

MINING UPDATES

By Wendy Russell

Appeal Process for FS Decision On Regal Resources Begins Soon

By this month, the Forest Service (FS) is expected to issue a Categorical Exclusion (CE) decision for Regal's exploratory mineral drilling proposal in Humboldt Canyon in the Patagonia Mountains. This would indicate that the FS considers their proposal to be "without significant environmental impacts."

In the past, a CE decision would allow a company to proceed with their proposed project immediately. However, the FS now offers an administrative appeal process for projects given a CE Decision. Anyone who commented on Regal's Sunnyside proposal during the initial scoping comment period is entitled to participate in the appeal process. Once the decision is issued, the FS will publish a notice in the paper, which starts a 45-day window within which to file an appeal to the FS.

Release of Wildcat's Draft EA Anticipated

In another ongoing NEPA process in the Patagonia Mountains, the release of a Draft Environmental Assessment for Wildcat Silver's Hermosa exploration proposal is also anticipated. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a "detailed statement" on the impacts of any proposed action that may "significantly affect the quality of the human environment." Projects with

anticipated environmental impacts get classified by NEPA as either requiring an "Environmental Assessment" or an "Environmental Impact Statement." An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a brief analysis used to determine the significance of impacts resulting from a proposal. The EA is first released in draft form for public review and comment.

Coronado National Forest Sierra Vista District Ranger Mark Ruggiero issued a letter on December 18, 2013, announcing the anticipated Draft Environmental Assessment for the Wildcat Silver/Arizona Minerals Hermosa Plan. Its release will trigger a 30-day public comment period before a final decision is issued. The letter also reported that in response to numerous comments received during the first scoping period, revision was made to the Hermosa Plan of Operation (Plan) "in order to reduce identified conflicts as to cultural resources." The revised Plan is available on the Hermosa Drilling Project page on the Forest Service website: www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=41158. The changes are summarized in Appendix G.

If you have further questions about the Hermosa Plan, contact Margie B. DeRose, Geologist/Hermosa Project Manager, Coronado National Forest at (520) 388-8341 or mbderose@fs.fed.us.

The Patagonia Area Resource Alliance (PARA) is mobilizing community members to respond to the two upcoming comment periods described above. For more information, go to: www.patagoniaalliance.org.

Objection Period for Rosemont FEIS Ends February 14

The Forest Service has released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed Rosemont Copper Mine Plan. In a new procedure for the Forest Service, an objection period is now available on the FEIS only for those parties who previously submitted scoping comments on Rosemont. The objection period started January 1 and is scheduled to end February 14.

Objections, including attachments, must be filed via mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays). Send to: Reviewing Officer, Southwest Region, 333 Broadway SE, Albuquerque, NM. 87102; by FAX to (520) 842-3173 or email to objections-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. For more information, contact Mindy Sue Vogel, Coronado National Forest, 300 W. Congress, Tucson, AZ, 520.388.8327, msovogel@fs.fed.us

Rosemont Now Proposing a High Volume of Traffic Through Patagonia

Rosemont's FEIS now has added delivery routes for copper concentrate to Guaymas, Mexico. Highway 82 from Sonoita to Nogales is slated to be one of the delivery routes of copper concentrates from the proposed Rosemont mine. Trucks could be expected to make up to 56 round trips per day through Patagonia.

New Forest Management Plan in the Works

The Coronado National Forest (CNF) has prepared a Draft Land and Resource Management Plan, to update the current management plan, which was written in 1986. The public review period has already started, with deadline to comment on February 20, 2014.

The Draft Forest Plan can be found on the Forest Service website: www.fs.usda.gov/detail/coronado/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fswdev7_018673. If you have questions or would like more information, please call the CNF office at 520-388-8300. Tell the receptionist you want to speak to someone about Plan Revision. You will be connected with one of the Plan Revision Core Team member.

Comments can be submitted via: Coronado Forest Plan Revision P.O. Box 1919 Sacramento, CA 95812, by fax (916) 456-6724 (Subject: Coronado National Forest, Plan Revision); or by email to CoronadoNF@fscomments.org (Subject: Coronado National Forest, Plan Revision).



Artwork by Jill Babcock