

Press Statement on BLM Critique of Resolution Copper Final Environmental Impact Statement

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September 21, 2022

On June 13, 2022, a team of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) hydrology specialists released a scathing [technical review](#) of the 2021 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Resolution Copper (RC) Project and Land Exchange (FEIS) and supporting documents. The review titled, [Bureau of Land Management Review of Hydrology Aspects of the Resolution Copper Project](#), examined the hydrology and water resources sections of the project.

The US Forest Service requested the review and the Tonto National Forest released the review in a [letter to Terry Rambler](#), Chairman of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, on August 26, 2022.

The technical report highlights serious environmental impacts of the proposed project and shortcomings of the FEIS.

"The BLM review confirms what we have been saying for 15 years," said Henry C. Munoz, Sr., chairman of the Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition and President of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition. *"The proposed mine project would devastate our aquifers and water supply and would place the existence of Superior in jeopardy. The BLM review shows that there is not enough water for both this project and our community and the environment."*

The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition and its allies have pointed out serious problems with the proposed project since the beginning and have slammed both the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements written by the US Forest Service.

"The Resolution Copper project is a failed experiment and as the BLM review clearly shows, the US Forest Service papered over its serious flaws," said Roger Featherstone, Director of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition. *"The US Forest Service needs to go back to square one and write a new, honest, and accurate Environmental Impact Statement reflecting the true and unmitigable dangers of this project based on the BLM review and extensive comments we and others have filed on the fatally flawed project."*

Important conclusions of the report show:

- The FEIS failed to adequately analyze the impact of climate change on the long-term environmental impacts of the mine.
- The FEIS did not adequately consider the proposed project's serious impacts to springs, streams, and groundwater.
- The FEIS's mitigation plan to address negative impacts on groundwater was "a flawed approach" that amounts to "passing the buck" rather than providing real mitigation.
- The proposed project would will require extensive groundwater pumping that will deplete aquifers at a time when Arizona is facing an unprecedented cutback of water supplies amid a historic mega-drought. At least 775,000 acre-feet of water – or 256 billion gallons – would be pumped over the life of the mine, much of it from the East Salt River Valley just east of Phoenix.
- The BLM criticized the lack of a detailed review of the risks posed by a waste dump that would contain 1.37 billion tons of toxic mine tailings in perpetuity. The Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) would cover nearly 4,000 acres and rise hundreds of feet. The

TSF would be impounded by a 500-foot high, three-mile-long dam that poses a significant downstream threat if it should fail.

- The BLM shows that the FEIS did not conduct a breach analysis if the dam was to fail. In August 2020, in response to the increasing number of cataclysmic tailings dam failures around the world, new global industry standards were published with the goal of zero harm to the environment and human lives.

Oak Flat has been used for centuries by Apache and other Native people for ceremony, sustenance and habitation, and ceremonies are still conducted there. Many tribes consider it sacred. Oak Flat is also a popular campground and recreation area, with stunning scenery and world-renowned rock climbing. It and the surrounding lands are important habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, including migratory and endangered birds as well as endangered plants and fish.

The Resolution Copper proposal would be a large underground block cave mine that would mostly destroy 16,000 acres of federal, state and private land. The mine would be under Oak Flat and would cause the surface above it to collapse into a crater 2 miles wide and 1,000 feet deep, which would completely decimate the area. The 1.4 billion tons of toxic waste the mine would produce would be dumped on thousands of acres of nearby wildlands, turning a vibrant landscape into an industrial wasteland and threatening to contaminate groundwater and surface water in the area. The mine would use a vast amount of groundwater annually, equal to the amount used by the entire city of Tempe, Arizona (160,00 people). Resolution Copper is owned by Rio Tinto (England), and BHP (Australia).

"We ask the US Forest Service to write a new FEIS based on the BLM recommendations and extensive agency and citizen comments, we call on Congress to enact the Save Oak Flat Act, and we demand that Resolution Copper recognize the fatal flaws in their failed proposal and save us all time, money, and trauma and simply abandon the project," concludes Arizona Mining Reform Coalition Director, Roger Featherstone.

For More Information:

[San Carlos Apache Tribe Press 9/12/2022, press release](#)

[San Carlos Apache Tribe 9/9/2022, letter to USDA and Interior Secretaries](#)

[San Carlos Apache Tribe 9/13/2022 letter to Tonto National Forest Supervisor Neil Bosworth](#)