



## **MINING: Group complains of permit delays for Arizona project**

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A new group set up to promote U.S. mining is on the warpath against permit delays for a large proposed copper mine in the Santa Rita Mountains near Tucson, Ariz. The Forest Service released a draft environmental impact statement last year for Augusta Resource Corp.'s Rosemont mine but has yet to finalize the document or come out with a record of decision. Also pending is a key Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act permit.

The new group, Mined in America, has been outspoken in its support of the project, which it says would create more than 2,000 direct and indirect jobs. In October the group granted Rosemont its "Shovel Ready" award. "When it comes to creating jobs and boosting the economy, no one should think the status quo is OK," Maurice Daniel, executive director of Mined in America, said in a statement.

The group -- which describes itself as a bipartisan coalition of business, union and civic leaders -- is a 501(c)(4) organization and not required to disclose donors. A spokesman said it does not receive funding from Augusta. "Our goal is to bring people together to create new investment, new jobs and to do so in an environmentally sound way," Daniel said, noting a much-talked-about report by Behre Dolbear Group Inc. that ranked the United States last among mining countries on permitting.

"[N]o one can afford these unnecessary bureaucratic delays," he said. "Now is the time to come together to bring this process to a conclusion -- and help put Arizonans back to work." The site, about 30 miles southeast of Tucson, contains at least 4.2 billion pounds of copper and more than 95 million pounds of molybdenum, an element widely used in steel. Rosemont executives say the mine could provide more than 10 percent of the United States' copper.

But the project also has a list of critics -- from environmental advocates and some area residents to lawmakers worried about its footprint ([Greenwire](#), Sept. 5). The Center for Biological Diversity is also seeking endangered species protections for wildlife in the project's path. Earlier this year, Arizona Democratic Reps. Raúl Grijalva and Ron Barber and a top local official expressed concerns about company changes to its mining plans. Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry wrote the Forest Service in October saying, "A new draft DEIS and public comment period are warranted for this project."

Rosemont President Rod Pace responded forcefully last month, "All of the studies and analysis completed during the agency review process have helped make the plan of operations for the Rosemont Copper Project even more protective of the environment and the public." He added,

"This latest letter from Mr. Huckelberry is an attempt by Pima County leadership to stop an important new business opportunity for our community, which will create badly needed jobs and result in significant direct and indirect benefits to southern Arizona."

The Forest Service, which received 25,000 comments on its draft EIS, is finishing consultations with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the state Historic Preservation Office and American Indian tribes, the company said in an update. Augusta CEO Gil Clausen said he expected the final document by early next year. "We are also pleased to see the USFS referring to working towards the issuance of Rosemont's final EIS," he said, thereby mitigating any belief that a supplemental report is required.