**Date: October 10, 2016**

**Attn: Coronado National Forest**

 **Minerals & Geology Staff**

**From: Carol Bonchalk**

**Re: Hermosa-Taylor Deposit Drilling Project**

As a full time resident of Washington Camp in the Patagonia Mountains I am providing my comments/concerns on the proposed Plan of Operations for the Hermosa-Taylor Deposit Drilling Project submitted by Arizona Minerals, Inc. The Proposed Plan in and of itself may appear to be small, but its impacts are far reaching when considering the recent activities on Arizona Minerals private land and the high probability that in the future there will be additional requests for exploratory drilling similar to the Wildcat Mine proposal several years ago. Given the cumulative effect of past, present and possible future impacts, the proposal requires a detailed Environmental Impact Statement.

**FSR 49 Harshaw Road Traffic**

FSR 49 (Harshaw Road), the public road affected by this proposal is the primary north/south artery for the Patagonia Mountains. Over the past few years there has been a significant increase in traffic on the road with no increase in road repair, maintenance or law enforcement presence to enforce traffic laws. This increase in traffic is due to, but not limited to:

* increased Border Patrol activity,
* the commercial and employee traffic associated with Arizona Mining’s operations on its private land,
* Forest Service promoting recreational usage through its “South Patagonias Off-Highway Access Guide”.
* National recognition that the Patagonia Mountains are a premier Quail hunting area,
* Increased birding activities due to the sighting and reporting of rare or endangered species,
* Winter visitors enjoying the National Forest.

The proposed time frame for this Plan of Operation is when traffic reaches its peak with the winter visitors and hunters. How will Forest Service and Santa Cruz County assure Harshaw Road:

* Is maintained in accordance with all Federal, State and local laws, regulations and policies established to assure the safety of those using the roadways,
* Compliance with the above requirements does not come at the detriment of other Forest Service Roads in the Patagonia Mountains.
* Has increased law enforcement presence to enforce traffic laws.

**Water Quantity and Quality**

Water quantity and quality is a major concern in the area. What will be the incremental impact to the area’s aquifer using a well on private property for the proposed project? What is the anticipated cumulative impact on the aquifer when the proposed drilling is combined with other recent and on-going activities on surrounding private property that required the use of groundwater and the probable future use of private wells for further exploration?

The area is already heavily populated with old abandoned mines that are leaching toxic substances. If the drilling breeches old mine workings, how will the aquifer be protected from further contamination? What monitoring will Forest Service undertake to assure abandoned mines in the area are not negatively impacted by the proposed drilling?

**Cultural Considerations**

Individuals hiking in the Goldbaum Canyon area have reported finding arrow heads and various Native American artifacts. Given the close proximity to the proposed drilling Forest Service should conduct its own archeological assessment/study and consult with local Native American Nations.

**Forest Fires**

In the recent past human caused fires occurred on both the Forest Service and private property as a result of not only illegal border crossers but also equipment and mining related activities. The Forest Service Fire Management Staff should evaluate the proposed Fire Prevention and Control Plan in relation to the Coronado National Forest’s Fire Management Plan. The negative impacts of fire in the area are obvious in the Humboldt Canyon area.

**Dark Skies**

Commercial businesses, schools and other organizations in other parts of southern Arizona are required to comply with Dark Sky requirements. The same requirements should apply to Arizona Mining’s operations.