



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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*copy
1. Nicole
2. Julia
8/16/14*

Mr. C. H. Huckelberry
Pima County Administrator
130 W. Congress Street
10th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Mr. Huckleberry,

The Forest Service appreciates the additional information and detailed critique that you provided in your letter of July 16, 2014. We have reviewed the information and intend to incorporate it, where applicable, into the preparation of our Supplemental Biological Assessment.

At this time, in conjunction with other federal agencies, we are considering a wide variety of approaches to estimate the potential effects to both Upper and Lower Cienega Creek and Empire Gulch from the proposed mine. In doing so, we will consider the effects to the hydrology of the system, as well as the impacts to habitat and effects to individual species protected under the Endangered Species Act. We believe it is unlikely that any single approach will provide the full and accurate answer to the questions at hand. The multiple approaches that we are currently evaluating should give us an improved perspective on potential effects. In doing so, we also feel it is necessary to clearly understand and disclose the uncertainties with each approach, some of which is discussed in your letter.

We are also still in the process of reviewing and understanding the large volume of information provided following the meeting on June 10-11, 2014, in which Pima County participated. The need for additional data collection suggested by Pima County is something that we will also consider as we review the existing data set and select a methodology for estimating future impacts.

The Forest Service has a responsibility to prepare the Supplemental Biological Assessment using the best available information and science. The current process in which we are engaged is intended to ensure that any available information is obtained and reviewed, that a wide variety of professional opinions are heard and incorporated. The Forest Service also must meet its statutory obligations in a timely manner. I appreciate Pima County's assistance and support as we work towards the completion of a supplement Biological Assessment.

Sincerely,


JIM UPCHURCH
Forest Supervisor

