

Meeting #59
October 11, 2017
MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Attendees

Community Working Group members present:

George Martin – JF Ranch
Lynn Martin – JF, JI Ranch
Jeff Bunkleemann – Central Arizona College
Bruce Wittig – Queen Valley Fire Department
Jim Schenck – Rebuild Superior
Hank Gutierrez - Superior Copper Alliance
Pam Bennett – Queen Valley Community Liaison
Karen Kitchayan Jones – San Carlos Apache Tribe
Roy Chavez - Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners
Nancy Vogler – LOST Trail
Bill Vogler – Superior Copper Alliance
Tom Spridgen – Rotary Club of Superior
JoAnn Besich – Superior Optimist Club
Tiffany Rowell – Superior resident
Arlynn Godinez – Superior Unified School District Board / Maricopa County
Anthony Huerta – Town of Superior
Pamela Rabago – Superior Chamber of Commerce
Fred Gaudet – Arizona Trail Association
Sy Sohmer – Boyce Thompson Arboretum

Community Working Group members not present:

Sylvia Werre – Top of the World
Cecil Fendley – Queen Valley Water Board
Fernando Shipley – Cobre Valley Regional Medical Center Board
Rick Cartier – Superior Chamber of Commerce alternate

Resolution Copper Company:

Melissa Rabago
Michael Betom

Facilitators – Godec, Randall & Associates (GRA)

John Godec
Debra Duerr

Speakers:

Mary Rasmussen – Tonto National Forest EIS Project Manager
John Scaggs – Tonto National Forest Public Information Officer

Public Guests:

DeLores Hatfield
Chris Stuhmer
Bill Russell
Anna Jeffrey – Apache Stronghold
Sylvia Barrett – Apache Stronghold, CCRMC
Henry Munoz – CCRMC
Others reportedly filming meeting for a documentary about Oak Flat – Did not sign in

Introductions & Housekeeping

John Godec welcomed everyone. There are quite a few guests, as well, and Godec thanked them for coming. A group is also here filming a documentary about the Apache Stronghold. He noted that the presentation tonight on alternatives for the Resolution Copper Project represents a landmark in the progress of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Godec said that a member at the last meeting had asked him to review the group's ground rules and operating guidelines, so he did this.

Also following up from the last meeting, there was a question about the location and disposition of the stock tanks in or near the Apache Leap Special Management Area. This issue has been resolved to the satisfaction of the CWG, so the group will not be submitting an objection to the plan.

In local news, Nancy Vogler reported that the Legends of Superior Trail (LOST) realignment has gotten approval from the Forest Service. This project will be starting on the Arnett reroute on November 2. On that note, Godec reported that the Recreation User Group (RUG) is making progress on a regional recreation plan, and they have been asked to make a presentation on their plans to the full Community Working Group at the November meeting.

Melissa Rabago reported that Resolution has opened its apprenticeship program. Everyone is welcome to apply. These are 3-year positions leading to full-time employment. Candidates will also be attending classes at the community college. Resolution staff at the Main Street office will assist people to apply on October 17 and 18, and on the 20th in Globe. Positions are open until October 29.

Subcommittee Updates

The RUG met this morning to further define the regional trail plan, and made a great deal of progress. They intend to finalize the multi-use trail map and approach to the plan at their next meeting on November 9.

Resolution Copper Project EIS Alternatives

Mary Rasmussen, Tonto National Forest

Mary Rasmussen introduced herself as the project manager for the Resolution EIS. She will be providing an update on the project environmental studies. The Forest Service has been in the process of developing alternatives, which she described using a process flowchart handout. She will talk about highlights of alternatives tonight, and later in the year there will be a more detailed explanation provided of the alternatives development process.

Rasmussen summarized the scoping comments received; over 133,600 submittals (1,200 unique submittals) outlining 6,948 comments that were distilled into 14 issues and 29

subtopics. Some of the most-mentioned issues were water use and resources, the Apache Leap, location of the tailings, and methods for containing tailings. A Scoping Report was prepared and is available online.

