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First name: Olivia

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am a local resident of Santa Cruz County and I am concerned about how the expansion of the Hermosa Mine onto Forest Service land will impact the forests, wildlife, and people who live near and visit the Patagonia Mountains. I enjoy the natural scenery, beauty and recreational opportunities in our local area, as do many other residents and visitors alike.

1)I would like to ask it to be studied how the proposed mining operations will impact recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping, horseback riding, and birdwatching. I am concerned that existing recreational areas in the Coronado National Forest could become off limits and that the mine's impacts on the local ecosystem could also affect these activities.

2)Please study the impacts of the proposed expansion of mining and related operations on the scenic value of the beautiful forested landscape of the Patagonia Mountains that is appreciated by locals and also draws visitors and tourists. I am concerned that building more buildings and other facilities, that would be built in addition to the existing South 32 site, could decrease the overall scenic value of the area.

3)Please study how the location of the new South 32 site could impact the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area in the Patagonia Mountains, located in the Coronado National Forest. The Patagonia Mountains, as part of the Sky Islands, is a critical habitat year-round, for breeding, and migration for several bird species. This is both for species of conservation concern and many species that have a limited range in the United States only in southeastern Arizona. These species include the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Mexican spotted owl, Eastern "Azure" Bluebird, Elegant Trogon, Montezuma Quail and many others. Please study how loss of habitat; impacts on the birds' habitat and available food and water; noise disturbance; and other impacts from South 32's proposed new operations, buildings and infrastructure could impact native birds.

4)Please study the impact of the new proposed mining operations on the native wildlife (in addition to birds), including some species that are rare in the United States such as jaguars and ocelots. Please investigate how loss of habitat; impacts on animal habitats and available food and water; noise disturbance; and other impacts from South 32's proposed new operations, buildings and infrastructure could impact native animal species.

5)I am concerned that deforestation as a direct result of South 32's planned development, as well as the drainage of water from the aquifer, will impact the health of the forests and wild plants growing in the Patagonia Mountains, both in short-term and long-term impacts in the decades to come. Please study if the proposed mining operations could cause drought conditions in the forests, potentially impacting trees, other plants, and the overall ecosystem. Please also investigate if pollution from mining operations in the air, soil, and water, could impact the forest ecosystem.

Thank you for studying thoroughly and objectively all of the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed South 32 project, and taking concerns from the public into consideration.

Sincerely,

Olivia Ersek