

Oak Flat Preliminary Scoping Talking Points

The US Forest Service has begun the permitting and public review process for Rio Tinto's proposed destructive mine at Oak Flat. The first phase of this process is a public comment period called scoping.

During this process, the Tonto National Forest is asking for citizen input to help define the issues that will be examined when they write a draft environmental impact statement.

The process began March 18, 2016 and is currently scheduled for 60 days. The following are some points for you to consider as you attend the scoping meetings and make comments.

Rio Tinto's project would destroy Oak Flat and would create a toxic mountain of tailings placed on high value public recreation lands between the towns of Superior and Queen Valley. Rio Tinto also proposes to build a loading and dewatering facility west of Florence Junction and upgrade their railroad between Superior and Queen Creek to use as a corridor for pipelines and water wells.

The project would have significant and negative impacts, the massive size of the mine, the style of the mining which will promote land subsidence, the impacts on water and wildlife, and the enormous tailings pile, all warrant an extended comment period to 120 days.

Due to the public interest in this project, the Forest Service should hold additional scoping meetings beyond the ones now scheduled in Queen Valley, Superior, Globe, and Gilbert. Meetings should be added in Phoenix and Tucson. Many people who live in these areas value Oak Flat and have been involved in trying to save it.

Beside asking for additional time to comment and additional public scoping meetings, the following is a brief and incomplete list of topics that should be considered for your comments and studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The Forest Service must consider the impacts to:

- Cultural values
- Wildlife
- Endangered species
- Water (quantity and quality)
- Air quality

- Transportation (How would additional highway, rail, air, ship, and other methods of moving goods to the proposed mine and ore concentrates to other countries impact our roads, trails, bridges, schools, safety, and wellbeing?)
- Safety and Infrastructure. (schools, public health, crime, hospitals)
- Property values

It must also look at impacts to and loss of opportunities for hiking, climbing, birdwatching, camping, picnicking, and more.

Real threats posed by the mine include:

- Land subsidence
- Dewatering of nearby perennial waters such as Devil's (Ga'an) Canyon
- The massive pile of heavy-metal-laden tailings on other parts of our national forest. Rio Tinto plans to place toxic acidic tailings directly on the ground without a liner.
- The lands offered in this swap do not meet the standards of Oak Flat and cannot replace this culturally significant and biologically rich area. That must be considered, as well.
- Now that Oak Flat is listed on the National Historic Preservation Registry, the Forest Service has a special responsibility to consider the impacts and must give these important issues heightened scrutiny.
- You could encourage the Forest Service to do everything possible to keep this swap from moving forward.