



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Tonto National Forest

2324 E. McDowell Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85006  
Phone: 602.225.5200  
Fax: 602.225.5295  
V/TTY: 602.225.5395

File Code: 2810/1950

Date: June 9, 2008

**Subject:** Public Comment Period – June 11, 2008 to July 18, 2008  
Resolution Copper Mining Pre-Feasibility Proposal

Dear Forest User:

The Tonto National Forest (TNF) is seeking comments on a mineral “pre-feasibility proposal.” This proposal is to provide for preliminary study and exploration to determine the feasibility of mining copper and other minerals. Resolution Copper Mining, LLC (Resolution), has submitted a *Plan of Operations* to conduct a variety of pre-feasibility mining studies on the Globe Ranger District within the western portion of the Pinal Mountains, near Superior, Pinal County, Arizona (Figures 1 and 2). This letter is to solicit comments on the proposed project and invite you to attend an open house on Wednesday June 25, 2008, from 4:30 PM to 8:30 PM at the **Superior Junior/Senior High School** located at 100 Mary Drive in Superior, Arizona. **The deadline for public comment is Friday, July 18, 2008.**

**Purpose and Need:** The *Plan of Operations* addresses Resolution’s need for access for drilling equipment to continue exploration, hydrologic, and geotechnical investigation to support mine planning activities. These activities are considered necessary to provide data of sufficient detail and of sufficient quality to facilitate analysis of the viability and technical feasibility of Resolution’s proposed development of a deep copper ore deposit near Superior, Pinal County, Arizona.



**Background:** The proposed activities include:

- constructing five exploration drill-hole pads and directional drilling operations on those pads
- drilling three deep hydrogeologic testing and monitoring wells
- drilling six shallow hydrologic monitoring wells
- drilling nine geotechnical characterization boreholes
- completing necessary roadway improvements to provide access to the drill pad locations
- clearing brush along portions of Magma Mine Road.

The *Plan of Operations* also includes a request to continue currently authorized exploration activities.

Access to proposed drill sites would be via approximately 16.9 miles of existing, unpaved roads and requires development of approximately 0.3 mile of new access road on National Forest System lands. Up to 39.2 acres would be impacted for proposed drilling operations, improvements to existing roads, and construction of the new 0.3 mile access road.

**Authorities:** The statutory right of Resolution to explore and develop mineral resources on federally administered lands is recognized in the *General Mining Law of 1872* and is consistent with the *Tonto National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (LRMP) of 1985. Surface management regulations codified at *36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 228* require that all mineral exploration, development, and operational activities be conducted in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental impacts on national forest surface resources (*36 CFR part 228.8*). The Forest Service is required to ensure that the proposal is in compliance with *36 CFR part 228* and to analyze the impacts of the proposed activities in accordance with the requirements of the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA).

**NEPA:** Based on initial review, we have determined that an *Environmental Assessment* (EA) would be the appropriate level of analysis for the *Plan of Operations*. This EA will identify the activities described in the *Plan of Operations* as the “proposed action.” It will also identify alternatives to the proposed action in response to issues that may be identified during the NEPA scoping process.

In accordance with the requirements of NEPA, the EA will include an evaluation of the *No Action Alternative*. Under the *No Action Alternative*, the pre-feasibility activities would not be conducted and currently authorized exploration activities would discontinue. However, due to the statutory rights afforded by the General Mining Laws, the Forest Service cannot select the *No*

*Action* alternative as a preferred alternative. The purpose for incorporating the *No Action Alternative* is to provide a baseline from which the impacts of other alternatives can be evaluated. The analysis documented in the EA will determine the effects of each alternative on resources identified during scoping and identify appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures to minimize adverse impacts to those resources.

Based on the environmental analysis and disclosure documented in the EA, the Forest Service will:

- 1) decide whether to select the proposed actions as proposed or modified, or as described in an alternative developed during the NEPA process;
- 2) determine what mitigation measures are needed; and
- 3) determine what monitoring is required.

**Requests for Comments:** You are encouraged to provide comments on the proposed project. The Tonto National Forest is initiating scoping efforts to identify those issues and questions to be considered in the evaluation.

There are a variety of ways to learn about the project and provide scoping comments. A public open house will be held in the multi-media room at **Superior Junior/Senior High School** located at 100 Mary Drive in Superior, Arizona. **The public open house will be held on Wednesday, June 25, 2008 from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm.** An electronic copy of the *Pre-feasibility Plan of Operations* is also available on the Tonto National Forest website. Comments may be provided to the Forest Service at the open house using comment forms that will be available at the meeting. Comments may also be submitted before or after the open house by, mail, email, fax, or through the Tonto National Forest web page.

The information below provides additional detail on how and where to submit comments. To receive full consideration and to best assist the Forest Service in its review, your comments should be received by **Friday July 18, 2008**.

