



File Code: 2810/1950

Date: March 4, 2014

Dear Interested Party,

The Coronado National Forest (CNF), Sierra Vista Ranger District, has prepared a draft environmental assessment (Draft EA) for the Hermosa Drilling Project. The project is proposed on the Sierra Vista Ranger District in Santa Cruz County, Arizona, about six miles southeast of the town of Patagonia. Total proposed disturbance from all exploration activities is estimated at 13.9 acres. The project area legal location is within Sections 33, 34, 35, and 36, Township 22 South, Range 16 East, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16, Township 23 South, Range 16 East, and Sections 6 and 7, Township 22 South, Range 17 East, Gila and Salt River Meridian.

The Draft EA considers the mineral exploration activities proposed in the Plan of Operations for the Hermosa Drilling Project including drilling 23 geotechnical boreholes, 10 exploration boreholes, 12 hydrogeologic boreholes/monitoring wells, and excavating 15 test pits. These activities would be conducted on 46 proposed characterization sites, 11 of which would host multiple activities (co-located exploration activities). Access to the 46 characterization sites would be from existing National Forest System roads (some requiring maintenance and a minor amount of reconstruction), construction of 8 temporary access roads (2.67 miles), use of 10 overland vehicle paths (3.30 miles), and 2 overland foot paths (1.51 miles). Reclamation of exploration activities, characterization sites, and temporary and overland access will occur within 2 years of implementation, with the exception of approximately 12 monitoring wells. These monitoring wells would remain in place for a period of up to 15 years for testing prior to final reclamation.

A public informational meeting will be held in Patagonia, AZ during the 30-day comment period for the Draft EA. The date, time, and location for the public meeting will be announced in a press release.

The Draft EA is available on-line on the project website at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=41158.

The Draft EA and supporting documentation are also available for review at the CNF Sierra Vista Ranger Station, the CNF Nogales Ranger Station, and the CNF Supervisor's Office.

Additional information regarding this action can be obtained from: Margie DeRose, Geologist/Project Manager, at 300 W. Congress St., Tucson, AZ 85701, (520) 388-8300, or mbderose@fs.fed.us.

The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and not authorized under the HFRA and is subject to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B.



How to Comment and Timeframe

Specific written comments (§218.2) on the proposed project will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of the Legal Notice in the *Sierra Vista Herald*, which is the newspaper of record, as well as in the *Nogales International*. If the comment period ends on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, comments will be accepted until the end of the next Federal working day. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source, including the dates in this letter. However, we anticipate the Legal Notice publication date to be Friday March 7, 2014, which would mean comments would need to be received by the end of the day on Monday April 7, 2014. These estimated dates are subject to change so please refer to the newspaper of record for the official date.

Only individuals or entities (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) who submit timely and specific written comments (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) about this proposed project or activity during this or another public comment period established by the Responsible Official will be eligible to file an objection. Other requirements to be eligible to submit an objection are defined by 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(3) and include name, postal address, title of the project and signature or other verification of identity upon request and the identity of the individual or entity who authored the comments. Individual members of an entity must submit their own individual comments in order to have eligibility to object as an individual. A timely submission will be determined as outlined in 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(4). It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted. Names and contact information submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider (36 CFR 218.2).

Specific written comments must be submitted via mail, fax, or in person (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays) to: Coronado National Forest, Attn: Hermosa Drilling Project, 300 W. Congress St., 6th Floor, Tucson, AZ 85701, FAX: (520) 388-8305. Electronic comments including attachments may be submitted by email in word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), portable document format (.pdf), and hypertext markup language (.html) to: comments-southwestern-coronado@fs.fed.us; with subject: Hermosa Drilling Project.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Sincerely,

MARK J. RUGGIERO
District Ranger