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Comments: Sunnyside Exploration Drilling #55719

I moved to Patagonia in 1977 because of the world renowned birding and wildlife viewing opportunities. Southeastern Arizona is a uniquely rich and sensitive biological wonderland situated so that many diverse habitats meet to form a rare landscape. The proposed Sunnyside Exploration Drilling Project in the Patagonia Mountains poses a special problem for this region and its environment.

A complete Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be developed to ensure a thorough understanding about the impacts of the proposed Plan of Operations.

1. Cumulative impacts clearly exist in the Patagonia Mountains due to multiple proposed mining projects and, therefore, this reason alone should require an EIS. The cumulative impacts include, but are not limited to:

Abandoned leaking mines

Other Mining Company Activity

Cattle Grazing

Border Patrol

Recreation Activity

2. Wildlife

The proposed project will take place in a Mexican Spotted Owl Protected Activity Center. Cause-effect relationship: the proposed drilling operation will dramatically and irretrievably disturb the owls.

There are many Federally threatened and endangered species in the Patagonia Mountains. Cause-effect relationship: the proposed drilling operation will dramatically and irretrievably disturb all species.

The Patagonia Mountains are a significant corridor for wildlife movement and one of the few remaining long range corridors. There is "no action alternative" to disrupting this corridor.

3. Water Quality and Water Quantity:

There is "no action alternative" to protecting our water quality and quantity.

This Plan of Operations proposes to truck in water from other "confirmed" sources. All those "confirmed" sources are upstream or downstream of this project. All watersheds are connected.

A comprehensive study should be conducted of the entire groundwater system throughout Santa Cruz County because there is significant science on changing water conditions due to ongoing drought with all science indicating worsening conditions for the foreseeable future.

This project will occur in a Forest Service designated Municipal Watershed (Town of Patagonia).

4. Air Quality:

There are federal agencies reporting that the air quality in the Patagonia area has been declining. This must be reversed. All mining activities (exploratory or otherwise) will have a negative impact on air quality. There is "no action alternative" to protecting the vital air that we breathe into our bodies.

5. Soils:

This area is increasing its local food production. Mining activities will expose toxic materials that are likely to leach into the soils of outlying areas through air and water migration.

6. Cultural Resources:

The Patagonia Mountains are known to have been inhabited for more than 10,000 years. All efforts must be

made to identify and protect these cultural resources.

7. Dark Skies:

Everyone who visits this area comments on the beauty of the dark skies. What impact will 24/7 operations have upon this recreational activity?

8. Road Disturbance:

This level of road disturbance in an area with multiple endangered species and designated protected areas is unacceptable.