



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Coronado National Forest
Supervisor's Office

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File Code: 1950-3/2810

Date: July 21, 2008

Manny Ruiz
Chairman
Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
2150 North Congress Drive
Nogales, AZ 85621

**CERTIFIED MAIL – RETURN
RECEIPT REQUESTED
NUMBER: 70033110000285807687**

Dear Mr. Ruiz:

I am writing to inquire as to Santa Cruz County's interest and eligibility in participating as a county cooperating agency with the USDA Forest Service, Coronado National Forest, in the environmental study of a proposed Mine Plan of Operation. The proposed Rosemont Copper Mine would extract and process ores from the Rosemont Deposit located approximately 30 miles southeast of Tucson, Arizona. The mine and associated facilities would encompass approximately 4,500 acres in public and private ownerships in Pima County, Arizona.

The Coronado National Forest, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, published a Notice of Intent (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado/rosemont/documents/rosemont-noi-02282008.pdf>) to prepare an environmental impact statement on Rosemont Copper Company's Mine Plan of Operations. In March 2008, several agencies received a scoping letter about this project. Briefly, the proposed action is to construct and operate an open-pit copper mine and associated processing facilities, including access roads, required utilities, and to reclaim affected lands. A full description of the proposed action (Mine Plan of Operation) may be viewed at: <http://www.rosemontcopper.com/operations2.asp>.

Based on the Mine Plan of Operation, the Coronado National Forest identified the following preliminary issues in its Notice of Intent:

Effects related to

- the economy, public services, quality of life, and other community resources in Pima County, Tucson, and nearby communities
- the quality and availability of surface water and groundwater resources
- vegetation and wildlife, including those having special-status designations
- soils and geology
- aesthetic resources, including visual quality objectives and State Highway 83, a scenic highway
- archaeological, historic, and cultural resources, including Native American interests and values
- Forest recreational use and compatibility with other Forest land uses
- increased traffic on local roads and transportation systems



- noise on nearby residents, Forest users, and sensitive wildlife
- mining and processing and vehicle traffic on ambient air quality

The formal scoping period for public comment closed on July 14, 2008. Comments received during this scoping effort will undergo content analysis and reports of the results will be produced. These preliminary issues are expected to be refined as the environmental study progresses.

I am inquiring as to Santa Cruz County's interest and eligibility in serving as a county cooperating agency. If you are interested in being a cooperating agency on this project, we expect your county's involvement to entail only those areas under its jurisdiction by law (40 CFR 1508.15) and/or special expertise (40 CFR 1508.26) that contribute to the environmental study.

By August 29, 2008, please provide Santa Cruz County's written response, including negative replies, to this solicitation of interest to be a county cooperating agency. If Santa Cruz County would like to participate in this environmental study, I further request that your response describe your county's potential eligibility. Upon receipt of your response, a determination of eligibility will be made. If it appears Santa Cruz County is interested but not eligible, we will contact you for additional information. If your response indicates an interest and Santa Cruz County is determined to be eligible, a formal letter of invitation to be a cooperating agency will follow.

Additional information about the roles and responsibilities of cooperating agencies is available on the Council of Environmental Quality website:

- *Memorandum for the Heads of Federal Agencies from James Connaughton, Chair:*
<http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/cooperating/cooperatingagenciesmemorandum.html>
- *Attachment 1 - Factors for Determining Whether to Invite, Decline or End Cooperating Agency Status:*
<http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/cooperating/cooperatingagencymemofactors.html>

Questions or concerns about the Mine Plan of Operation or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this environmental study should be directed to Deputy Forest Supervisor, Reta Laford. Ms. Laford may be reached via telephone at (520) 388-8300 or via electronic mail at rlaford@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeanine A. Derby
JEANINE A. DERBY
Forest Supervisor