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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a new resident of Patagonia I strongly support all of the recommendations made by the Board of Supervisors of Santa Cruz County regarding the scoping process for the Hermosa Mine Project. As a person who has spent the last few years planning my 2024 move to Patagonia, I can very clearly see that there are many significant issues that should be more closely studied, and that the Lochiel exit route alternative, at minimum, may be an improvement that should be investigated and fast-tracked, if possible.

Traffic: impact on residents and tourism:

The proposed Cross Creek Connector/Harshaw Road construction/exit route, chosen to maximize profits for a foreign mining company, also maximizes the negative impact of the proposed mine on Patagonia residents and Forest Service visitors. The current traffic on the Harshaw Road is already having significant impacts on residents of the community. On a recent visit to Patagonia, the quiet, rural, family nature of the Red Rock area was obviously incompatible with the mine traffic. Further, Patagonia's position as a recreational hub in Southern Arizona will be threatened by both access routes. Hundreds of ore trucks, construction trucks, and mine worker vehicles a day, on a relatively narrow windy and hilly mountain road with no centerline or shoulders, will not mix well with gravel bikers, hikers, campers, ranchers, bird watchers, hunters, and ATV users. My husband recently had a close call when encountering a semi-truck loaded with massive pipe sections on a blind corner. Even the proposed Flux Canyon exit route could create further damage: possible damage to the cultural gem that is Arizona's oldest dude ranch should also be studied. The Lochiel exit route suggested by the County Supervisors would be best for Patagonia residents, tourists, and Forest Service visitors alike.

Water: Impact on ecology and ecotourism:

As I've been planning my move, I've been delighted by the wide range of people who know of Patagonia and love to visit. Arizona's Sky Islands are an irreplaceable treasure, recognized worldwide for their unique flora and fauna, and their value, in particular, for migratory birds. I am very concerned about the short-term and long-term impact of the mine's dewatering plans on the City of Patagonia's water supply and the fragile ecosystems of Harshaw and Sonoita Creek and Patagonia Lake. I am also concerned about the impact of the mine's dewatering on the ecology and geology of the Patagonia Mountains themselves. I would hope that the impact of noise, light, and manganese pollution on the flora and fauna of the area would also be studied. Any impact must be weighed against the unique and special nature of the Patagonia/ Sonoita area.

Other impacts to consider:

Fire and flood are more significant concerns for small, rural communities. My own experience living through flood in Everson, Washington and watching the central Washington communities of Twisp and Pateros endure fires have shown me that rural communities lack the infrastructure to weather these catastrophes well. Their isolation makes the initial disaster worse, as resources are fewer, and it takes longer for help to arrive. The limited housing and labor make it very difficult to rebuild. Many schools, businesses and homes are simply lost, and treasured community members are forced to move away. The risks of flood due to groundwater pumping and fire due to damaged vegetation and mining operations' power lines should be studied carefully, and their possible impacts should be taken very seriously.

I hope that the Forest Service will consider the unique nature of the Patagonia/ Sonoita area, and that you will take special care to carefully investigate these and all possible impacts.

Thank you,

Jennifer Cranston