



**SIERRA
CLUB**



Media Release

For Immediate Release

March 27, 2019

Lawsuit Filed to Protect Arizona's Waters, Wildlife From Proposed Rosemont Mine

TUCSON, Ariz. — Together, four conservation groups filed a lawsuit in federal district court today to overturn a key permit for the controversial proposed Rosemont Copper Mine in southern Arizona. The lawsuit challenges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' issuance of a Clean Water Act permit for the mine, which would threaten critical water resources and wildlife habitat.

"In spite of reports from multiple government agencies that the proposed Rosemont Mine does not comply with federal law, the Army Corps of Engineers has chosen to grant the federal Clean Water Act 404 permit," said Gayle Hartmann, president of Save the Scenic Santa Ritas. "Because of this, we have no choice but to seek justice in federal court in support of our community, our health and our environment. We will move forward and present our case, reiterating the extensive damage this project will do to our water resources and our beautiful Santa Rita Mountains."

Earlier this month the Corps reversed course from a 2016 determination and issued the final permit needed to start construction of the vast open-pit copper mine. Hubsay Minerals, Rosemont's Canadian owner, wants to blast a mile-wide, half-mile-deep open pit in the Santa Rita Mountains and pile toxic mine tailings and waste rock hundreds of feet high in the Davidson Canyon-Cienega Creek watershed, which replenishes Tucson's groundwater basin, a source for roughly 20 percent of Tucson's drinking water.

More than 5,000 acres would be destroyed by the mine, including nearly 4,000 acres of public land that would be covered by the mine's waste dumps, open pit, processing plant and infrastructure. The pit and waste dumps would remain as a permanent scar and environmental hazard on public land.

"The proposed Rosemont Mine would be a blight on the Santa Ritas and do serious harm to Outstanding Arizona Waters such as Davidson Canyon and Cienega Creek," said Sandy Bahr, chapter director for Sierra Club's Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter. "The Corps has not considered the degree or scope of the impacts to wildlife, cultural resources, and other protected public lands in its decision, and it has not done its job to ensure that this project is in the public's interest."

The Rosemont Mine would drain the regional aquifer that supports dozens of springs and streams in the area that are home to endangered fish, frogs, snakes, birds and plants. It would also destroy thousands of acres of federally protected jaguar critical habitat and sever a critically important wildlife corridor essential to the recovery of the northern jaguar population that spans the U.S.-Mexico border.

"The Corps' outrageous flip-flop on the Rosemont Clean Water Act permit is politics at its worst and

cannot be justified by science or law,” said Randy Serraglio, a conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity. “This decision to betray southern Arizona and greenlight this disaster won’t stand. We’ll fight for Tucson’s water security and the jaguars, ocelots and other wildlife that call the Santa Ritas home.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has weighed in against the Rosemont proposal numerous times over a period of several years, saying that the project would violate water-quality standards and was not in the public interest. In July 2016 the Corps’ own scientists determined that the permit should be denied, yet the Trump administration reversed course and issued the permit anyway.

“There is no better example of the failure of our government to provide effective protections from the harms of mining than the proposed Rosemont Mine,” said Roger Featherstone, director of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition. “Rosemont is a poster child for reform of the 1872 Mining Act. This project is bad for communities, devastating to wildlife, and should not be allowed to proceed.”

The groups are represented by the Western Mining Action Project, a public-interest law firm specializing in litigation on mining issues in the western states, and Marc Fink and Allison Melton of the Center for Biological Diversity.

Save the Scenic Santa Ritas is a nonprofit organization working to protect the Santa Rita Mountains from environmental degradation caused by mining and mineral exploration activities.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.4 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is a national nonprofit environmental organization with approximately 2.7 million members and supporters, including more than 60,000 in Arizona. Sierra Club’s mission is “to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources; and to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.

The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition represents 16 local, regional, and national organizations working in Arizona to improve state and federal laws, rules, and regulations governing hard rock mining to protect communities and the environment. We work to hold mining operations to the highest environmental and social standards to provide for the long term environmental, cultural, and economic health of Arizona.