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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a resident of the Sonoita-Patagonia area. I will be negatively affected by drilling and mining on this portion of the Coronado National Forest, as will my family and friends. The drilling area is one we frequently use for hiking, bird watching, 4-wheeling, and observation of various rare animal species. A family member hunts deer in the area. Below, I delineate the various impacts of the drilling/mining impacts and request specific actions from the Forest Service.

Impact 1: Disruptive Noise. Trucks, drilling and mining will create noise that will disturb the natural quiet of the area. Noise will disturb bird and animals, forcing them out of the area. It will make hiking unpleasant and disrupt hunting opportunities.

Action Requested: Conduct a study of noise impacts on wildlife and birds. Survey hikers and hunters about the impact of noise on their activities.

Impact 2: Water scarcity: This area is part of a larger and valuable watershed of the Santa Rita river, a lifeline for rare and endangered wildlife, birds, and fish. The watershed is already threatened by nearby mining in the Patagonia mountains, mining activity that is projected to vastly expand water use in coming years.

Action requested. Conduct a hydrology study to determine how new mining activities will affect the watershed, including the larger San Rafael Valley, its residents, and cattle operations. How will the redirection of water to mining uses affect nearby wells that feed stock ponds and water resources used by people and animals?

Impact 3: Changed recreational use patterns. If the designated area used for mining, recreational activity such as hiking, horseback riding, birding, and ATV use, will be dislocated to other parts of the Forest. This use has already been concentrated by new mining activity and access restrictions on the Meadow Valley area at the northern end of the San Rafael Valley.

Action requested: Conduct a study of recreational users to determine how they will be affected by mining related restrictions and disruptions. Survey landowners in nearby areas to determine how they will be affected by redistribution of recreational activities.

Impact 4: Harm to rare, threatened, or endangered species. I have personally observed Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Elegant Trogans in the drainages immediately adjacent to the proposed drilling sites. I have also observed frogs and salamanders in nearby stock tanks. It is possible that these frogs and salamanders are threatened species. These animals will likely be impacted by mining activity and associated noise, habitat loss, and reductions in water resources.

Action requested: Conduct a thorough study of the effects of proposed mining activity on rare, threatened, and endangered species, including reports of local residents and wildlife organizations, ssuch as the Audubon Society.