
From: Brian Wirak [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 15, 2026 5:56 AM
To: FS-objections-southwestern-regional-office
Subject: [External Email]Objection to Hermosa 32 South Mine expansion

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Objection to the Hermosa Critical Minerals Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Draft Record of Decision (Draft ROD)

To: U.S. Forest Service (Coronado National Forest)

Subject: Objection to the Hermosa Project Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision

Date: [Insert Date]

Submitted By: [Your Name/Organization]

I am writing to formally object to the approval of the Hermosa Critical Minerals Project, as proposed by South32 Hermosa Inc., and documented in the recently released FEIS and Draft ROD.

My objections are based on the following deficiencies in the environmental analysis and risks to the local environment:

1. Failure to Adequately Protect Water Resources

Despite claims of low water usage, the mining project poses a severe risk to local aquifers and the watershed, including the San Pedro River. Recent reports indicate that the mine has already experienced water discharges with elevated levels of contaminants, requiring state investigation. The FEIS fails to provide sufficient assurances that long-term operation will not deplete or contaminate local water supplies, which are critical for local residents, agriculture, and endangered species in the Patagonia Mountains.

2. Inadequate Analysis of Air Pollution and Fugitive Dust

The project entails heavy traffic (trucks and trains) through residential areas 24/7, which will contribute significant fugitive dust and particulate matter (

$PM_{2.5}$

$PM_{2.5}$

). The environmental assessment fails to adequately model these emissions or provide enforceable, stringent controls, which is a major concern given the region's high-wind events and sensitive residential surroundings.

3. Incomplete Evaluation of Environmental Impacts (NEPA Violation)

The FEIS does not adequately comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It fails to fully consider the cumulative effects of the project on the sensitive, biodiversity-rich Patagonia Mountains. Specifically, the analysis fails to provide a comprehensive and consistent review of cultural resources, as evidenced by contradictions between the Draft EIS and the Mining Plan of Operations.

4. Potential for Toxic Pollution (Acid Mine Drainage)

The mining activities involve the risk of creating toxic waste materials and acid mine drainage, which can contaminate soil and water tables with toxic products such as manganese, zinc, lead, and arsenic. The mitigation strategies presented in the FEIS are insufficient to address the long-term risks of this pollution.

5. Inadequate Community Engagement and Social Risks

The project has caused significant concern among local residents regarding public health, noise, and light pollution. The permitting process has been criticized for failing to adequately notify community members, making it feel "under the radar". The potential negative impacts on local tourism and agriculture outweigh the temporary benefits promised by the company.

Requested Action:

I request that the U.S. Forest Service withdraw the Draft Record of Decision, thoroughly address the deficiencies in the environmental review related to water and air quality, and deny the permit until a full, objective evaluation proves the project can operate without detrimental impact to the region.

Sincerely,

Brian Wirak

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]