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Title:

Comments: As a former resident of Patagonia and temporary resident of Santa Cruz county since Jan. 2024, I am opposed to permitting the South32 Hermosa Inc mine mainly for the following reasons:

1. First I think this entire permitting process should be suspended indefinitely until there are enforcement standards for manganese mining and manganese processing. Without a standard in place on what would be safe and unsafe levels of manganese emissions the entire population of Santa Cruz county will be guinea pigs without any confidence that health and human safety will be protected. Manganese clearly presents a significant threat to public health and safety so therefore it is shocking to think a project of this scale could be permitted without more knowledge of the potential public health impacts from manganese emissions and standards in place for safe/unsafe levels.
2. I consider the groundwater pumping plan of South32 to be a fatal flaw that will devastate an underground aquifer and lead to an unnatural discharge of contaminated water into the local watersheds and drinking water supply.
3. While I support renewable energy I don't support mining at all cost to support the electric vehicle industry which is geared more to selling cars and making money than saving the environment.
4. I realize Patagonia is historically a mining/ranching community that is majority Mexican-American and lower income, so that some locals would certainly be interested in employment at the mine. I personally know someone who previously worked at the mine. I have also heard but not confirmed that many of the locals from Patagonia who previously worked at the mine were let go. One of any mine's economic strong points would be providing employment for the local population so this aspect needs to be properly analyzed about who really is benefitting economically from South32 in Santa Cruz County, and who isn't.
5. Finally I request that Title VI (6) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act be applied and enforced under federal environmental justice mandates. Title VI is designed to prevent disproportionate impacts from projects such as South32 on lower income minority communities which in my opinion Patagonia and Santa Cruz County would qualify. Title VI must be used in this case since federal tax dollars are supporting the permitting process for South32 and more federal funds will be used over the life of South32. I have asked several Forest Service officials at the open house here tonight but no one can tell me how much federal support could go into the permitting process or in other ways over the life of the project. The environmental and public health impacts of South32 appear to me to be potentially very severe on Santa Cruz County so Title VI should be applied, analyzed, and enforced within all operational aspects of the South32 mine project. In addition to the lack of safety standards for manganese and other environmental concerns, the surrounding inhabitants and residents of Santa Cruz will potentially suffer very harsh consequences from South32's operation.

Thank you for your attention on this matter.

Richard Boren