ROSEMONT COPPER MINE AND MINING

By Siria Cerda Navarro
• Rosemont Copper Mine
• Important Facts
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• Example of Open Pit Mine
• Issues Related to Mining
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• Rosemont Copper Mine: open-pit mine ~ 955-acre pit to extract minerals (EIS 2012).
• East side of Santa Rita Mountains, Coronado National Forest. ~30 mi south of Tucson.
• 2/3 of the 955-acre pit area of the proposed location is owned by Rosemont Copper Company and ~3,330 acres of National Forest lands will situate ore processing, waste rock, and tailings (EIS 2012).
• Multiple-Use Mining Act of 1955, 1872 General Mining Act, and Forest Service mining regulations 36 C.F.R. part 228 subpart A state the right to mine in search of locatable minerals on public lands.

• 2006 Rosemont Copper Company obtained two contracts with Central Arizona Project to obtain water.

• 2008 Coronado National Forest began NEPA process for analyzing the mine proposal.
IMPORTANT FACTS

• 2012 Arizona Department of Environmental Quality issued permit to the mine on aquifer pollution standards (Scenic Santa Ritas 2012).
• 2012 Arizona Corporation Commission approved a power line for the proposed mine (AZ Daily Star 2012).
• Currently Rosemont Copper Mine is awaiting decision from Forest Service Record of Decision that would decide if they could use ~ 3,330 acres of National Forest (Scenic Santa Ritas 2012).
OTHER PERMITS

• The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must approve a Clean Water Act permit for the mining company to place fill material into washes.

• The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality must certify that the Clean Water Act permit issuance won’t trigger violations of state surface water quality standards.

• An air quality permit must be approved for the mine.

-AZ Daily Star
MAJOR PLAYERS

• **Proponents:** Rosemont Copper Company, Augusta Resource and Tucson Hispanic Chamber

• **Opponents:** Local conservation organizations such as Save the Scenic Santa Ritas, farmers, hoteliers, Pima and Santa Cruz Counties and EPA
• Mine will process “75,000 tons of ore per day, producing more than 600,000 pounds of copper per day, as well as molybdenum and some silver,” (NY Time 2012).
• $19 million per year to local government from tax revenues and $700 million to local economic stimulus (Rosemont Copper 2011).
• For 20-25 years the mine will output $15 billion (Rosemont Copper 2011).
• Copper is a key ingredient in the clean-energy economy (NY Times 2012).

• Mine obtained sustainable water supply: two contracts to obtain water from Central Arizona Project (Rosemont Copper 2012).

• Mine will engage in water conservation and recycling techniques like dry-stack tailings that will require half as much water as a conventional mine.
Copper refinery in El Paso, TX
• EPA gave the environmental impact statement its lowest rating (NY Time 2012).
• Mine plans to fill 40 acres and 150 individual stream drainages.
• Pima and Santa Cruz counties attain $2.95 billion each year from recreation and ecotourism (Sonoran Institute 2012).
OPPONENTS

- Increase in traffic and effect air quality, views, and tourism (NY Time 2012).
- Copper will be sold to China and earnings will go to Canada and its international investors (Scenic Santa Ritas 2012).
- Location of the mine in “Sky Islands” and is prime habitat for wildlife (NY Times 2012).
- Mine’s tailing could attain rain and leach toxins into groundwater (NY Times 2012).
Abandoned copper open pit mine in Pinal County, AZ
ISSUES RELATED TO MINING

• Water and air quality
• Erosion of soil
• Toxic amounts of minerals and metals released in soil and water
• Large amounts of waste, aka “tailings”
• Wildlife- habitat loss and fragmentation, displacement of animals
• Pollution
• Destruction of landscapes
LOCAL RECREATION

• $2.95 billion annually from recreation and ecotourism in Pima and Santa Cruz Counties (Sonoran Institute 2012)

• Cienega Creek-college field trips
LOCAL RECREATION

• Bicycling
• Camping & Cabins
• Fishing
• Hiking
• Horse Riding
• Nature Viewing
• Picknicking
• Scenic Driving
• Water Activities
• Winter Sports

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QUESTIONS
LITERATURE CITED