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First name: Manuel

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Kerwin S. Dewberry, Forest Supervisor

Coronado National Forest

ATTN: Hermosa Critical Minerals Project

300 West Congress Street

Tucson, AZ, 85701

RE: Letter of Support for South32's Hermosa Critical Minerals Exploration and Mine Plan of Operations

Dear Mr. Dewberry,

As a native of Santa Cruz County, I have taken great interest in the developing mining operations in the Patagonia Mountains since about 2011. I have listened to the opposition as well as proponents and most have valid points.

However, I am solidly in favor of this project. I raised three sons whom I had to see off once they reached a certain age to make their way in this world. There were very limited opportunities for them and I, like many others, had to encourage them to leave. I also have been witness to countless tragic stories of how my own friends and then my sons' friends fell prey to the drug trade which lured them with the promise of "easy money." An alternative is the produce industry, which while dignified, forces many of the rank and file to sign up for food stamps in the off season. Tourism, often touted as the industry we should all be trying to shore up, is also seasonal and provides few jobs and little training.

Mining is an industry that can change that dynamic and help train the local workforce in a variety of different skills. Workers are compensated well, which ultimately leads to generational benefits. By providing good-paying jobs, for example, parents will be able to afford to help pay their children's college tuition.

We hear horror stories of mining mishaps around the world and it is understandably scary to some. But in the United States, mining is among the most regulated industries. In addition to federal laws and regulations, the state and county have their own laws and ordinances and there is plenty of opportunity for public input, such as this NEPA survey. The intricate approval and monitoring processes help ensure compliance with environmental laws.

The Hermosa area has been mined off and on for centuries and now, test drilling has yielded geological and engineering data that indicate that once in production, it will be the largest silver mine in the United State. More importantly, this is the only mine in development to date that could produce two federally designated critical minerals - manganese and zinc - both of which are essential minerals for powering the nation's clean energy future.

I never thought I would see such an opportunity present itself that has the potential to change our county, state and region economically for decades to come.

For the sake of its own sustainability, Hermosa is being designed with advanced technology and monitoring systems. It is a fraction of the footprint of the open-pit mines in our area and its proposed water use is a lot less than other mines in the region.

I have seen a good-faith effort by South32 to approach this project in a responsible manner by organizing public forums, speaking to service clubs and the media and presenting water-management plans. They regularly conduct surveys of threatened and endangered plant and aquatic species as part of their goal of preserving biodiversity. Their commitment to sustainability could not be made clearer than the \$30 million the company spent to clean up mine waste left by previous mining operations that were much less responsible. This effort protected the natural environment and mitigated heavy metals that were leaching from old tailings and waste rock and threatening local waterways.

If approved, no doubt South32 will reap financial benefits many times over as others have done. But the above examples are not of a company that plans to simply loot our community. They speak to a company committed to developing Hermosa in a way that minimizes impact while reaping resources of national importance and creating new opportunities for generations to come. In my mind, sufficient guardrails exist to ensure the continued protection of our environment.