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Comments: NOTE: I filed comments yesterday, but they are not showing even though comments that I know have been filed this morning ARE showing. So I am refileing in an abundance of caution -- that is how important this is to me.

I have lived in the Patagonia Mountains and Sonoita Creek Watershed for many years. E O Wilson (American biologist, researcher, theorist, naturalist, and author) writing in his book "Half Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life" makes the point that even though extinction rates are soaring, a great deal of Earth's biodiversity can still be saved. Wilson contacted 18 of the world's senior naturalists (each with international expertise in biodiversity and ecology) and asked them to ". . .name one to five places in the world you consider best on the basis of richness, uniqueness, and most in need of research and protection . . ." Among the top choices are the Madrean mountains chains of Mexico and the Sky Island heights of the southwestern United States, including the Patagonia Mountains.

The first tenet of responsible mining should be that there are some places that should NOT be mined and the Patagonia Mountains qualify for a place in need of protection.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) governs federal land use, including access to and exercise of the General Mining Law of 1872 (GML) rights on lands administered by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service (USFS). The FLPMA recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals and provides that the FLPMA shall not impair GML rights, including, but not limited to, rights of ingress and egress. HOWEVER, the FLPMA also provides that mining authorizations must not result in unnecessary degradation of public lands.

The proposed Small Tracts Act sale of National Forest land to Arizona Minerals, Inc. is directly tied to the Hermosa mining project; it will facilitate the mine's operations in an ecologically sensitive area and will likely result in a significant cumulative impact on the area, therefore it should not be approved. The Patagonia Mountains are home to many threatened and endangered species and the Forest Service needs to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the potential sale's impacts on all affected threatened and endangered species and their designated critical habitats before the sale is to be approved.

Further, if this proposed Small Tracts Act sale were to go through, access to, use, and enjoyment of National Forest land by the general public will be unduly impeded and restricted. The Patagonia Mountains have long been used for public recreation by residents from all over Arizona and many people also travel from far and wide to enjoy the natural beauty, wildlife, hiking, mountain biking, off-roading, and camping that the area has to offer.

In addition, the Patagonia Mountains have been home to multiple Indigenous people groups for thousands of years, and the Forest Service should first consult with any Indian Tribes that attach religious or cultural significance to the sites prior to approving the proposed sale.

I hereby reference comments filed by Patagonia Resource Alliance and include those comments as issues of concern for me individually.