

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/11/2025 2:44:27 PM

First name: Amber

Last name: Fields

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in support of the Hassayampa River Riparian Area Mineral Withdrawal. I have lived on the Hassayampa for 32 out of my 41 years of life, and the Hassayampa River flows through two parcels of land that I currently own. I grew up along the river since the time I was a few days old, and as such, the river has always been a central part of my life. Due to my love for the river, I developed a keen sense of observation for the changes that have occurred for the river throughout my life. As a child, I spent my years admiring the Hassayampa's beauty and uniqueness as a waterway, getting to know the rare tiger salamanders, lowland leopard frogs, Arizona toads, and even occasionally hearing the spotted owl in the distance. As a result, it literally hurt my young heart to see the damage done to the river by miners prior to the last Mineral Withdrawal, which was carelessly allowed to expire by the Prescott National Forest.

The unbelievable damage to the riverbed and riverbanks from mining was and still is visible decades later. I have witnessed extreme down-cutting to the riverbed from those mining activities, which has negatively affected people's recreational opportunities, as well as plant and animal habitat. I have seen exotic invasive species brought in by mining activities take over previously native plant habitat, at the expense of people and wildlife. Not only was the river damaged by those mining activities, but I remember having unfavorable dealings with previous miners that were living on their mining claims against the law, and witnessed the negative impacts of the miners' activities on the ability for local citizens to recreate along the Hassayampa River. Since the previous withdrawal expired, dredging on a new claim just downstream from Frog Falls (on the road named for my Grandfather) has torn up the creek bed, and the miners drive recklessly on our road, endangering our family and our pets. I have also personally witnessed how mining activities negatively affect the water quality leading to the pollution of the water that people swim in and wildlife drink. My mother remembers the river "running orange" from the mining that was occurring upstream from our home when I was a child. I currently own a well along the river that my family drinks from and I am concerned about further water contamination from further mining activities. It is my most sincere desire for my 4 year old daughter to not be afraid to play in the Hassayampa River due to contamination, and to feel confident in the quality of our drinking water, since drinking polluted water often leads to incurable diseases.

Since my childhood, the Prescott area has become even more of a travel destination. People come to the area to enjoy the amazing natural beauty that it has to offer. The Hassayampa River is very close to the City of Prescott, and an important part of the recreational opportunities provided. As the climate changes, flowing rivers where people can swim are becoming evermore rare. If miners are allowed to further impair the water quality and scenic beauty of the Hassayampa River, it could negatively affect Prescott's tourism-based economy. Tourism will always bring more money to Prescott's economy than mining ever could.

I have explored the Hassayampa River from its headwaters, all the way along its' path deep down into the desert. I can testify that this river is an absolute natural wonder; a marvel unmatched anywhere else in the world. The granite swimming holes are Heaven on Earth - let's preserve these treasures for current and future generations of people and wildlife to enjoy instead of allowing them to be plundered. The value of an undamaged Hassayampa River is immensely greater than the small amount of revenue that miners could scratch out from the rubble they would make of the river. While the damage from previous mining will never be completely healed, I have witnessed a good amount of natural rehabilitation of the river due to the last successful Mineral Withdrawal. I am asking for this current iteration of the Hassayampa River Riparian Mineral Withdrawal to be approved so that we don't lose all the valuable healing that has occurred - the people and wildlife of the Prescott region deserve nothing less.

Thank you,

Amber R. Fields