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Press Release

For Immediate Release:

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Proposed Permit Could Allow Rosemont Copper Mine to Pollute Area Groundwater

Local Coalition Files Appeal to Protect Tucson and Southern Arizona Water Supplies

(Tucson, Ariz.) A diverse coalition of southern Arizonans charged today that a key water quality permit will allow Rosemont Copper Company to pollute area groundwater supplies with mercury, arsenic, lead and other dangerous contaminants —without oversight or consequence—for at least two years after mining operations begin.

The coalition cited this two-year loophole, as well as other 18 other critical issues in their appeal last week of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's (ADEQ) April 10 decision to issue an "aquifer protection permit" to Rosemont Copper. The Pima County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a separate appeal on May 8.

Although the permit is supposed to ensure that Rosemont Copper uses the best available technology to control ground water pollution, and that any contaminants in the ground water do not exceed state Aquifer Water Quality Standards, the individuals and organizations appealing the ADEQ decision maintain that it doesn't come close to accomplishing its stated purpose.

"ADEQ's lax standards used to issue the so-called 'aquifer protection permit' fail miserably to ensure that our ground water will be adequately protected," says lead appellant Gregory Shinsky. Shinsky and his wife Carol built a home in the Empire Mountains 2 miles from the proposed project site.

In addition to the provision allowing Rosemont to pollute area groundwater for at least two years before ADEQ even considers setting pollution standards, other key issues cited in the appeal include the ADEQ's:

- failure to conduct an independent evaluation of the data provided by Rosemont;
- failure to require an adequate number of monitoring wells;
- failure to fully account for mine closure costs; and
- failure to impose discharge limits at the actual source of the pollution.

The appeal also notes that ADEQ did not provide access to all its files related to the Rosemont permit until April 30, despite the fact that the appeal deadline was May 10.

The appeal will be heard by the state Water Quality Appeals Board, which is composed of three members appointed by the governor. The board chair, Laurie A. Woodall, has represented

Rosemont Copper in a related proceeding. The appeal requests that Ms. Woodall recuse herself from considering the appeal.

The appeal can be found here: http://www.scenicsantaritas.org/APP_Appeal.pdf

The aquifer protection permit is one of a number of air, water and wildlife protection permits that must be approved before construction can begin on the proposed mile-wide, half-mile deep, open pit copper mine planned in the Coronado National Forest south of Tucson.