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Comments: Sunnyside Exploration Drilling Project

I have lived in Patagonia for 3 years. I am now realizing how embedded the mining industry was back in the late 1800's and early 1900's in Arizona. In addition we now have the resurgence of mining in southern Arizona. It is because of the history of mining and the recent mining projects that I believe that the Forest Service should bypass the Environmental Assessment (EA) and instead complete the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) when evaluating the Sunnyside Exploration Drilling Project. We already have several factors that are negatively impacting the environment.

I am concerned about the following issues:

1. After learning about the old mining towns, now referred to as ghost towns in southern Arizona, it came to my attention that some of the mines are leaking hazardous waste.
2. We already have a mining company that has been doing exploratory drilling in the Patagonia Mountains for many years. The company has already caused environmental problems of which I am hopeful that they will try to alleviate as much as possible during their reclamation process.
3. The Sunnyside Exploration Drilling Project Proposal states that the water for the project will be trucked into Flux Canyon from other communities. I appreciate that the company is not going to use the Town of Patagonia's water, however, this area has been in a drought for at least ten years and who knows how much water there is underground? I believe that the source of the water trucked in is directly or indirectly connected to Patagonia's water. A downside of trucking the water in from other communities is that it will add to the increase of truck traffic on Route 82.
4. The exploration activity is most likely going to disturb the environment of the endangered Mexican Spotted Owl and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. During one of the Forest Service's Open House I learned that Flux Canyon is a migration corridor for the endangered ocelot and jaguar. The building of the laydown yards, the widening of the roads and construction of new roads along with the noise and light pollution 24 hours, 7 days per week for 7 years would be bothersome to any animals let alone the endangered species.

In conclusion, I can only hope that if the Sunnyside Exploration Drilling Project Proposal is accepted that the reclamation process will be thorough and successful. But I'm afraid that there is no amount of reclamation that can be done to save the endangered species of Flux Canyon after seven years of dramatically changing their habitat.