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Comments: I am completely in favor of the WITHDRAWAL of Hassayampa Mineral lands excluding and protecting nearly 4,000 acres of prime and crucial riparian habitat for many threatened species. As stated in the Draft Environmental Assessment, vegetation along the river, one of few perennial streams on the Forest include Fremont Cottonwood, AZ Alder, AZ Walnut & Velvet Ash. Endemic species to AZ occur exclusively along a mile long stretch of river in the lower portion of the withdrawal area and are found nowhere else in the Prescott National Forest. The 9.5 miles of protection that will exist along the Hassayampa river is directly downstream of some major prospective mining operations patented in the early 1900's.

This withdrawal is only a 20 year band-aid for future exploration and deterioration of this precious watershed will continue if water quality and mining operations at the state level are not addressed. The withdrawal does not address current and active mines that have been polluting this and other local watersheds for the past 120 years. This protection and withdrawal is but a start to conserving what little riparian areas still exist in the Northern Arizona Highlands area.

I would be very much in favor of increasing the protected timeframe from 20 years to 50 or beyond.

Thank you for the opportunity in voicing citizen concern regarding the withdrawal.