**Email:** [comments-resolution-prefeasibility-proposal-tonto@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-resolution-prefeasibility-proposal-tonto@fs.fed.us)  
**TNF Website:** <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/projects>  
**U.S. Mail:** Team Leader  
Resolution Copper Mining Proposal  
Tonto National Forest  
2324 E. McDowell Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85006  
**FAX:** 602.225.5295 (ATTN: Team Leader, Resolution Copper Mining Proposal)

Sincerely,



GENE BLANKENBAKER  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures

- Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map
- Figure 2. Project Location map

ARIZONA



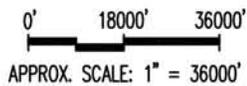
PROJECT LOCATION



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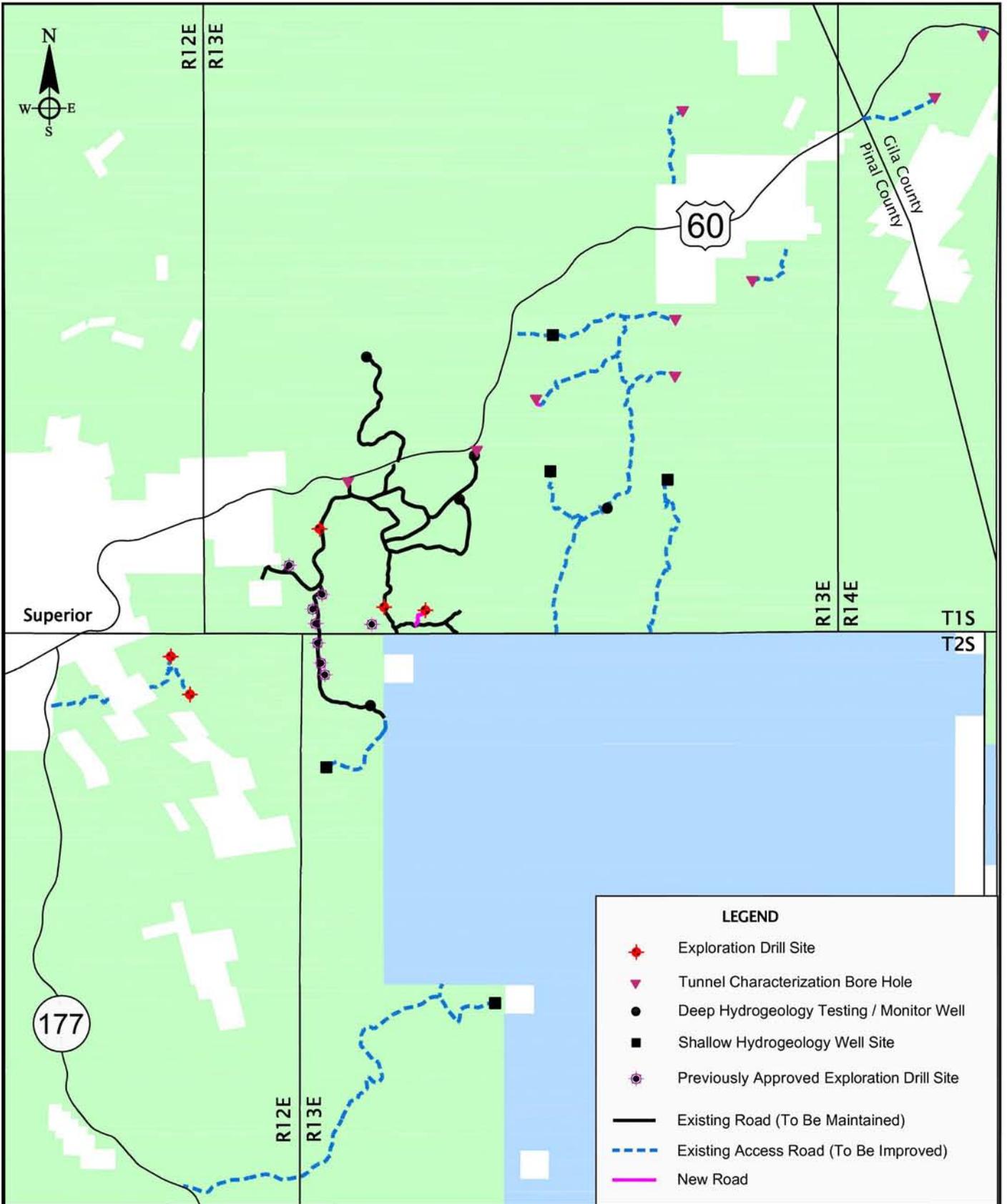


Resolution Copper Mining  
Pre-feasibility Activities  
Plan Of Operations

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Figure 1

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Tonto National Forest  
 2324 E. McDowell Rd.  
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- Tonto National Forest Lands
- State Trust Land
- Private Land

0' 3000' 6000'  
 APPROX. SCALE: 1" = 6000'

Resolution Copper Mining  
 Pre-feasibility Activities  
 Plan Of Operations

PROJECT LOCATION

Figure 2