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Title:

Comments: Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments regarding the proposed Hermosa Critical Minerals Exploration and Mine Plan of Operations.

I am concerned that the large scale of this proposal would make it impossible to minimize adverse environmental impacts on national forest surface resources. The description of this proposal in the Federal Register published on May 10, 2024 lists numerous anticipated impacts.

Impacts to water quality and quantity. I am concerned that discharging 6.84 million gallons of water per day into Harshaw Creek is an unsustainable waste of water in an arid climate. Also, what effect would discharging this much mine wastewater into Harshaw Creek have on the water quality of the Patagonia municipal water supply, the water quality of individual wells in the area, and that of communities and residences further downstream? Has this been studied?

Impacts to threatened, endangered, and other special status species and their habitats. I am concerned that this proposal may cause significant harm to more than 100 endangered, threatened, and sensitive species of plants and animals. Federal agencies are required to prevent the extinction of these species. With such a large scale proposal, how would it be possible for the Forest Service to prevent harm to each of these species?

Impacts from noise and from lights used for nighttime drilling. I am concerned about this proposal's plans for noise 24-hours a day and lights at night. Has there been modeling to show the scale of the anticipated noise and lighting and how that would affect Patagonia and other private lands in Santa Cruz County? See research from the Sound and Light Ecology Team: <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/soundandlightecologyteam/> Among other activities, this team is investigating the effects of peaks and lows of energy development on soundscapes and wildlife communities.

Impacts to air quality. I am concerned about the effects of airborne manganese accumulation: tremors, loss of balance, compromised cognition, and more. I understand that nerve and brain damage from airborne manganese is permanent and not treatable. Has a third party evaluated the proposed technology to limit airborne manganese?

Impacts to traffic. I am concerned about the increasing mine-related traffic that is already happening in Patagonia as well as the effect of traffic on birds and wildlife. Has there been traffic modeling to show the peak impact of this proposal, with respect to large ore-carrying trucks as well as other mine-related traffic?

There are so many potential impacts associated with this proposal. When this proposal is considered along with other nearby industrial development projects, there are also cumulative impacts. To analyze all of these impacts, will third party or other federal agency experts be consulted?

Also, have current developments in electric car batteries been evaluated? Will manganese and zinc be needed for these batteries in the future?

Thank you for considering my comments.