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The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 2050

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I would first like to express my appreciation for the professionalism that has been displayed by the staff of the Coronado National Forest. They have shown a strong willingness to listen to, and engage with, a wide range of stakeholders as they move forward with review of the Rosemont Mine Environmental Impact Statement.

On July 10, Augusta Resource Corp. sent a letter to Coronado National Forest Supervisor Jim Upchurch outlining the company's intention to modify its proposed mine plan of operations, which was included in the Environmental Impact Statement currently being reviewed by the Forest Service.

I have been directly involved with the environmental review of the mine for several years, and I am deeply concerned with Augusta Resource Corporation's proposal to so significantly alter the original mining plan of operation. I am writing to express the need for enough time and opportunity for community stakeholders to fully analyze, understand, and comment on these changes. It is clear that these modifications to the mining plan will have far-reaching environmental and economic impacts that are not addressed in the current version of the Environmental Impact Statement.

The proposed modifications represent substantive changes to the original mining plan. Augusta is rejecting one of the two principal mining processes that it had proposed, abandoning oxide ore processing altogether, and in the process significantly altering both economic projections and the proposed physical layout of the mine.

Specifically, I am concerned by projected increases in heavy truck traffic, new uncertainties over long-term water usage, and the likelihood of leaching of stockpiled oxide ore. Additionally, it is important to give the public sufficient opportunity to comment on planned expansions to the excavation pit that will require the placement of tens of millions of tons of additional waste rock on public land.

I respectfully request that a new draft Environmental Impact Statement be prepared, to be followed by at least 90 days for public review.

I realize that my request to reopen the Environmental Impact Statement process would further delay a decision on Rosemont's proposals. Any such delay must be weighed against the potential for serious and detrimental impacts. These impacts could harm the environment and water supply for generations after the copper supply is played out and devastate Southern Arizona's greatest economic drivers, including agriculture, ecotourism, and homebuilding.

The current mine plan of operations has been carefully studied by staff of the Coronado National forest, other local, state and federal agencies, and the public. This substantial change in the operating plan must undergo the same level of careful evaluation.

Sincerely,



Ron Barber
Member of Congress