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To: Heidi McRoberts, Forest Supervisor
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands
2113 Osuna Rd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Submitted via: USDA Forest Service Comment Portal (Project #301824)

Subject: Public Comment on the Proposed Roca Honda Mine Project

Dear Supervisor McRoberts,

I am writing to submit my formal comments regarding the proposed Roca Honda large-scale, underground conventional uranium mine project within the Mount Taylor Ranger District. While I understand the project is undergoing regulatory review, I have deep concerns regarding its long-term environmental, cultural, and public health impacts on New Mexico's communities and public lands.

I request that the U.S. Forest Service thoroughly evaluate and address the following critical issues before issuing any final decisions or permits:

1. Severe Water Resource Depletion and Contamination Risks
The scale of underground dewatering required for this project poses an unacceptable threat to our regional water security. Expert analysis indicates that dewatering operations will cause an aquifer drawdown of over 1,000 feet-a depletion that could take centuries to naturally recover. Furthermore, consuming over 1.6 billion gallons of water in a region already suffering from severe, climate-induced water scarcity is unsustainable. The Forest Service must enforce the strictest oversight on the treatment and discharge of dewatering fluids into local watersheds to prevent heavy metal and radioactive runoff from contaminating vital water supplies.

2. Irreversible Degradation of Sacred Cultural Landscapes
The Roca Honda project sits within the Mount Taylor Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), a landscape of profound spiritual and cultural significance to the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, and Laguna peoples. Heavy excavation, industrial road building, and drilling on Jesus Mesa threaten the physical and spiritual integrity of these sacred lands. Traditional post-mining reclamation cannot fix or undo the disruption of these irreplaceable cultural sites.

3. Public Health Risks from Cross-Jurisdictional Ore Transportation
The plan to haul extracted uranium ore over long distances through public routes and Navajo Nation communities to the White Mesa Mill in Utah introduces severe public health risks. The environmental review must include rigorous, cumulative assessments of fugitive radioactive dust, heavy truck emissions, and robust emergency response protocols for potential transit accidents involving raw ore.

4. Deforestation and Habitat Fragmentation in Cibola National Forest
The construction of surface support facilities, drilling pads, and access roads will fragment vital wildlife corridors and degrade public recreational lands within the Cibola National Forest. The Forest Service must prioritize the preservation of these public ecosystems over private industrial exploitation.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to protecting our public lands and communities. I look forward to seeing how these critical environmental and cultural concerns are addressed in the upcoming regulatory responses.

Sincerely,
Eileen Bilynsky