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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am submitting this comment as someone who values the Saline River for its recreational, economic, and ecological importance.

After reviewing the proposal, I support the No Action alternative for Project #63480.

Many of the nominated tracts are located in steep, forested terrain that contains headwater streams draining toward tributaries of the Saline River. These upper watershed areas are especially sensitive, as they rapidly transport sediment downstream during storm events.

Mining activities such as excavation, spoil placement, haul road construction, and heavy equipment use can significantly increase erosion and sediment delivery to nearby streams. Even modest increases in fine sediment can degrade aquatic habitat by embedding streambeds, reducing oxygen exchange, and impacting fish and freshwater species that depend on clean gravel substrates.

These impacts are not isolated. The Saline River system includes streams recognized for their exceptional water quality and ecological value. Protecting these conditions is critical to maintaining the long-term health of the watershed.

From a recreational standpoint, these same conditions-clean water, stable channels, and healthy aquatic systems-are what make the river valuable for paddling, fishing, and outdoor use. Changes in water clarity and stream quality are quickly noticed and directly affect the user experience.

The Saline River is also an economic asset for the region. Recreation on the river supports outfitters, local businesses, and tourism. Protecting water quality helps protect these opportunities.

I am also concerned about the cumulative watershed impacts of this project. Existing factors such as roads, recreation, and storm-driven erosion already contribute sediment to headwater systems. Adding mining disturbance within the same drainage network increases the risk of downstream impacts that may not be fully captured through parcel-by-parcel analysis.

At a minimum, I encourage careful evaluation of:

- * Sediment and erosion risks associated with mining activities
- * Impacts to headwater streams draining toward the Saline River
- * Effects on high-quality and ecologically sensitive waters
- * Impacts to aquatic habitat and species dependent on clean substrates
- * Cumulative watershed impacts across multiple tracts

Headwater streams are the source of water quality for the entire system. Disturbance in these areas can have far-reaching downstream effects on both ecological integrity and recreational value.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Forest Service to select the No Action alternative for this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.