

April 20, 2026

Via electronica email at: objections-southwestern-regional-office@usda.gov

Reviewing Official, Southwestern Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service, Southwest Region,
Southwestern Region
333 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

RE: OBJECTION to the Hermosa Critical Minerals Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Draft Record of Decision (Draft ROD or DROD), and proposed Amendment to the Coronado National Forest Plan

Responsible Official: Kerwin S. Dewberry, Forest Supervisor
Coronado National Forest

I am a 23-year resident of Santa Cruz County, and my husband family has lived in this region for generations and has ties to the Spanish land grants. We love where we live for so many reasons. We walk, bike, hike, camp, boat, kayak, paddle, participate in birding, explore, participate in river cleanups, pick up trash at Patagonia and Pena Blanca Lakes, pick up trash on roadways and hiking/walking paths, in and around the Patagonia Mountains and within Santa Cruz County.

We are stakeholders regarding the Final DEIS of the Hermosa project. I state for the record for a second time, I attended an Open House sponsored by the US Forest Service on May 25, 2025, at the Nogales High School, in Nogales, Arizona. I visited every USFS table and asked many questions. At several stations I was told by USFS staff, "this is not my area of expertise" in response to my questions. In some cases, staff could not answer my questions. There were many USFS staff present at this event yet I heard this statement repeatedly several times during the open house which was the USFS's official time for the public to engage in questions and the time for community members to have an expectation for concrete answers. I found this an unacceptable practice, given the importance and purpose of the event. There was no follow-up event or attempt to answer questions by residents impacted by this project. The fact that staff were present at subject matter tables to take questions yet could not answer all of my questions, nor some of the questions of other community members, is indicative of a lack of regard for the community, and unethical standards teetering on malfeasance as a part of the NEPA process. It does not meet the standards of public involvement.

Please note I submitted my comments on the Draft EIS on June 21, 2025. I hereby submit my comments and objections to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the CNF Hermosa Critical Minerals Project.

I hereby reference and incorporate the comments, documents, and attachments filed by the Patagonia Area Resource Alliance on behalf of numerous conservation organizations, regarding the OBJECTION to the Hermosa Critical Minerals Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Draft Record of Decision (Draft ROD or DROD), and proposed Amendment to the Coronado National Forest Plan, filed on April 17, 2026.

All previous comments submitted by the Objectors and myself, including all exhibits and attachments submitted to the Forest Service by the Objectors, and myself, are already in the possession of the agency, the Reviewing Officer and Regional Office, and are hereby incorporated into this Objection and into the administrative record and hereby submitted to the Reviewing Officer for its review and consideration.

The Forest Service must not take any action until a revised FEIS and revised DROD demonstrates full compliance with each and every law, regulation, policy, and Executive Order noted herein. The Regional Forester must withdraw the FEIS and DROD with instructions to the Coronado National Forest to correct all errors noted therein before the Agency can consider approving or taking any actions.

Omissions and unaddressed issues regarding the DEIS render the FEIS faulty. I urge the Forest Service to reject the Draft ROD, require supplemental analysis, and ensure full compliance before any authorization.

Key unresolved deficiencies include incomplete cumulative impact analysis (still omitting other mines like Rosemont and Barksdale).

Direct impacts: Those that “are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.”

Indirect impacts: Those that “are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonable foreseeable.”

Cumulative impacts: Those that “result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such actions.”

Additional items needing addressed include reliance on generic mitigations and lack of alignment with scenic integrity objectives for the Patagonia-Sonoita Scenic Road; unresolved issues with the selected alternative road, updated dry-stack tailings, soil and dust emissions, transmission line, wildfire and infrastructure, air quality, water discharge and quality.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my objections to the Hermosa Critical Minerals Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Draft Record of Decision (Draft ROD or DROD), and proposed Amendment to the Coronado National Forest Plan. If you have any questions, feel free to call me or email me at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Wendy Islas
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]