Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 2008

Jeanine Derby
Supervisor
Coronado National Forest
300 W. Congress Street
Tucson, Arizona 85701

Dear Ms. Derby:

We write to you today regarding the scoping process for the Augusta Resources, Inc. proposal to mine for copper on or adjacent to the Rosemont Ranch in the Santa Rita Mountains.

We respectfully request that the Forest Service suspend the current EIS scoping process pending receipt of a complete Mine Plan of Operations for this project. A new scoping process should then be initiated at that time. We make this request for a number of reasons.

We are troubled by correspondence from our constituents and local government officials reporting confusion as to the purpose of scoping, deadlines for submitting comments, and the delayed or curtailed release of important studies and documents to the public.

The first announcement of the scoping process, published by the Forest Service in the Federal Register on March 13, 2008, contained confusing information regarding the purpose and need for the project, as well as a limited range of alternatives to be examined. Specifically, we are concerned by the statement that the purpose of the proposed Forest Service action is "to grant permission to the Company to use NFS land for certain activities related to operation of the Rosemont Mine." Under the statutory EIS process, one of the alternatives that must be considered is "no action." We do not believe the Forest Service can adequately consider a "no action" alternative if its stated purpose at the outset is to grant permission for the project. Therefore we believe the project purpose should be redefined more broadly.

In addition, we are concerned by the failure to release important studies and other documentation to both local government officials and to the public at large, which appears to have inhibited meaningful dialogue and commentary from these entities on the potential scope of impacts of this project. We are aware, for example, of a Freedom of Information Act request, filed by the non-profit group Save the Scenic Santa Ritas, that has still not been fulfilled and without which that group cannot adequately participate in the scoping process.

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We second concerns raised by Pima County officials, in their letter to you of May 19, 2008, about the need for exhaustive studies on the water demands, impacts and alternatives associated with this project due to the lifeblood link of water to the fragile nature of this region of the Sonoran Desert. Additionally, we concur with Pima County officials that, due to the highly complex impacts of this project, a peer review process should be established for technical documents submitted by Rosemont or independently commissioned by the Forest Service. Furthermore, the Forest Service agreed to establish working groups that included citizens and cooperating agencies. We are now less than two months from the end of the extended scoping period and there has been no apparent movement on this commitment.

While we appreciate the Forest Service's willingness to extend the comment period and to hold additional public hearings on the matter, We strongly believe, as a result of the issues raised above, that the scoping process has been flawed from the beginning and should be restarted. In our view, re-noticing the scoping process and beginning scoping anew at that time, with objectives more clearly described, would greatly benefit the community and the Forest Service in this case.

We would appreciate a prompt response on this matter. If you have any questions about this request, please feel free to contact either one of us or our staff at the following numbers: (202) 225-2435 (Rep. Grijalva) and (202) 225-2542 (Rep. Giffords).

Best regards,

Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests, and Public Lands
Natural Resources Committee

Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress

cc: Mark Rey, Undersecretary, Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture
Corbin Newman, Regional Forester, Forest Service Region 3