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First name: Gary

Last name: Levine

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I have some very serious concerns and comments with respect to the Hermosa Critical Minerals Project and the Environmental Impact Study.

I am extremely concerned about the impact and environmental effects of pumping of up to 6.5 million gallons per day of groundwater by the mine. I am concerned about the impact on the watershed of doing that as it will undoubtedly reduce the availability of water for residences, wildlife, and ranches in an area that is already experiencing drought and water shortages. I am also very concerned as to what testing will be done and by whom to ensure that any water that is pumped and subsequently released into our streams is safe and free from pollution and contaminants. I am also concerned about geological changes that could result from removing that much water, the additional flood risk from discharging so much water (and especially during monsoon season) as well as the potential destruction of historical rock art and artifacts along our waterways when those water discharges raise the height of the streams, creeks, etc.

I am also extremely concerned by the act that this Hermosa Project will add very significant amounts of truck and other vehicular traffic onto our roads (operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) adversely impacting the ability of residents to utilize those roads while encountering a non-stop parade of trucks and other mine vehicles as well as greatly increasing the likelihood of traffic accidents and injuries. That will clearly also result in higher road maintenance costs for our County. There will also be the large amounts of exhaust pollution going into our air from all of those additional trucks. Our traffic and transportation infrastructure as it currently stands cannot support that additional traffic.

I am also extremely concerned about the potentially very serious adverse impact that the Hermosa Project will have on our air quality. Heavy metals, including manganese which is highly toxic, may be released into our air causing serious health issues or even death for both people and wildlife. Hermosa has described their trucks as "nearly indestructible" but nearly is not good enough as it will take only one accident to have devastating consequences on this region. Then of course there is also the dust and other pollution that will be released into our air as part of Hermosa's construction activities.

I am also very concerned about the adverse impact that the Hermosa project will have on our many species of wildlife, birds, and plant life in this area. We have a sizeable number of species that are already on the endangered species list. Any and all of the activities that Hermosa will be engaging in will adversely impact our wildlife, birds, and plant life since those activities will impact water supply and quality, air quality, and their habitat. That is also true of the proposed above ground high voltage power line to service the mine.

In April 2023, President Biden signed Executive Order 14096 Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All. I am greatly concerned by the fact that this Hermosa Project directly violates the provisions and commitments spelled out in that Executive Order and the Justice 40 Initiative. What Hermosa is doing here in Santa Cruz County is making a travesty of our government's commitment to Environmental Justice.

The Hermosa Project will increase our area's vulnerability to fire, especially with increasing levels of drought being caused by climate change. Mine-related operations can start and encourage the spread of fires, including an increase in non-native vegetation on the mine site and new roadways, larger vehicle transport, increase use of heavy equipment, and an above-ground power line.

I am also very concerned by the fact that the Hermosa Project will adversely impact current patterns of recreation and lead to loss of recreation areas. Not only residents, but a great number of people from other parts of the

U.S. and even the world come here to enjoy our beautiful environment and scenery and to partake in our many available recreational activities including hiking, birding, horseback riding, hunting, biking and ATV riding, and boating.