United States Department of Agriculture | **Forest Service** | **Tonto National Forest**

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Date: August 1, 2019

Dear Reader:

The USDA Forest Service is pleased to announce the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Resolution Copper Project and Land Exchange, along with supporting documents, are available for public review and accessible online at www.ResolutionMineEIS.us.

As the lead agency for this project, the Tonto National Forest invites the public to comment over a 90-day period—**August 10 through November 7, 2019**—on the environmental review and analysis findings for the operation of a proposed underground copper mine; a connected, Congressionally mandated land exchange; and related project-specific forest plan amendments. We appreciate comments that are specific to the proposal and include supporting reasons for us to consider.

Resolution Copper Mining, LLC (Resolution Copper) proposes developing an underground copper mine on unpatented mining claims on National Forest System (NFS) lands near Superior, Arizona. To access the copper deposit, located primarily on NFS lands, Resolution Copper pursued a land exchange.

In December 2014, Congress authorized a land exchange pending completion of an Environmental Impact Statement, as outlined in Section 3003 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2015. The exchange parcel to be conveyed to Resolution Copper includes not only the Oak Flat Withdrawal Area but also the NFS lands above which the copper deposit is located. This collective 2,422-acre tract of land is known as the "Oak Flat Federal Parcel." Resolution Copper would, in turn, exchange eight parcels located throughout Arizona (5,376 acres of private land) to the Federal Government.

On behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture, the Tonto National Forest is responsible for preparing a single Environmental Impact Statement to: approve a mining general plan of operations submitted by Resolution Copper; and facilitate a land exchange of the Oak Flat Federal Parcel (2,422 acres of NFS land) for eight parcels located throughout Arizona (5,376 acres of private land currently owned by Resolution Copper) as directed by Section 3003 of the NDAA for 2015.

We prepared this DEIS in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This DEIS discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action (described above) and alternatives.

Chapter 1 of the DEIS provides greater detail regarding the purpose of and need for action. It describes the framework in which decisions will be made, and the significant issues associated with the proposed action. Chapter 2 outlines alternatives. It describes the proposed action, four additional action alternatives, and our preferred alternative. The third chapter describes the affected environment and the environmental consequences associated with the proposed action and the alternatives. Appendix J contains descriptions of mitigation concepts being considered and known to be effective at reducing adverse impacts of the mine proposal.

Since 2016, public and partner involvement has played a critical role in helping the Tonto National Forest develop the project components. Public comments submitted during the scoping period in spring 2016 formulated issues concerning the proposed action. Issues help set the scope of the actions, alternatives, and effects to consider in our analysis. Seven social and cultural issues along with seven physical and biological issues were carried forward for analysis in the DEIS.

How to Submit Comments

There are several ways to submit comments, you only need to provide your comment once for it to receive full consideration:

- Attend an open house public hearing (see schedule below for public hearing dates and times)
- Submit a comment using the online form at: www.ResolutionMineEIS.us/Comment. The online form accepts attachments in Microsoft Word (.doc and .docx), rich-text format (.rtf), plaintext (.txt), or portable document format (.pdf)
- Submit written comments via U.S. Postal Service mail to:

  Resolution EIS Comment
  PO Box 34468
  Phoenix, AZ 85067-4468
  NOTE: Written comments and statements must be postmarked no later than November 7, 2019.

Please include your name, address, and affiliation (if any). Be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available. Although you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public review in their entirety.

Public Meeting Schedule

September 10, 2019, 5 to 8 p.m.
Superior Jr./Sr. High School Cafeteria
1500 Panther Drive
Superior, AZ

September 12, 2019, 5 to 8 p.m.
Central Arizona College
3736 E. Bella Vista Road
San Tan Valley, AZ

September 17, 2019, 5 to 8 p.m.
Ray Elementary School Cafeteria
701 AZ-177
Kearny, AZ

September 19, 2019, 5 to 8 p.m.
High Desert Middle School Auditorium
4000 High Desert Drive
Globe, AZ

October 8, 2019, 5 to 8 p.m.
Queen Valley Community Center
1464 E. Queen Valley Drive
Queen Valley, AZ

After the 2019 comment period, the Forest Service will review and respond to comments it receives. This comment response will be in an appendix to the Final EIS. The Forest Service will then finalize the EIS and issue a draft Record of Decision (ROD), which will document the alternative selected for the mine General Plan of Operations and the necessary project-specific forest plan amendments. We anticipate this occurring in summer 2020. This draft ROD will be subject to an administrative review process (also known as the objection process), pursuant to 36 CFR part 218. Upon completion of the objection process, a final ROD will be issued, anticipated to occur in winter 2020/2021. The Land Exchange will be fully executed no later than 60 days after the release of the Final EIS.

Sincerely,

NEIL BOSWORTH
Forest Supervisor