SCOPING NOTICE: ARIZONA MINERALS INC PROPOSAL FOR MINERAL EXPLORATION IN THE PATAGONIA MOUNTAINS.

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Coronado National Forest:

I am writing today to let you know that the Coronado National Forest (Forest) is considering a request by Arizona Minerals Inc. a.k.a. Wildcat Silver (Proponent) for approval of a Plan of Operations (PoO) to implement a minerals exploration program on National Forest land at their Hardshell Mine project in the Patagonia Mountains. The project area is located within the Sierra Vista Ranger District in Santa Cruz County, Arizona, about 6 miles southeast of the town of Patagonia, in Section 4, Township 23 South, Range 16 East, Gila and Salt River Meridian (see attached map).

With this Scoping Notice, I am providing a description of the proposed action and inviting your comments on the scope of the upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of the proposal. Information on how and when to comment is provided below.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Forest proposes to approve the following minerals exploration activities that are described in the PoO. The activities described below would replace or be a continuation of the currently ongoing drilling activity on the private land within the project area, which has been operating since the latter part of 2010 in the same manner as described below. If approved, drilling operations would commence upon approval of the PoO and would be completed in less than 11 months.

Access

The proponent would access the project area from the town of Patagonia by way of Harshaw Road, a county road which is also identified as National Forest System roads 49 and 58. Access within the project would be on Forest Roads (FR) 4682 and 4687 which run in and out of both Proponents’ private land and on Forest land (see attached map). Also, approximately 3,900 feet of temporary low standard access road would be constructed on Forest land to provide vehicle access to the drill sites. The proponent could also conduct maintenance on approximately 7,500 feet of Forest System roads FR 4682 and 4687 within the project area.

A lockable gate has been installed by the Proponent on FR 4682 near the first point of entry onto the private land. The Forest Service does not have legal access across the private land, but would be granted specific access for inspection and reclamation purposes relevant to the proposed activities.
Traffic from Patagonia to the project site could include travel by four crew trucks per shift, twice a day, with road maintenance and site construction equipment as needed. Travel by Proponents’ supervision and engineering staff, suppliers, contractors and various service vehicles could account for over two dozen round trips per day by trucks ranging from half ton to one ton capacity or larger. In addition there could be as many as 15 trips per day by water tankers ranging in size up to 4,500 gallon capacity, hauling water on the Harshaw road from a source a mile or so north of the project site where water would be purchased.

**Drilling**

The proposed program of work for road construction and drilling is a continuation of, and would be similar to, the on-going exploration activity on the private land within the project area which began in December, 2010. Drilling operations on Forest land could be ongoing around the clock seven days a week in 12-hour shifts, 7 days per week and could continue for up to 300 days.

The drilling operations would be conducted using as many as four drill rigs, using both reverse circulation (RC) and diamond core drilling types, to complete up to fifteen holes on Forest land to maximum depths of 2500-ft deep with a maximum 8-inch surface collar diameter. Each drill site or pad would be approximately 40 ft × 50 ft in size, including a drilling mud pit or sump having the dimensions of up to 10 ft × 15 ft × 8 ft deep. Forest Service stipulations would require that one face of each pit be ramped to allow escape from the pit and that drill sites be surrounded by yellow “CAUTION” tape until the pit has been reclaimed and all drilling equipment has been removed. At any given time, the equipment on a drill site could include the drill rig, a pipe trailer or truck, a water truck, a fuel & service truck, a crew truck and incidental service and Proponent personnel with their vehicles.

A maximum of four sites would be drilled at any one time. Core and RC samples would be transported by truck to a work site on private land for testing and evaluation, and retained for future reference.

**Reclamation**

Reclamation would consist of both a concurrent phase and a post-drilling phase. Concurrent reclamation would include plugging each hole before the drill rig is moved off the site. This would be done in accordance with Arizona Department of Water Resources regulations by backfilling with bentonite mud below the water line, filling from the top of the water table to within 20 ft of the surface with a mixture of bentonite drilling mud and drill cuttings, and filling the remaining 20 ft with neat cement. When the drill rig is moved away from a site, all equipment and supplies would be removed from the site along with any trash and other non-native materials. Post-drilling reclamation would include filling the mud pits at the drill sites, leveling berms not needed for erosion control, and replanting the site with native vegetation. The low standard, temporary access roads providing access to the drill sites would be recontoured or bermed with additional drainage bars and cut-outs to prevent erosion, replanted with native vegetation and the entrances would be blocked to obstruct traffic.

**YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT**

The Forest Service values public input as part of its NEPA process. You are encouraged to submit comments regarding the proposed action and the scope of the NEPA analysis of this
To receive full consideration and to best assist the Forest Service in this effort, your comments should be submitted within 30 days of your receipt of this notice.

Written comments may be sent by U.S. mail to Mr. Richard Ahern, Minerals Program Manager, Coronado National Forest, Supervisor’s Office, 300 West Congress Street, Tucson, AZ 85701; by facsimile to his attention at (520) 388-8305; and by electronic mail (email) to comments-southwestern-coronado@fs.fed.us. You may submit email comments in any of the following ways: text of your email, in a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) attachment, or in rich-text format (.rtf). Please identify your facsimile and email comments with "Arizona Minerals Exploration NEPA" in the subject line.

To provide telephone or in-person comments and for further information on the project, please contact Mr. Ahern at (520) 388-8327, by e-mail at rahern@fs.fed.us or visit the Forest Supervisor’s office at the address above between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays. Questions on the NEPA process may be directed to Ms. Andrea W. Campbell, Forest NEPA Coordinator, at (520) 388-8352.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the activities of the Coronado National Forest.

Sincerely,

ANNETTE H CHAVEZ
District Ranger

Enclosures: Figure 1: Project Location Map
Figure 2: Project Area Map

---

1 Comments and personally identifying information associated with them, such as names and addresses, become part of the administrative record of this NEPA review. This information is available to a third-party upon request under the authority of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). If you do not wish for your personal information to be released in response to a FOIA request, you may choose not to include it with your comments. Or, you may request an exemption from FOIA with your comment submittal. Should you choose the latter, you will be informed by the Forest Service as to whether or not your request qualifies for an exemption. If it does not, you will be offered an opportunity to resubmit your comments without personal information or to withhold them.
Figure 1. Arizona Minerals Inc. - Hardshell Project Location Map
Santa Cruz County Arizona
Figure 2. Arizona Minerals Inc. - Hardshell Project
USFS Plan of Operation - Proposed Drill Hole Location Map (revised 4/20/2011)