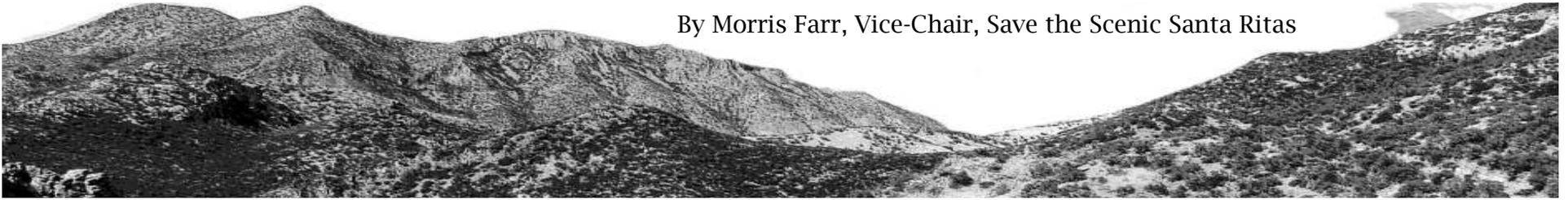


Hurdles Faced By Rosemont Mine

By Morris Farr, Vice-Chair, Save the Scenic Santa Ritas



Opponents of the proposed Rosemont Mine are encouraged by a recent letter from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to Rosemont Copper in response to its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Mitigation Plan Insufficient

The letter states "...the proposed compensatory mitigation would not fully compensate for the unavoidable adverse impacts that would remain after all appropriate and practicable avoidance and minimization measures have been achieved." That is bureaucratese for "the proposed mitigation is not sufficient to cover the damage."

The ACOE is one of several government agencies that must approve the plans of Rosemont before construction of the

mine could begin. Their major concern is the impact of the mine on the "waters of the United States," which include Davidson Canyon and Cienega Creek. The Cienega watershed provides about 20 percent of the water supply for the Greater Tucson Area.

...And Expensive

Rosemont's mitigation proposal calls for the purchase and protection of other aquatic areas in exchange for the potential damage to Davidson Canyon and Cienega Creek. This is a very expensive problem for Rosemont and presents one of the many hurdles that Rosemont must surmount before the mine can begin. Others are:

Overwhelming Number of Comments

The EIS contains over 1,200 pages and has gen-

erated an incredible volume of comments. Roger Flynn, an attorney in Denver who has much experience in opposing mines in the western USA, is working pro bono with Save the Santa Ritas (SSSR), and prepared over 270 pages of comments on their behalf. Pima County sent over 70 pages, mostly on air pollution, and one individual in Tubac submitted over 200 pages. The task of responding to those comments is overwhelming. The USFS has missed the legal deadline for a response, and an update is expected soon.

Opponents of the mine are extremely concerned about one change from Rosemont's draft EIS to their present EIS that could result in truck transport of copper concentrate from the mines through our communities to Nogales. That change—which would mean one truck coming through every 15 minutes 24 hours a day—was slipped in without any notification to or consultation with the county and local governments directly affected.

EPA Concerns

The EPA has sent a couple of teams to the area to investigate, and the President's adviser on environmental matters, the Council on Environmental Quality, has also sent staff members on one of those visits.

Challenges to Water Quality Permit

SSSR is challenging Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's decision to grant a water quality permit for the project. Hearings in the Superior Court of Maricopa County are completed, and SSSR is awaiting a decision. SSSR also plans to challenge the ADEQ's decision to issue an air quality permit to Rosemont.

New Info About Endangered species

A recent ocelot sighting,

and the fact that two species in the area now being considered for protection have caused the US Fish and Wildlife Service to reconsider its previous acceptance of the EIS. (See sidebar below.)

The impacts of the hurdles listed above are expected to delay the efforts of Rosemont Copper to initiate mine operations and legal actions against the company's proposals are likely to contribute to that delay.

Errors & Omissions



Our sincere apologies to Jesus Lopez and family, for having identified him as "Pedro Lopez" in the front page caption to our article about the family's celebration of his 99th birthday.



Photo by Lynn Davison

Ocelot Sighting Impacts EIS Approval



A camera installed in Rosemont Valley to record wildlife as part of a jaguar survey captured the image of a passing ocelot on May 14. The USFWS, which funded the survey together with the Department of Homeland Security, has reopened their consideration of Rosemont's EIS as a result. Although they had accepted the plan previously, the sighting has triggered a new round of consultations between federal regulatory agencies with reference to the Endangered Species Act. In addition, the area is home to the Northern Mexican gartersnake and the yellow-billed cuckoo—both of which are now being considered as possible endangered species whose habitat might be affected by the mine.