



SAVE THE SCENIC
SANTA RITAS
ASSOCIATION

Media Release

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Forest Service Fails to Address Critical Issues in Rosemont Analysis
Regional Forester Passes the Buck on Decision for Rosemont Mine

(Tucson, AZ) The U.S. Forest Service has failed to adequately address serious shortfalls identified in hundreds of written objections to its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and draft Record of Decision (ROD) for the proposed Rosemont copper mine.

In a letter released late Friday and posted on the Rosemont EIS [website](#), the Forest Service also delayed a decision on whether to require a revised or supplemental environmental analysis for the massive open-pit mine that would destroy more than 3,000 acres of Coronado National Forest and threaten regional water supplies and the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area.

In spite of the serious and significant flaws in the Forest Service's analysis of the objections and delaying a decision on whether to conduct further environmental studies, Southwest Regional Forester Calvin Joyner concluded that the proposed Rosemont mine "is in compliance with (federal) laws, regulations, policies and the Forest Plan."

A diverse group of organizations and individuals including Save the Scenic Santa Ritas, Pima County, the Tohono O'odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department filed the written objections to the FEIS and ROD in February. The Forest Service was required to respond to each objection in writing.

"The proposed ROD and FEIS are so bad, it took nearly 300 pages for our scientists, economists and other experts to describe all the problems," said Gayle Hartmann, President of Save the Scenic Santa Ritas (SSSR). "It is clear, as we detailed in our objections, that the Rosemont mine as proposed will violate numerous federal laws designed to protect public health, public lands, and the environment.

"At a minimum," Hartmann added, "the completely inadequate FEIS must be revised to address the objections raised by Save the Scenic Santa Ritas and so many others."

Instead, Regional Forester Joyner provided Coronado Supervisor Jim Upchurch with minor edits to the FEIS and draft ROD. Joyner also left it to Upchurch to determine "whether a revision or supplement to the FEIS is deemed necessary" under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because of new information and because of a pending Endangered Species Act (ESA) review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"It's obvious that the Forest Service did not take its job of protecting our water and mountains seriously," said Randy Seraglio, conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity, "When

we met with them in April, we were stunned to learn that they came to the meeting unprepared to discuss any of our objections and hadn't even identified issues where they felt further clarification was needed. Today's decision is just further evidence that the Forest Service is more concerned with Rosemont's foreign investors than the resource they've been entrusted to protect."

The future of the mine remains far from certain given the recently reinitiated ESA review and the tenuous status of Rosemont's application for a Clean Water Act permit with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Mine opponents have also sued to have the state's air quality permit and aquifer protection permits overturned on the grounds that, among other things, Arizona's Department of Environmental Quality rubber-stamped Rosemont's applications.

The recent photograph of an endangered ocelot near the proposed Rosemont copper mine site combined with new information on the impacts to other endangered species has triggered a second round of formal endangered species act consultations between the Forest Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that will indefinitely delay the issuance of the ROD, according to the Forest Service.

Additionally, both the Army Corps and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have raised serious concerns regarding Rosemont's permanent damage to a vital watershed that is protected by Las Cienegas National Conservation Area in the valley due east of the proposed mine. The Army Corps must determine whether to issue a Clean Water Act permit Rosemont needs to build the mine. EPA has veto authority over the issuance of the permit.

The Army Corps recently notified Rosemont that its mitigation plan in its permit application failed to fully compensate for damage to springs, washes and wetlands. The EPA has recommended denial of the permit because Rosemont's mitigation plan was "grossly inadequate to compensate for the mine's impact."

"Given these significant obstacles, as well as the possibility of further analysis under NEPA as indicated in Regional Forester Joyner's letter, it is very difficult to understand how Joyner could reach the conclusion that the project is in compliance with environmental laws and regulations," Hartmann said.

Vancouver, B.C. speculative mining company Augusta Resource Corporation, through its Rosemont Copper Company subsidiary, is proposing to blast a mile-wide, half-mile deep open pit mine in the Santa Rita Mountains and dump the potentially toxic mine waste on public land. Augusta would pay no royalties to U.S. taxpayers for mining nearly 6 billion pounds of copper, as well as gold, silver and other precious metals over 20 to 25 years.

Save the Scenic Santa Ritas is a non-profit, community organization working to protect the Santa Rita and Patagonia Mountains from environmental degradation caused by mining and mineral exploration activities. For more information, go to ScenicSantaRitas.org or RosemontMineTruth.com.