Over the last few years there has been a number of tailings dam failures around the world. The most recent was a catastrophic failure in Brazil. In this Update we explain why there is no ‘tailings dam’ in Waihi, and why such events are not possible here.

**WHO CHECKS what we are doing?**

From site selection to construction, monitoring and independent peer reviews by recognised experts, the construction of Waihi’s tailings impoundments has been closely followed and reported on. There is strong regulatory involvement from Waikato Regional Council and Hauraki District Council through the consent conditions.

**Construction and operation**

As the impoundments are raised, each level must meet strict performance criteria relating to material type, construction, depth and compaction. Different types of waste rock are placed in specific locations before the embankment is capped with clay and topsoil. As the embankment is constructed, drainage systems and monitoring bores are incorporated into the design.

Over time the tails settle and consolidate. Drilling in one of our tailings impoundments has shown that the tails have already consolidated to become a firm mud.

The consent conditions stipulate the requirements for the reporting of data to the appropriate regulatory authorities. The design engineer prepares an annual inspection report to confirm that the embankments are in a safe and stable condition. An independent peer review panel, consisting of experts in the fields of geotechnical engineering, geochemistry, hydrogeology and rehabilitation, also carry out inspections on a regular basis. They review data and reports, and they then provide reports to the regulatory agencies.

**Closure**

When the tailings impoundments are finally closed they will be partially capped leaving a wetland/small lake on the top. A variety of land uses is possible for the remaining area.

**LONG TERM**

When mining is completed the Martha Trust will take over responsibility for the tailings impoundments. The company will fund the trust to allow it to carry out its functions. The sum provided will generate annual interest sufficient to allow the trust to manage, monitor and maintain the site.

On the web: www.waihigold.co.nz/mining/waste-rock-and-tailings/