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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Subcommittee on Parks, Forests and
Public Lands – *Ranking Member*

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
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CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS,
Co-Chair

Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.
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**Re: Rosemont Representations Regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Currently Under Review**

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I would like to thank the staff of Coronado National Forest and the federal and local agencies that have devoted significant time and resources to reviewing Rosemont Copper's proposed Mine Plan of Operations (MPO). Given the extensive cultural, environmental and natural resources impacted by this proposed action, primarily on federal lands, a thorough review is more than appropriate.

On July 24, 2012, Augusta Resource Corporation issued a news release (enclosed) informing investors of plans to alter the MPO currently under review because of an increase in estimated probable mineral reserves. The company now estimates that probable mineral reserves are 22 percent, or 121 million tons, higher than previous projections, inevitably increasing the tons of ore waste that will be processed at the site. This is a major departure from previous plans and represents a significant change in conditions.

Federal and local agencies have spent considerable resources reviewing and commenting on Rosemont's MPO. A last-minute change requires a new round of review and comment. Who knows the impacts of their proposed new plan? Will it expand the footprint, height or volume of the waste and tailings disposal facility? Will it require additional water? Will it further impact significant national resources?

The federal environmental impact statement process is designed to establish a reasoned analysis of impacts based on the specific facts of a proposal. In this case, the proposal keeps changing. The effort spent commenting on Rosemont's previous plan now seems to be wasted. Rosemont has redesigned the mine pit, canceled the leaching and solution extraction/electrowinning of copper oxide ore, and extended the timeframe for construction and operation of the mine. The nearly barren oxide "ore" is now acknowledged as waste, increasing total waste to be dumped on federal land. The timeframe during which the company would operate without income would be extended even further.

The proposed alterations to the mine significantly change the purpose and need of the Rosemont Copper project under the National Environmental Policy Act, as well as the risks of bankruptcy. The mine the State permitted is not the mine the company now proposes.

Federal and state agencies, and the public, have all commented on the proposed Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) based on Rosemont's representations. Rosemont has now changed those representations, which in my view makes it impossible for the U.S. Forest Service to prepare a Final EIS. This is absolutely unacceptable, contrary to commitments by the company in the original plan, and counter to the principles of fair play.

Based on the documented significant risks to human health and safety, as well as the irreversible and permanent losses to the environmental and cultural landscapes caused by the proposed mine, I ask and expect that a new, not supplemental or amended, DEIS be prepared by the Forest Service, with at least 90 days for public review.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

CC: Tom Tidwell, Chief, US Forest Service
Jim Upchurch, Supervisor, Coronado National Forest