



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

PIMA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
130 W. CONGRESS, TUCSON, AZ 85701-1317
(520) 740-8661 FAX (520) 740-8171

C.H. HUCKELBERRY
County Administrator

September 15, 2009

The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords
United States Congress
502 Cannon House Building
Washington, DC 20515-0308

Re: Assistance to Coronado National Forest

Dear Congresswoman Giffords:

As a cooperating agency with the Forest Service, Pima County continues to voice its concerns regarding the proposed Rosemont copper mine project. The purpose of this letter is to respectfully request that appropriate resources be requested and made available to the Forest Service in its efforts on one of the most complex environmental impact statements in the Coronado National Forest's history.

Given the complexity and nature of this project, it is imperative that a strong team of staff experienced in assessing a project like this be assembled to conduct the current effort. A completely new copper mine would be unprecedented in the Coronado, and rare elsewhere in the National Forest system. In the Coronado, most mining-related activities have been applications for recreational mining, mineral exploration, or small-scale development. The Coronado has recently added staff with greater skills in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), but few, if any of their staff, has had responsibility for developing or overseeing the federal permit for a mine of this scale.

By contrast, other National Forests have extensive experience with large copper mines, most of which began before NEPA was passed. In Arizona, the Tonto National Forest has brought at least one large, new mine into operation, and oversees mining permits issued for expansion of the Miami mine. Forest units in Nevada and Montana also have vital experience that could be brought to bear on the Rosemont proposal, even though their experience is typically with other mineral resources.

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Whether favoring or opposing the mine, local residents understand that the Coronado National Forest will make decisions about the proposed plan of mining operation that will affect Pima County for generations to come. The County therefore asks for your support in bringing qualified staff and resources to the Coronado National Forest.

Pima County has joined with the Coronado as a cooperator for the preparation of the EIS. Our purpose is to ensure that any mining plan of operations avoids, minimizes and mitigates impacts to the maximum extent possible, resulting in a clean operation and no net loss of the natural resource base.

In our work as a cooperator, we see the quality of work being produced by Coronado Forest staff. With great respect for the sincere efforts and qualifications of many existing staff, we believe the Forest will need more funding and time from Rosemont Copper, and more qualified staff to complete the EIS. The Coronado is rushing to complete the Draft EIS by November 2009. In their rush, opportunities to reduce impacts are being ignored. Many important questions are not being addressed.

Numerous studies introduced as testimony in hearings before Congress clearly indicate that the federal environmental review process has seriously and consistently under-estimated adverse environmental impacts, as well as the costs associated with repair or mitigation of contamination and other harms. This problem must not be perpetuated. An experienced staff, willing to use existing authorities, is critical to the Coronado's mission.

The matter of the Rosemont EIS is very complex and involves matters of extreme importance. Please assist the Forest Service in dedicating the necessary resources as well as trained experienced staff to this most important matter.

Sincerely,



C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

CHH/dr

c: Jeanine Derby, Forest Supervisor, U.S. Forest Service