

Forum on Creating Greater Local Sustainability

by Donna Reibslager

The Food and Finance Forum, scheduled for January 13 to January 15 is an ambitious project that seeks to foster strategies for new farms and food micro-enterprises and to revitalize local economies.

The forum hopes to bring entrepreneurs and investors together to facilitate the development of "tangible initiatives toward systemic food system change." Nationally recognized speakers will talk about ways that farmers and investors can obtain and profit from substantially higher production. Small business owners will explain how to broker financial backing and establish local beef and vegetable sourcing. Other topics will focus on linking food banks, community development planners and local credit unions with local employment and food production. Local ecologist Gary Nabhan of Native Seed Search will be one of the speakers.

Noting that Arizona is the "fifth worst ranking among states in poverty and third worst ranking in childhood food insecurity," speakers will also propose the creation of "green jobs" with liveable wages in the farming, ranching, food processing, distribution and serving sectors of our economy.

The forum will open on January 13 with an afternoon and evening of film and lecture, to be held at Sea of Glass concert hall in downtown Tucson. Refreshments will be served, and a \$5 donation will be requested at the door.

Continued lectures will take place during the following two days of the forum, and are available only to pre-registered participants. (Registration ends January 1.) This portion of the event will be held at Biosphere Two Conference Center in Oracle, and will run all day Tuesday, 1/14, and until 2 p.m. the following day.

The forum is being hosted by the Kellogg Program for Sustainable Food Systems at the University of Arizona, in collaboration with Local First Arizona, Good Food Finder, Slow Money Arizona, Edible Baja Arizona magazine, Edible Phoenix magazine, Sustainable Tucson, Avalon Gardens, Slow Food Tucson, Slow Food Phoenix, Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, Pima County Food Systems Alliance and Native Seeds/SEARCH.

For information on registration, go to www.eventbrite.com. For other questions relating to the forum, contact Gary Nabhan at gpnabhan@email.arizona.edu, or go to www.localfirstaz.com.



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Rosemont Mine - Two Views

By Ann Katzenbach

Last month the PRT's front page declared that the Rosemont Mine's water mitigation plan had been rejected by the Environmental Protection Agency. That same week the Bulletin's front page featured a story declaring the Rosemont Mine was likely to be approved. Both these stories are correct, but each emphasizes a different aspect of this complicated approval process.

After years of study, the U.S. Forest Service has released a final environmental report that essentially says the mine meets all environmental standards. Those standards relate to wildlife, water, air, and native claims. Charged by a 140-year-old mining law to facilitate mining, the Forest Service admitted that it changed its standards in order to allow the mine to go ahead.

At the same time, the EPA, which is not obligated by consideration for the 1872 mining law, rejected Rosemont's plan for preventing the affected water in the Santa Rita Mountains from being polluted. Their report called Rosemont's mitigation plan "grossly inadequate."

What this all means at this point is not clear, but despite the Forest Service's approval, there still seem to be some major hurdles for Rosemont to clear before the company can start digging.

Letter to the Editor Info About the Affordable Care Act

After hosting a series of Affordable Care Act Tele-Town Halls, it is clear that people are looking for answers about the ACA and how it can help their families.

These forums provided information about the ACA and Medicaid restoration and expansion, which have extended Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System eligibility to some individuals who did not previously qualify.

I am still receiving requests for the information presented in the forum, and I now have recorded copies of both the English and Spanish presentations available, free of charge, on request. I will make sure anyone who wants a recording gets it via email or in the mail. The English version of the presentation is also available online at <http://youtube/E9WQoLdYKQw>.

Arizonans deserve access to quality, affordable health care coverage. There is a lot to know about Medicaid eligibility, the enrollment process and the differences in plans. The timing is important because some people need to find a plan by Dec. 23 to ensure they have coverage beginning Jan. 1.

To request a copy of the ACA Tele-Town Hall, email adalessandro@azleg.gov or call 1-800-352-8404, ext. 65342. Arizonans can also dial 211 for a directory of community services including help with the ACA.

-- Rep. Andrea Dalessandro,
D-Sahuarita (District 2)