



September 25, 2022

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Jerry Schoeppner, Director  
Mining and Minerals Division  
1220 South St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Re: EMMA Pit

Dear Mr. Schoeppner,

We oppose this project and urge you to reject it.

Despite climate breakdown, the biodiversity and companion crisis, extractive industries forge ahead as if tomorrow will be just like yesterday, as if, “things are fine.” There are 14,000 peer-reviewed, published science papers that maintain the climate crisis is real, human caused and worsening. At the recent information meeting, we’ve been told a Freeport representative said: “We have been through droughts before.” The speaker was either ignorant or knowingly misleading the state and the public. The planet is not contending with a drought. The definition of a drought is clear: “a prolonged *period* of abnormally low rainfall, leading to a shortage of water.” The definition of *period* is also clear, better understood by reference to a thesaurus: a spell, term, era, epoch, an age. A period is what you find at the end of a sentence or the end of the first period of a basketball game. It is something with and end. To pretend the Earth is in a “period” of drought or prolonged drought is disingenuous and to authorize this project with exorbitant water use is not in the public interest. Our understanding is that more than ten million gallons of water (20 gpm; 20 gallons X 24 hours = 20 x 60 x 24 = 28000 gallons per day x 365 = 10,512,000 gallons a year) will be spent on this classic illustration of “short-term thinking.”

Equally mind-boggling is Freeport's acknowledgement this 550-600 foot deep pit will extend 200 feet below groundwater level and require what it evasively refers to as "dewatering," forever. Translation: contaminated sludge will be dumped elsewhere, leach into groundwater even before the company stops the process of dewatering, goes bankrupt or otherwise fails to pump water forever. We understand Freeport is balking at a perpetual assurance guarantee to pump water out of the pit, a stance that speaks loud and clear. The "forever" aspect of this proposal — dewatering forever — defies common sense.

Others of the many who oppose this project have made clear wells throughout Grant county have gone dry. Where we live, the Pitchfork Ranch, 15-miles southwest of White Signal, all six wells have gone dry. They have been pumping water since 1904, one well is 200-feet deep. Long-established family neighbors tell us this is the only time these wells have run out of water. We recently spent \$64,000 for marginal well water - 830 feet of near dry replacement well cost \$73 a foot and pumps but 4-gallons a minute for 2-3 hours, every other day. This is basically "drip-water." We waited 11-months to even get a well-driller out here, others are backed up more than a year. We were hauling water at \$275 for 2,000 gallons, lasting 4-7 days. I made emergency runs to a neighboring ranch to haul 125-gallons of water for thirsty cattle. This ranch no longer provides sufficient water to profitably raise cattle. To authorize Freeport to ruin other ranches and area homes is wrong.

Not only is the deceptive use of the term drought a falsehood, but extractors are claiming we can adapt to this "new normal" But there is nothing "normal" about these exploding crises that scientist make clear is a threat to civilization, as we know it. The fate of humankind is at stake. With the onslaught of ruinous weather in the second half of 2021 and 2022, little needs to be said about the existence or severity of the climate crisis. A third of Pakistan is under water. Most thoughtful people agree with this appeal from more than eleven thousand scientists in the Alliance of World Scientists:

[W]e declare...clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency...The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected...It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity... [causing] significant disruptions to ecosystems, society, and economics...potentially making large areas of earth uninhabitable...

The crisis is closely linked to excessive consumption of the wealthy lifestyle...An immense increase of scale in endeavors to conserve our biosphere is needed to avoid untold suffering due to the climate crisis.

The sixth report of the 2021 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) makes clear that the climate is overheating faster than earlier reported, emphasizing every ounce of emissions matters. The United Nations Secretary General António Guterres was blunt:

This report must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels, before they destroy our planet ...[It's] a code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk."

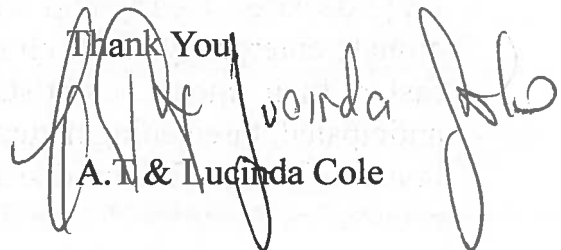
John Kerry, US President Joe Biden's special envoy for climate, said "The IPCC report underscores the overwhelming urgency of the moment." There is no longer any question the unprecedented human-caused carbon-dioxide levels are higher than they've been in at least two million years, temperatures are higher than they've been in at least one hundred thousand years, and the sea level is rising faster than it has in at least three thousand years. We're stumbling over the precipice, threatening sustained, organized human life.

In the face of these real and present dangers to the planet's inhabitants, the shortage of water in Grant County, near doubling of expense to drill for new water (\$40 per foot has shot up to \$73), for Freeport to flippantly rely on the 50-year old Trauger report. We're told, to quote their representative in reference to the Trauger report, "things have not changed much." Their cavalier approach is far beyond unconscionable. At a time when dozens of countries, including the UK, Spain, Iceland, France, Mexico and Chile, are considering classifying ecocide as an international crime under the code of the UN's International criminal court, to allow a project that will squander more than 10,000,000 gallons yearly of limited Grant Count water in woefully untenable.

The approval of this crises-ignoring, water-depleting project would be indefensible. We implore you to just say no.

Thank You

A. T. & Lucinda Cole

Handwritten signatures of A. T. & Lucinda Cole, appearing as stylized cursive script.

