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Comments: October 2020

San Antonio Exploration Drilling Project

Sierra Vista Ranger District

c/o Rick Goshen, Geologist

4070 S. Avenida Saracino

Hereford, AZ 85615

I am writing to express my opposition to the San Antonio Exploratory Drilling Project in Santa Cruz County, Arizona. The San Rafael Valley watershed is a crucial resource in Arizona and should be revered and protected. Irreparable harm will be done to the people, water, land, aquifer, streams, animals, plants, air-quality, and eco-system if you allow this project to proceed. Mining operations will use up to 60 square miles of this land preventing it from being used by the general public. By its nature, mining is a destructive and polluting activity and will turn the watershed into an undesirable place to recreate, forcing recreation enthusiasts to take their tourism dollars elsewhere.

Water quantity is critical in desert environments and this project will allow the mine to draw unlimited amounts of water from the eastern side of the Patagonia Mountains. Any reduction in the aquifer or redirection of surface water will negatively impact residential wells and cattle operations and the perennial flow of the Santa Cruz River headwaters, one of the last free-flowing rivers in Southern Arizona.

The Patagonia Mountains, Huachuca Mountains and the Canelo Hills are a part of the US Critical Habitat for Jaguars and has also been designated a Wildlife Corridor for other species. Mining will present an additional risk for already endangered species in the watershed, like the Sonoran Pronghorn Antelope.

The cumulative long term effects of multiple mining operations will change the very nature of the San Rafael Valley Watershed and the surrounding communities.

As a country we have learned the costly long-term damage caused by projects like this first-hand, and many government officials and citizens greatly regret the decisions they've made in the past to allow the destruction and extraction that comes with mining. Please heed the lessons and cost of past projects and reject this proposed project in all forms. You hold in your hands an important decision that will impact this area for centuries. I again ask you to consider the very high cost of mining in this critical watershed and decline to authorize the project.

Thank you,

Claudia Delaney