



*Promoting Healthy Communities by
Protecting Our Environment Since 1998*

November 4, 2021

Jerry Schoeppner, Director
Mining and Minerals Division
New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department
1220 South St. Francis Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Via e-mail: Gerard.Schoeppner@state.nm.us

**RE: Request for Public Hearing - Tyrone Mine Expansion – Emma Project,
Tyrone Permit No. GR010RE**

Dear Mr. Schoeppner:

On behalf of the Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP), I would like to request a public hearing on the Emma Project, Tyrone Permit No. GR010RE.

There are a number of concerns that are of interest to the public and adjacent homeowners and therefore warrant a public hearing including the following:

- Increase in the Tyrone mine design limit and permit boundary;
- Formation of a pit lake at closure that will not meet water quality standards and therefore pose a risk to wildlife;
- Groundwater flow and drawdown that may impact water quality and water supply at adjacent residential properties;
- Construction of new waste rock stockpiles and associated materials handling that may pose a groundwater quality risk and create sources of fugitive dust;
- Concerns adjacent property owners have associated with construction, operation, and reclamation of the Emma Pit, such as nuisance dust, noise, lights, traffic, blasting, water quality and supply concerns, and impacts to wildlife. The closest resident is located approximately a half mile from the proposed Emma pit. Local residents should be provided with a formal public hearing process to provide their input to MMD given the significant potential for adverse impacts to their property, public health and quality of life.
- Proposed reclamation activities to restore the Emma Pit to its post-mining land use;

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- Reclamation cost estimate and associated financial assurance.

We are also very concerned that the Air Quality Bureau has already approved an air quality permit for the Tyrone Mine that includes the Emma Project. This is premature since the Emma Project application was just submitted to MMD and the project has not been permitted yet.

GRIP's technical consultant, Jim Kuipers, is in the process of reviewing the Emma project application and will review the Closure/Closeout Plan once it is available.

We hope to schedule a conference call to discuss our comments with you and your staff in the near future.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allyson Siwik". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Allyson Siwik
Executive Director

Cc: Jim Kuipers, Kuipers and Associates
Holland Shepherd, EMNRD/MMD
David Otori, EMNRD/MMD
Kurt Vollbrecht, NMED/MECS

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Concerning the permit applications for the Emma mine expansion project at the Tyrone mine owned by Freeport McMoRan mining LLC :

As a resident of the nearby Apache Mound neighborhood, recently stated, "All we're really asking is for them to give us some commitment that they will fix whatever they do to our water supply." But the mine, owned by the company Freeport-McMoRan, refuses to give them this assurance, he said. Freeport-McMoRan did not respond to multiple requests for comment by New Mexico In Depth and the Guardian.

The Copper Flat mine Northeast of here, has included a contingency plan to supplement water usage by leasing 3000 acre feet of water to mitigate their usage. Freeport should be able to do something similar but hasn't even thought about it when asked at the last information meeting. In fact when I questioned them on this, I heard laughter.

Some operations, like Freeport's Tyrone mine, will have to pump water in perpetuity, even after there is no longer copper to be found, so that contaminated water from the mine site doesn't flow back into the wider water table.

As of yet, no significant data has been offered on the amount of water usage currently being used at the Tyrone mine, and only vague replies, like "low-medium" as to current usage, and how much additional groundwater will be pumped. A state engineer has said that there doesn't appear to be much or any. Future usage has not been adequately explained, as well as how much increased water usage will affect the surrounding aquifers.

Several of my neighbors have already had to dig their wells deeper or drill new ones when the existing well went dry. My next door neighbor has been hauling supplemental water for 25 years. A nearby ranch owner has 12 dry wells and is hauling water.

The expansion will result in the denuding of 300+ acres and displacing hundreds of species of flora, avians and mammals, that have been identified in limited studies, yet there are more subterranean and nocturnal species that were not seen. I have seen many animals that were not listed as seen in the studies, on my acreage 3 miles south of the mine. There are no doubt many more in the 300+ acres headed for destruction.

I chose to move here a few years ago, to escape the noise and pollution of big cities that I had lived in. I am a veteran who has been diagnosed with PTSD and was encouraged to seek a quieter environment. So far I have enjoyed the simplicity and lifestyle of country life, and now once again I am faced with the possibility of explosive noises which trigger my condition.

Being faced with major disruptions in my pursuit of healing and happiness, I must object to the lack of scientific statistical evidence supporting the claim that our water supply will not become impacted, and to the general overall destruction of native habitat.

These concerns of drought, declining rain and snow fall, and the unknown quantities and effects of pumping more ground water, are critical to the well being of the area.

Therefore I would ask for a Public Hearing on this and any other matters of concern that others may have to address these issues.

Thank you,

Arthur S. Ratcliffe
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