

Report Highlights Critical Situation of Mining Tailings Deposits in Chile

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The report emphasizes the alarming lack of oversight and transparency in tailings management, with 300 deposits having unknown owners and 265 lacking information on their construction methods, increasing uncertainty about the risks faced by communities near these socio-environmental aggressors.



Original article: [Informe revela crítica situación de los depósitos de relaves mineros en Chile](#)

The report «Mining Tailings Deposits in Chile: Socio-Environmental Aggressors» published by the NGO Ecosistemas warns about the serious environmental and human health risks posed by nearly 800 mining tailings deposits scattered across the country.

Compiled by Michael Lieberherr Pacheco, Mitzi Urtubia Salinas, and Juan Pablo Orrego Silva, the document reveals that a staggering 81.9% of these deposits are classified as inactive and abandoned.

This classification designates them as «mining environmental liabilities» by the mining industry and public institutions.

However, according to extensive national and international evidence, these deposits are, in fact, active and ongoing threats to the health of populations and ecosystems, degrading the quality of life for communities in Calama, Antofagasta Region, Andacollo and Illapel in Coquimbo Region, Santiago in the Metropolitan Region, and Alto Mañihuales in Aysén Region, among others, stated Juan Pablo Orrego, president of Ecosistemas.

This publication will be presented this week at two events. The first will be a virtual talk by Mitzi Urtubia, journalist for Ecosistemas, on Thursday, November 27, at 8 PM, as part of the Socio-Environmental Training School Primavera 2025 organized by the Green Thinking Foundation and IDMA.

The second presentation will take place in person on Saturday, November 28, at 1 PM on the Patagonia stage of the Ladera Sur Festival, featuring a panel with Juan Pablo Orrego, president of Ecosistemas; Erwin Sandoval, president of CODESA; and Claudia Ortiz, researcher at USACH. This panel will be moderated by activist and Aysenda president Patricio Segura.

It is important to note that Chile ranks third in the world for the number of tailings deposits, following industrial powerhouses like China and the United States. Projections indicate that by 2026, Chile will need to manage over 900 million tons of tailings material, which contains heavy metals and other toxic substances, turning them into permanent sources of contamination.

Five Critical Regions

The report explores the geographical distribution of the deposits, identifying the five regions with the highest tonnage of tailings: Antofagasta, followed by the Metropolitan Region, Atacama, Tarapacá, and Coquimbo.

Additionally, the document addresses the institutional framework, related regulations, ongoing public and private remediation initiatives, and a history of tailings disasters in the country, focusing on three cases in the Coquimbo and Aysén regions, ending with a summary of the impacts of heavy metals on human health.

In its conclusions, the report emphasizes the concerning lack of oversight and transparency regarding tailings management, with 300 deposits having unknown owners and 265 with no

information on their construction methods. This data deficiency heightens the uncertainty regarding the risks faced by communities near these socio-environmental aggressors.

«Ecosistemas calls for action from both authorities and responsible companies, urging the implementation of effective public policies that regulate and hold the private and state industry accountable for tailings management and prevent potential disasters; improve oversight and transparency of information regarding the status of the deposits; limit uncontrolled and unsustainable expansion of mining operations; and implement territorial planning, strategic environmental assessments, ecosystem capacity studies, and comprehensive social and environmental baseline evaluations prior to all mining ventures and their subsequent tailings deposits,» stated the environmental organization.

Finally, the report pioneeringly reveals the direct relationship between mining, warfare, ecological crisis, and climate change. The current boom in the armament industry in the global north is significantly increasing mining activities in the global south, alongside the accompanying industrial sphere, particularly concerning tailings deposits.

Read the full report [HERE](#)

The El Mauro tailings dam of Los Pelambres mining company, predominantly owned by the Luksic group.

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Fuente: [El Ciudadano](#)

