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First name: Joshua

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Sierra Vista Ranger District

District Ranger, c/o Rick Goshen

4070 S. Avenida Saracino

Hereford, AZ 85615

Re: Project ID Number: 2810-030503-POO-2020-001

The following comments are being submitted in response to the Plan of Operations (PoO) for the exploratory drilling being proposed by IC Exploration, LLC - the "San Antonio Project."

My name is Joshua Stewart, and I live in the Duquesne area of the Patagonia Mountains. My house and land directly abut the Barksdale mining claim of the San Antonio Project. I have lived in this area since 2006, and I have been an avid bird watcher for the past 28 years, traveling all parts of North America searching for avian species. I also have much experience with the Eastern and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo. I currently possess a Class A driving license and have driven a concrete mixer in the Sierra Vista/Nogales/Patagonia area since 2001. The land that my house and the Barksdale mining claim share sits among the foothills of the Patagonia Mountains, rising just above the scenic and historic San Rafael Valley. Being in the transitional stages of the lowland riparian woodlands to the upper pine-oak mountain habitat, the birds and wildlife living here are a mixture of habitats, and higher or lower elevation species are sometimes encountered.

On Sept. 2nd, 2014, after living in the Duquesne area for eight years, I heard the first Yellow-billed Cuckoo at my home. I was shocked and believed the bird was just passing through after breeding somewhere else. But every year since 2014, I have encountered Yellow-billed Cuckoos near my home and the Barksdale mining claim area during all parts of July, the prime breeding season of this species. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Arizona is a federally protected species. A study from the fish and wildlife service found that Arizona likely is home to the largest remaining Yellow-billed cuckoo population among states west of the Rocky Mountains. Since 1980, state-wide surveys from New Mexico, Arizona, and California, indicate an overall estimated 52 percent decline. Another species regularly encountered around my home and the Barksdale mining claim is the Elegant Trogon. The Patagonia Mountains is one of the only five mountain ranges where Elegant Trogons breed in all the United States. I have regularly found this species using the lush Finley and Adams Canyon drainage that runs through the heart of the Barksdale mining claim.

With the presence of Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Elegant Trogons in the Barksdale mining claim area, an Environmental Impact Study must be warranted. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is a federally protected species, and the habitat used by the permanent resident Elegant Trogon is limited, indicating a unique environment that may hold other secrets.

With my years of experience driving a concrete mixer, I know that heavy commercial vehicles entering sensitive environmental habitats will disrupt the avifauna living there. The noise and activity from the potential drilling sites will also have an impact. The effects of a fully operational mine will kill it.

Attached is the area map where I have personally found Yellow-billed Cuckoos. 2014 through 2020.

Thank you,

Joshua Stewart

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