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Comments:

Re: Roca Honda Uranium Mine Proposal on Mt. Taylor

Dear Cibola National Forest Supervisor,

To: Forest Supervisor

Cibola National Forest and Grasslands

2113 Osuna Rd. NE

Albuquerque, NM 87113

I respectfully submit the following comments on the Roca Honda Resources Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). I urge you to select Alternative 1, "No Action", for the following reasons:

? Roca Honda will waste New Mexico's water.

Roca Honda is proposing to pump and use millions of gallons of water a day to operate the mine. This water will be pumped from the underground aquifer that our communities will rely on in the future. Treated groundwater that could be used by the public in the future, will be given to a nearby private landowner.

? Mt. Taylor is a sacred site that needs to be protected.

Many people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, recognize the cultural value of Mt. Taylor. Mt Taylor is a place of great spiritual significance. It is central to oral history stories and ceremonies, and it plays a vital role in cosmology and religious practices. Shrines, pilgrimage trails, traditional medicines, and springs are all at risk of being destroyed by new mining. Mining on Mt Taylor jeopardizes the spiritual harmony and balance of our communities. Historical and cultural impacts need to be analyzed under the protection of the National Historic Preservation Act and NEPA.

? There is no mill to process the uranium.

Roca Honda proposes to open their mining operation with no plan on what to do with the uranium once it is mined. There is only one operating mill in the United States, which is not taking any additional ore to process.

? There is no repository for uranium waste.

The fact that there is nowhere to take and store the waste is a critical problem. It is irresponsible and dangerous to begin mining when there is no answer for waste disposal.

? Radioactive waste and by-products would be transported through our communities.

Roca Honda would transport radioactive and hazardous materials through our communities. Local law enforcement and public health entities are not prepared to handle accidents during transport. Communities would bear the brunt of responding to emergency situations and living with the aftermath. The DEIS does not identify a mill site, the transportation route, or communities along the way.

? There is no "new technology" when it comes to uranium mining.

There are two ways to mine uranium: conventional mining and in-situ leach mining. Both methods have been around for years and both have records of contamination. In-situ leach mining involves purposefully

contaminating groundwater to mobilize uranium. Roca Honda would be a conventional underground mine, the same type of mines that New Mexico dealt with in the past.

? Cumulative impacts to nearby communities are not being considered. State and federal agencies are not taking into account other nearby mining projects and the cumulative impacts these mines would have on our health, water and other natural resources. The section on cumulative impacts lists other projects in the Grants Mining District, but doesn't provide a map showing their location or what communities will be impacted.

? Impacts to people's health haven't been adequately studied. Communities in northwestern NM are living with the contamination of the past. Families living nearby abandoned uranium mines and mills notice increased rates of cancers and other health problems. This problem has been ignored by state and federal agencies. To proceed with more mines without knowing the scope of impact to people's health is dangerous and deadly.

? Water and a healthy community are human rights. The federal government and the state of New Mexico need to recognize the rights of people who are living in uranium impacted communities and say "NO" to the proposed Roca Honda mine.

? Uranium contamination from past mining projects remains unremediated. New Mexico is home to hundreds of abandoned uranium mines, with thousands more on the Navajo Nation. These mines leak contaminants into groundwater, release radon into the air, and contribute to health problems of residents living in contaminated communities.

? Former mine workers suffer devastating health impacts from working in uranium mines. Thousands of mine and mill workers have suffered and continue to suffer and die from working in hazardous conditions. While there have been some improvements in worker safety, there will always be risks associated with working in mines. Our communities deserve jobs without the risk.

Thank you for considering my comments and I look forward to reviewing the final plan.  
Sincerely,

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Hanh Nguyen  
tctbt5@unm.edu