valid data from deep current monitoring (ie, current meters installed at 150m or 200m depth). Were the current studies accurate and are the results of these studies actually included in the modelling? Did MSM properly model the behavior of what is in essence a tailings "emulsion" (super finely ground sediment suspended in water)? Did it take into account the known upwelling in the area - is this addressed at all in the model? Did it address the issue of "biological upwelling", whereby deepwater plankton could be contaminated from tailings exposure and then bring this contamination back up to the surface food chain when they do their daily vertical migration from 100's of meters depth to the surface at night?

If MSM's study is shown to have been conducted in an inadequate way, then their AMDAL is undermined and they would not be able to prove that their operation would be environmentally sustainable. In this case, the NSWA believes that a more comprehensive study of this detailed modelling would have to be conducted by an independent scientific review and we would urge the government to delay granting MSM an operating permit until that new study is completed.



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## **The socio-economic argument against mining in North Sulawesi**

MSM justifies its planned location for the STDs by saying that it is *“principally a fishing area”*. Even if this were the case, it should be noted that fishing already contributes hundreds of billions of Rupiah each year to our economy. MSM states that *“the Toka mining operation should run from between 6-8 years.....”*, which means that the earning potential of the mine, however great, is limited. If a mine operating in North Sulawesi were to damage the marine environment, the potential for the sectors of fisheries to continue to contribute to the province’s economy could be lost for generations to come, so the mine, whilst offering a short-term benefit, could harm our economy in the long-run. We know from previous experience that even a perception of a degraded marine environment will lead to catastrophic losses in the fishing community (North Sulawesi’s fishing industry sustained losses of over Rp.314B between 2002 and 2003 as a direct result of the rumour that there was mercury in the fish).

But the area in question is not principally a fishing area – it is extremely rich in rare and exotic species, has already undergone tourism investment and is earmarked for further development. It has long been recognized as a province with excellent potential for development of an eco-tourism sector. If the marine environment was damaged, the ability for that sector to survive or grow would also be thwarted. Indonesia is committed to the principle of environmentally sustainable tourism, so the NSWA asks the provincial government of North Sulawesi to come to the protection of its existing investors in the tourism sector.

## **The environmental argument**

North Sulawesi’s marine environment contains many species that are on the endangered species list e.g. coelacanth. As the confirmed host of the World Ocean Summit in 2009, North Sulawesi has a responsible to the international community to protect those species.

***“There needs to be good work done on looking at the sustainability of the livelihood of people in this area along with preserving the reef environments.”***

(PT Meares Sopotan Mining, 08 June 2006)

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## **What is the NSWA?**

The NSWA is an association of 20 dive tourism resorts and operators who cooperate to develop tourism services, diving safety and environmentally-friendly practices in North Sulawesi and to promote the province as a tourism destination. Any licensed dive operator is welcome to join, whether foreign or Indonesian. The NSWA believes in working closely alongside the local fishing community to sustain North Sulawesi’s marine environment, as both communities use the sea to gain their livelihoods. The NSWA is neither a government department nor environmental agency and, contrary to some beliefs, does not manage the Bunaken National Park.

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