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First name: Layola

Last name: Eden

Organization:

Title:

Comments: First and foremost, let me express my gratitude that there IS a US Forest Service. I read of your mission online "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations" and your motto "caring for the land and serving people". I trust above all that you will bear this in mind (and take it to heart) as you deliberate the impact of South 32 mining on US Forest Service land.

There are many considerations in "caring for the land" (and its inhabitants). Please ponder the displacement of the soil itself, made manifest in floodplains and wetlands, forest floors and grassy meadows. The soil is host to vegetation that is unique to this bioregion. Once it is gone, how long will it take to grow back, and how do you ensure that it will be restored to its former diversity? The vegetation in turn is home to wildlife in many forms - mammals, birds, reptiles, insects - all essential to the ecosystem. They have homes. There are corridors wherein they move from place to place. How will the disruption of their habitat affect their status? Will they become threatened - or even endangered - in the process?

What of fire danger? This land is a desert, experiencing a many-years-long drought. The threat of fire is a natural consequence of using equipment and machinery that runs on gasoline - how will that threat be mitigated? It may not be your motto per se, but it is the watchword of your icon Smokey Bear "only YOU can prevent forest fires!" A fire is not easily contained and would devastate not just the Forest Service land but potentially could spread for miles and impact perhaps hundreds of thousands of people - the people you serve. Recent years have seen wildfires from California to British Columbia, Hawaii to Montana. They should serve as a warning of just how fragile our environment, and our life itself, can be.

Consider please the "present and future generations" of your mission statement as you study the scope of negative impact this proposal would bring - in the short term, and in the long run.