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Title:

Comments: I am a former area resident and a biologist who is very concerned about the potential impacts of this mine on the Patagonia Mountains ecosystems, especially the groundwater regime. I request that you carefully study and analyze these impacts before making a decision as to whether or not to approve the mine, or whether to require specific mitigation steps (and the funding to carry them out effectively) before any approval is granted.

Given the track record of the proponent, I would hope that your agency would be especially vigilant in protecting the natural resources of this Sky Island National Forest, which, in the age of global warming, is even more critical to so many species in the region than it has historically been.

Water is a particularly scarce and precious resource, and the impacts of local dewatering of an aquifer cannot always be accurately predicted---especially over the decade or more of this proposed project's lifetime. I understand that your agency cannot regulate below-the-ground activities; however, you can investigate the likely impacts of such activities if they seriously lower the water table and/or dewater surface flows that are essential for so many animals, plants, and ecosystems in these mountains.

Other impacts that should be studied include: the potential for air and water pollution from mining operations (including heavy equipment traffic); the impact of noise and night lighting on both human and animal communities; and the fallout from reduced tourism to the area, which provides a substantial part of the Patagonia area's economy.

Thank you for your serious attention to this potentially catastrophic impact on your Forest lands, and on our entire southern AZ sky island region.