



SAVE THE SCENIC SANTA RITAS ASSOCIATION

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Media Release

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Air permit for Rosemont Mine threatens public health and air quality

Letter from 130 Southern Arizona residents and organizations asks State to withdraw draft permit

(Tucson, Ariz.) A broad-based citizen's coalition, citing threats to public health and air quality in southern Arizona, is calling on the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to withdraw a draft air quality permit for the proposed massive open-pit mine in the Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson.

An October 31 letter signed by 130 southern Arizona organizations and residents says that the draft permit is fatally flawed because, among other things, Rosemont made significant and substantial changes to its mining plan, after submitting its permit application, that will lead to dramatically higher levels of air pollution both at the site and in surrounding communities. The letter notes that "both ADEQ and the public will be better served by review and analysis of the actual project that Rosemont intends to build and operate, rather than a project that both [Rosemont Copper] and ADEQ knows will not be built."

The citizens' letter concludes by asking ADEQ to return jurisdiction over the permit to Pima County and to require Rosemont to submit a new application to Pima County that accurately reflects the company's current mining plan.

To further emphasize the potential threat to southern Arizona's air quality, SSSR also released a short video illustrating the risks posed by haboobs, or desert winds, which could sweep across Rosemont's massive "dry stack" waste dump and spread poisonous dust and debris across nearby communities, including Tucson.

A second letter prepared by technical experts for Save the Scenic Santa Ritas, a Tucson-based non-profit group opposed to the mine, provided detailed scientific analysis on the technical shortfalls of the draft air quality permit.

"There are so many problems related to the materials submitted by Rosemont (Copper Company) and the proposed language of the air permit, that ADEQ must not issue the

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proposed draft permit,” Green Valley residents Joel Fisher and Dr. Thomas Purdon conclude at the end of the 22-page technical report.

Mr. Fisher, PhD, has 50 years of experience in air pollution sciences, technologies and ecological and human health impacts. He worked as research scientist for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and at the State Department for more than 26 years as a senior scientist and treaty officer for air pollution affairs.

Dr. Purdon is a Clinical Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Arizona and gynecology consultant for the United Community Health Centers of Arizona.

The two letters identify numerous shortcomings of the draft air quality permit including:

- The proposed air permit fails to consider the potential for Rosemont mine operations to emit hazardous air pollutants in excess of the thresholds set in the Clean Air Act;
- Arsenic and lead emissions from the mine require special regulatory controls that ADEQ did not include in the proposed permit;
- The permit fails to control the substantial and potentially dangerous amounts of particulate matter, especially “toxic dust,” that will be emitted from Rosemont’s operations and its dry-stack tailings dump. Rosemont intends to build one of the largest dry-stack mine waste dumps in the world, which will bury canyons and streams on the Coronado National Forest under nearly 800 feet of arsenic and lead-laced mine debris;
- The draft permit incorrectly classifies the mine as a Class II air pollution source when its emission levels require it to be regulated as a Class I source, which requires stricter controls.

At the request of Rosemont Copper, ADEQ took air quality permitting for the mine away from Pima County last August and soon after issued the draft air quality permit. The public comment period closed October 31. ADEQ has indicated it will decide whether to issue a final air quality permit by mid-February.

[Editors Note: The comments can be downloaded from the SSSR website at:

http://www.scenicsantaritas.org/SSSR_AQP_comments.pdf

The video can be viewed on SSSR’s YouTube page at:

www.youtube.com/ssrtucson]