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Most Highly Regarded Firms: Mining 2012

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In this section we analyse the findings of our research in greater depth to identify the firms and practitioners who stand out worldwide.

Our research utilises the feedback received from corporate counsel and private practitioners across the globe to pick out 287 lawyers in 47 countries who should be considered the leading experts in the world for the full range of mining related work.

Macleod Dixon and Norton Rose OR are to merge at the beginning of 2012, and each firm performs strongly in this year's research. Ten nominees are selected for inclusion from the former, giving the firm a presence on the ground in eight countries. In Canada, [Marvin Singer](#) is particularly well regarded for his corporate and finance expertise, and [Crae Garrett](#) and the "very learned" James Coleman QC appear from the Calgary office. Three further partners are selected from Moscow, with [Levon Kocharyan](#), Aydin Jebraïlov and managing partner Anatoly Andriash giving the firm a "reliable and uniformly impressive presence in Russia". The highly rated [Yerzhan Kumarov](#) is managing partner of the firm's Kazakhstan practice.

The firm also performs very well in Latin America. [Glenn Faass](#) is the managing partner in the Bogotá and Rio de Janeiro offices of Macleod Dixon and "much sought after for the incredible breadth of his local knowledge". Elizabeth Eljuri is "one of the finest lawyers in Venezuela", and Jorge Neher is a partner in the Caracas and Bogotá offices and similarly highly rated by the market.

Norton Rose is particularly well known in London, where Raj Karia is "top tier and very active" and Mark Bankes is known for his M&A and restructuring work in the energy sector. In South Africa, "everybody loves" Michael Dale, one of the country's most highly recommended lawyers. He is joined by Kevin Cron, the firm's head of corporate in the country and "widely respected for his track record". Shaun McRobert is well regarded for his work on large resources transactions, and gives the firm a presence in the Hong Kong listing.

Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP once again performs particularly well in our research with nine nominees selected for inclusion, including two of the most highly recommended lawyers in the field worldwide. [Michael Bourassa](#) "continues to be a force of nature in the mining world". Co-ordinator of the firm's global mining group, he received more nominations than any other practitioner and is "the best there is at what he does". Also based in the Toronto office, [John S M Turner](#) is leader of the firm's global mining group. He is "the sort of lawyer I love to work with" in the words of our sources: "quick, to the point and really understands the business". Chuck Higgins is also selected once again for his "outstanding" commercial and financial practice. Elsewhere in Canada, Josh Lewis and Andrew Gabrielson from the Vancouver office "really know the market", and Jean Gagné is considered to be the leading mining lawyer in Quebec. Elsewhere, Tanneke Heersche is "one of the finest mining lawyers in Africa", and received recommendations from across our research. Jean-Claude Petilon is based in Paris and is also well known for his African expertise, and Thomas Wexler is highly regarded in London.

Baker & McKenzie is well known for its geographical breadth of practice, and six of its partners are selected from five offices. Antonio Ortúzar in Santiago is "first class" and joint co-ordinator of the firm's Latin America energy, mining, chemicals and infrastructure group. Two further nominees are selected in Venezuela, as well as the "highly respected" Adolfo Duranona in Buenos Aires. The firm also has a market leading presence in the CIS, with Azamat

Kuatbekovin Kazakhstan and Alexey Frolov in Moscow recognised for their knowledge of the sector.

Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP expands its listing to five in this edition. Mark Bennett is an “outstanding finance lawyer”, and John Craig is a “real authority”. Erik Goldsilver has advised clients such as Goldcorp, Yamana Gold and Silver Wheaton Corp. in recent times, and Paul Stein is particularly highly rated by clients and peers alike. Our sources also spoke highly of Jay Goldman, who “impressed with his knowledge and expertise”.

Four nominees are included from Stikeman Elliott LLP. Jay Kellerman leads the firm’s global mining group is “one of the best in the business”. Quentin Markin joined the firm’s Sydney office in late 2011 and is also widely respected in the industry, as is Derek Linfield, head of Stikeman Elliott London and “one of the most experienced and authoritative practitioners in the UK”.

Heenan Blaikie LLP has two lawyers listed in Canada, including Steve Vaughan – “no list of the best would be complete without him”. Gaylord Watkins performed particularly well in the Singapore research, and Jean-François Mercadier is listed for the first time from the Paris office.

Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP is one of the leading Canadian firms in our research with four nominees selected for inclusion. [Brian Abraham QC](#) in Vancouver is national co-chair of the mining group and has a “spectacular reputation”. [John Sabine](#) is counsel to the firm and “hugely knowledgeable”, and Frank Davis and Michael Melanson both figure among Toronto’s leading specialists.

