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May 3, 2016

Mr. Neil Bosworth, Forest Supervisor
Tonto National Forest
2324 East McDowell Road
Phoenix, AZ 85006

File Code: 1950

Re: Gila County Comments in response to scoping letter regarding the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Resolution Copper Project and Land Exchange.

Dear Forest Supervisor Bosworth,

In response to the request for public comment regarding the proposed Resolution Copper Project and Land Exchange, the Gila County Board of Supervisors would like to provide the following comments. Although not located with the geographic boundaries of Gila County, Resolution Copper has and will continue to create an economic benefit to Gila County, and as such, Gila County has a special interest in this proposal. We are a rural county with a population of 53,144, of which 12% are unemployed and 21% are living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

In December 2014, Congress passed, and the President approved the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2015. Section 3003 of the NDAA authorizes a land exchange between Resolution Copper and the United States. The NDAA includes the exchange of 2,422 acres of National Forest land for 5,344 acres of private lands. The National Forest lands that will be exchanged include the 760 acre Oak Flat parcel and lands that overlie the ore body. These lands as well as adjacent lands have been involved in copper mining for the past 141 years. The private lands that would become federal lands are located in various areas of Arizona including high-priority conservation lands that would become part of the San Pedro Riparian and Las Cienegas national conservation areas.

In addition, we believe that this proposal is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) of 1985 as amended, and that the mineral exploration, development and operational activities as outlined in this proposed plan will be conducted in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental impact on the Tonto Nation Forest surface resources as codified in 36 CFR Part 28.

Resolution Copper has spent the past ten years and several million dollars developing plans to access the additional copper ore body that was discovered in 1996. The economic benefit to the local area as well as to Arizona will continue for at least another 50 years with an estimated economic benefit of more than \$61 billion over the expected 60 year lifespan of the operation, including an estimated \$20 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue and more than \$14 billion in wages.

In Gila County, we recognize and understand the importance of protecting our natural resources while providing opportunities and access to those whose livelihoods depend on resources located on federal land as well as access for multiple use, multi-cultural activities, and multi-recreational opportunities to the public. Historically, our economy and our residents have depended heavily upon resource-based industries and, more recently, upon recreation opportunities on federal land. We appreciate that we must take care of the land, but we need to be able to use the land to take care of ourselves.

The Gila County Board of Supervisors thanks you for the opportunity to comment and requests to be kept informed and included in the process as this analysis continues.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Pastor
Chairman, Gila County Board of Supervisors

Date