Rasmussen defined an “alternative” as a counter-proposal to what was proposed by Resolution in order to address key concerns. Alternatives need to meet the project purpose and need. They need to be reasonable – as defined by an independent review - considering if it is technically feasible and economically viable. Alternatives do not need to be within the purview of the project proponent (Resolution). The Forest Service analysis leads to a range of alternatives (including No Action) to be studied in the EIS.

Alternatives address a number of aspects of the proposed project including tailings type, tailings design, tailings locations, the mining technique, and other project components such as the filter plant location, process pond location, and transportation routes.

The alternatives to be discussed tonight focus on the tailings facility. Two types of locations were evaluated as “brownfield” and “greenfield” sites. About 15 brownfield locations (closed or active mines) were identified in Arizona ranging from Carlotta and Pinto Valley south to Bisbee. About 14 billion cubic yards of tailings must be accommodated, which is huge. Some people compare the size of the ore body to the size and shape of Picket Post mountain; only about 2% of this is copper extract and the rest is tailings, or waste. None of the brownfield sites evaluated could accommodate this volume. The mines near Globe/Miami are Superfund sites and so not economically feasible for Resolution, who would have to take on the environmental liability. The Forest Service has also looked at using these sites for only the acid pyrite tailings, which is about 15% of all waste. There are water quality problems in doing this. In summary, none of the potential brownfield sites would be suitable as an alternative tailings site. It was noted that Pinto Valley was the original preferred site, but this mine will be extending operations until at least 2040 and so cannot accommodate Resolution.

Greenfield sites evaluated included 15 locations encompassing those considered by the CWG and others. The main criteria for this was trying to find a site large enough to fit the tailings into the landscape. The Forest Service also talked with the Arizona State Land Department about the Far West site, and the State again refused to consider this; they did, however, say they may consider other State Trust Land locations.

The feasible tailings alternatives that have emerged from the Forest Service study so far include the following:

Locations:

- Silver King
- Peg Leg (south of Gila River)
- Proposed Action (Tonto National Forest site proposed by Resolution)

Tailings types:

- Slurry
- Thickened
- Filtered

Dam construction:

- Upstream
- Centerline
- Downstream
- Pyrite tailings handling

These variations were combined at specific sites to identify the alternative to be studied in detail in the EIS. Alternatives recommended for detailed analysis are:

1. No Action
2. Proposed Action
3. Modified Proposed Action – using thickened tailings and a centerline dam design, for a slightly smaller footprint at this site
4. Silver King - using dry stack tailings
5. Peg Leg – using slurry
6. Peg Leg - lined facility for slurry

In answer to a question, Rasmussen said it would still be possible to place slurry at Silver King, but dry stack has a smaller footprint. This site is also closer to the processing plant. Private lands and a cemetery at this site would be avoided. Other CWG questions and comments were:

- What is the distance from the processing plant to Peg Leg? Would there be an above-ground or buried pipeline?
 - The exact distance wasn't known at this time. The pipeline route would probably run from the West Plant site along SR 177. It could be an aboveground or underground pipeline, and assume it could use the highway right-of-way.
- Does the Forest Service have authority to look at sites that are not on the Forest?
 - Yes, they can look at areas outside of their jurisdiction. The Peg Leg site is mainly located on Bureau of Reclamation land, along with Bureau of Land Management and some State Trust land. The BLM is a cooperating agency in the EIS.
- Will the slurry stay wet, or will it be able to be molded into some kind of landscape?
 - The intent is to manage it so it's similar to the landscape.
- Would dry stack be more stable and moldable?
 - Possibly. It requires some water but less than slurry. You can also do concurrent reclamation with this material.
- It seems that crossing a major waterway with a pipeline to reach the Peg Leg site could be a public safety concern.
- Who would do the site characterization studies at the other two locations, similar to what Resolution has already done at the proposed site? Would the Forest Service have to pay for this?