McMillan LLP also sees three nominees selected, including chair of the national mining group Darrell Podowski. Strongly recommended by clients and peers alike, he is one of the most highly rated lawyers in the research worldwide. Two further partners are also selected from the Vancouver office.

In the States, Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP earns four entries in the Colorado research. Randall Hubbard is a “star”, and cited as “one of the premier US mining lawyers”. Joel Benson also scores highly, as does Deborah Friedman who was feted for the depth of her industry experience. Charles Kaiser is recognised for his energy and mining practice.

Modrall Sperling Roehl Harris & Sisk PA increases its presence in this edition to four New Mexico based lawyers. Larry Ausherman is recognised for his environment, energy and natural resources practice while Stuart Butzier, co-chair of the mining service group, is also highly rated. Lynn Slade co-chairs the firm’s Indian law service group and is a “real authority” in that sector, as is the widely respected Walter Stern.

Veirano Advogados is the leading firm in Brazil with four nominees selected for this edition from the firm’s Rio de Janeiro office. [Pedro Aguiar de Freitas](#) is former global general counsel of Vale and “one of the big names in Latin America for mining work”. He is joined by [Pedro Garcia](#), recognised for his expertise relating to local and cross-border transactions and commercial agreements as well as the regulatory and environmental aspects of mining projects. [Carlos Americo Ferrar e Castro](#) is also selected for inclusion alongside [Alexandre Bittencourt Calmon](#), who stood out for his M&A expertise in particular.

Four lawyers appear from Webber Wentzel in South Africa, led in the voting by the “excellent” [Peter Leon](#), head of the firm’s Africa mining and energy projects practice. He has a “first class reputation, and deservedly so” according to our interviewees. [Manus Booysen](#) is similarly highly regarded, and both he and Leon serve on the mining law committee of the International Bar Association.

Holland & Hart LLP is one of the leading firms in the US for mining work, and earns three places in this edition. Robert Bassett is the most highly regarded US lawyer in our research, and is recognised as chair of the international committee of the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation, as well as past chair of the mining committee of the International Bar Association section on energy and natural resources law. Two further highly rated nominees are

selected from the firm's Cheyenne office in Wyoming.

In Colorado, Holme Roberts & Owen LLP has two nominees listed. James Cress comes highly recommended by clients and peers alike. "He has a very broad based skill set in crafting mineral exploration and mining agreements, couple with a notable attention to legal detail and a pragmatic approach to business issues" said one, "he has consistently proven to be a real contributor to our business and I can recommend him in the mining field to anyone without hesitation". Frank Erisman is of counsel to the Denver office and similarly well respected in the field.

In Australia, Gilbert + Tobin merged with Blakiston & Crabb in mid 2011, and Michael Blakiston is deemed to be "one of the finest mining lawyers in the country." He is joined in our Australian listing by two highly rated nominees from Allen & Overy LLP. Geoff Simpson is the firm's global head of mining and "absolutely first rate" in the eyes of our sources, and Barry Irwin impresses in Sydney.

Latin America is home to some of the world's leading experts in mining law. Chile in particular has a very well developed bar, with three of the world's most highly regarded experts based in Santiago. Rafael Vergara is head of Carey y Cía's natural resources, energy and environment group and rated as "absolutely terrific" by those with experience of his work. He has been professor of mining law at the Universidad de Chile since 1996. Pablo Mir of Bofill Mir & Alvarez Jana Abogados is similarly highly regarded, with respondents citing his "insightful, practical and effective counsel". [Patricia Núñez](#) of Núñez Muñoz & Cía Ltda Abogados also performs extremely well, with interviewees saying "in these matters it is attention to all the minor details that is just so important, and there are few in Latin America who does as well as the firm Nuñez Muñoz". Her fellow name partner Rodrigo Muñoz is also highly recommended.

Two further market leaders can be found in the Argentina research. Florencia Heredia of HOLT Abogados was recognised across Latin America and beyond for her "outstanding practice" and Ignacio J Randle of Estudio Randle is similarly well regarded. He has been appointed chairman of the international natural resources law committee of the American Bar Association and is "internationally recognised as one of the best in the business".

Elsewhere, Luis Carlos Rodrigo Prado of Rodrigo Elias & Medrano Abogados is the most highly recommended individual in our Peruvian research and described as "outstanding" by our sources. [Fernando Aguirre B](#) is particularly well regarded in Bolivia, and is one of two nominees to feature from Bufete Aguirre Soc. Civ.