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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USDA Forest Service,

I am writing to provide my comments on the recent funding and development of the Hermosa Mine near the Patagonia Mountains in southern Arizona. The Biden administration's allocation of \$20 million to boost manganese production at this site raises several environmental, social, and economic concerns that I believe need thorough consideration.

Environmental Impact: The Patagonia Mountains are known for their unique biodiversity, including several endangered species. Increased mining activity could lead to habitat destruction, water contamination, and long-term ecological damage. The Forest Service should conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess these risks thoroughly.

Water Resources: Mining operations often require significant water use, which can deplete local water supplies and contaminate water sources. Given the arid environment of southern Arizona, it is crucial to ensure that the mining activities do not compromise the water quality and availability for local communities and ecosystems.

Community Health and Safety: The potential for air and water pollution poses health risks to nearby residents. Dust and emissions from mining operations can lead to respiratory issues, while contaminated water can have severe health consequences. The Forest Service should implement strict monitoring and regulation to protect community health.

Economic and Social Impact: While the project promises economic benefits such as job creation, it is important to balance these with the potential negative impacts on local tourism, recreation, and quality of life. Sustainable development practices should be prioritized to ensure long-term benefits for the local economy without compromising environmental integrity.

Cultural and Historical Preservation: The Patagonia Mountains hold cultural and historical significance for local indigenous communities and the broader public. Mining operations should not disrupt these important cultural sites. The Forest Service should engage in meaningful consultations with indigenous groups to ensure their cultural heritage is respected and preserved.

In light of these concerns, I urge the U.S. Forest Service to take the following actions:

Conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before any further development.

Implement stringent water use and contamination safeguards.

Establish continuous air and water quality monitoring around the mining site.

Engage with local communities and stakeholders to address their concerns and incorporate their input into decision-making processes.

Ensure that any development includes measures to preserve cultural and historical sites in the area.

Thank you for considering my comments. I trust that the U.S. Forest Service will take the necessary steps to ensure that the Hermosa Mine project is developed responsibly and sustainably, with careful attention to environmental protection and community well-being.

Sincerely,

Danya Gorel