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May 18, 2024

Forest Supervisor
USDA Forest Service
300 W. Congress St.
Tucson, AZ 85701

RE: NEPA COMMENTARY South 32 Mine Patagonia, Arizona.

Dear Sir:

Writing as a 35 year resident of Rio Rico, Arizona, University of Florida School of Forestry graduate. Directly impacted by the South 32 plan.

Of course, I have been interested in the proposed development of the South 32 mining project and write to identify considerations that are apparently being both glossed over and/or ignored in the writings of South 32 and the local press that should be included and accurately evaluated in the NEPA process above all others. This letter is not all inclusive.

#1.- The scope of the focus on the level and intensity of adverse impact on current populations localized inside all of Santa Cruz County and throughout the lower Santa Cruz River Valley from the quality of life perspective as well as the degradation of the environment potential has received little notice in spite of overwhelming negative input before County Planning & Zoning as well as Board of Supervisors, both, apparently have vested interests in the projects success. The fact that rivers in Southern Arizona are both scarce and fragile ecosystems is being either dismissed or ignored. Water runs down hill to seek it's own level and all rivers run to the sea. The Santa Cruz is the only river in the area and will be impacted by the project. How to measure the extent of negative impact requires serious objective fact finding. The question of surface and subterranean river flow of the Santa Cruz River has yet to be mentioned much less addressed.

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#2.- (WATER) The entire mine itself is located within the National Forest yet to function will impinge upon additional Forest Lands and Private Lands to develop the project to completion. The duration of the project DEVELOPMENT is estimated at 25-30 years. The entirety of the project is located within the Sonoran Desert at an elevation significantly higher than the town of Patagonia which has proven to be directly down hill by water run off from the project. South 32 estimates the project will consume over six million gallons of water a day from their wells and will adversely affect surrounding environments for an estimated six mile radius from the project. There is concern that it is likely more than a twenty mile radius that will be adversely affected because it affects both ground water and the down stream access to ground water and the Santa Cruz River, an additional concern is

where will that six million gallons a day of used runoff go? Certainly not back to ground water. Desert ecosystems are fragile. Moreover, obviously the ground water recharge rate has not been addressed and is an obvious significant question. Neither humans, wildlife nor vegetation do well without water and this is a desert with low humidity, high evaporation rates and subject to serious drouths.

If sufficient ground water becomes 'unavailable' in time the project will be a failure and the environmental destruction irreversible. We have to get it right the first time. A definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. We do not need another resident Ghost Town Mine in Santa Cruz County, Arizona.

Your thorough attention to these matters will prove pivotal.

As ever,

Zack Taylor
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