

APPLICANT: Rosemont Copper Company

AREA: The proposed project is located approximately 30 miles southeast of Tucson, Arizona, west of SR83 and north of I-10, with access provided on East Hidden Springs Road.

AZ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 3rd District, Rep. Raul Grijalva; 2nd District Rep. Ron Barber

DESCRIPTION: Rosemont Copper Company, a subsidiary of Augusta Resource Corporation, proposes to produce 234 million pounds of copper, 4.5 million pounds of molybdenum, and 2.7 million ounces of silver annually over a 20-year mining period at the proposed project site. The site is located on 995 acres of privately-owned land and 3,670 acres of public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as Coronado National Forest in the Barrel Canyon watershed, Pima County, AZ. The proposed project consists of a single 900-acre pit with an additional +3,200 acres used for a tailings facility, a waste rock dump, infrastructure, administrative buildings, etc. The Rosemont Copper Project would, through the discharge of dredged/fill material, directly impact 40 acres of waters of the U.S. (WUS) and indirectly impact 28.8 ac of WUS. The proposed project will involve the construction and operation of various mine features, associated structures, and anticipated infrastructure necessary to support these facilities. These constructed features include: the mine pit, waste rock storage areas, dry-stack tailings facility, ancillary facilities and structures, mine haul roads, access roads, and off-site water and power transmission lines. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is the lead Federal agency for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Corps has actively participated in the EIS process as a cooperating agency. Screening criteria for project alternatives were developed and the Corps met one-on-one with the USFS and both have subsequently agreed upon the alternatives which were carried forward in the Draft EIS and Final EIS. The Geographic Jurisdictional Delineation was completed November 2010 and determined there are approximately 101.6 acres of WUS on the site. Barrel Canyon watershed contains tributaries that drain to Davidson Canyon Wash, which is a perennial waterbody downstream of the confluence with Barrel Canyon and has been designated as an Outstanding Water by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. Environmental issues addressed in the FEIS include groundwater and surface water pollution, lowering of the aquifer, loss or impacts to waterways, destruction of wildlife habitat, aesthetic impacts, recreation impacts, endangered species impacts (Chiricahua leopard frog), cultural properties, tribal concerns among others.

STATUS: The Corps published a public notice for public comment on December 6, 2012. The original comment period closed January 5, 2013 and was extended to January 19, 2013. Over 6,000 comment letters were received which shall be part of the administrative record and addressed in the Corps' Record of Decision (ROD). The consultations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act were completed in October, 2013. The FEIS/draft ROD was published by the USFS on December 13, 2013. The USFS objection period began on January 1, 2014 and ended on February 14, 2014. The USFS has up to 75 days to complete their review of and respond to objections filed during this period before the USFS may finalize its ROD. The Corps is currently reviewing Rosemont's proposed compensatory mitigation plan to offset direct and indirect impacts to 68.8 acres of WUS. The Corps' goal for a permit decision is June 30, 2014.

UPDATED: 28 February 2014