- Resolution would do it if it is necessary. They have already been looking at the Peg Leg site, and there is quite a bit of existing data about this site. Resolution would want to make sure there was no ore body beneath this site.
- A pipeline to this site would need to cross Asarco property.
- It was pointed out that there is mining activity in this area and interest in resource development.
- It's the block cave method that creates the need for the West Plant and the large tailings site. If a different mining method is used, then other tailings sites may be available. Is the Forest Service seriously considering any other mining method?
 - The ore body is where it is, 7,000 feet below ground, and is a low grade ore. It may be possible to do a stoping/cut and fill method for the higher-quality areas in this body, but that is only about 10% of the whole ore body. This makes it not really feasible, and would not represent industry standard. There will be a more detailed evaluation of this in the alternatives report.
 - Forest Service has not identified any alternative to the block cave mining method that is technically and economically feasible. Therefore, the Forest Service will not be studying an alternative mining method in the EIS.
- The State Land at this location would have to be auctioned. The other portions of federal land probably would not be. The proposed Forest site is 'free' while this other one may represent a cost to Resolution.
- Will there be an opportunity for the public to comment on alternatives?
- CWG members suggested that the Forest Service should develop some understandable ways of putting information about the ore body/percentage of copper in perspective, e.g. compared to open pit mines. It's a complicated subject that's hard to understand.
- Will there be visual representations of these sites?
 - Yes, but they probably won't be available until the Draft EIS comes out.
- Several comments and concerns about the alternative tailings sites were offered by CWG members.
 - Rasmussen suggested that the Peg Leg site might provide a good comparison since it is in a different watershed to Queen Creek and is different in other ways.
- Is the distance to the Peg Leg site an issue of concern?
 - Not really. Other facilities are located quite a distance away.
- Members asked about other alternatives like the filter plant site.
 - Resolution has requested that the Forest Service look at putting this plant on Resolution property at the West Plant as an alternative to the Florence Junction site.

Godec asked Rasmussen to explain the next steps in the EIS studies. She said that the Forest Service is still gathering details about some alternatives. An alternatives report will be produced, probably by the end of the year, and the CWG will be able to review this on the Tonto National Forest website.

Public Comments

Guests had several comments and questions for the Forest Service, as follows:

- Is the Forest Service able to provide a cost comparison between block cave and cut-and-fill mining methods?
 - Rasmussen said that their analysis isn't designed this way, but is focused more on technical feasibility.

- An article in the newspaper today noted that water constraints may hamper residential development in Pinal County, even without the proposed Superstition Vistas mega-development. Since groundwater will be used for this project, we should be concerned about this.
- The wetter the tailings, the larger the footprint and the less desirable they are from an environmental standpoint; so, how much of an influence will the Forest Service have over the type of tailings produced?
 - The Forest Service will assess the environmental effects of dry stack tailings at these locations and will be able to compare them to the effects of slurry placement.
- Can tailings be used to fill sink holes and as barricades where needed around the Forest?
 - No, because the tailings are toxic to varying degrees. The mining industry has tried to find uses for tailings, without success.
- Can the Forest Service just say No to this entire project?
 - No, because the proponent has a legal right in the property and the mineral resource. The Forest Service only has jurisdiction over the surface use of the land and some authority to determine how the project might be managed, not if it can be done.
- Will any of these alternatives affect the San Carlos Apache community water supply?
 - That's something that will be assessed in the EIS.

A CWG member reported that the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality had a public hearing on water quality in Queen Creek, focusing on dissolved copper total daily loads. The facilitators were asked to obtain information about another upcoming public hearing in December. Roy Chavez reported that he is attending the London mining conference next week. He also noted that the Trump Administration has decided to allow the highly-controversial Pebble Mine in Alaska to go ahead.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for:

*Wednesday, **November 8**, 2017*
Superior Chamber of Commerce
6:00pm