

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan

What it means for mining in Pima County

Goals of the Plan

- To slow or prevent urban sprawl
 - “It has been estimated that each year new construction consumes approximately ten square miles of desert “
- To preserve and protect our natural and cultural heritage
 - “The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan...gives high priority to preserving and protecting our most important natural resources. Growth should be directed to areas with the least natural, historic, and cultural resource values”
- 5.9 million acres are covered by the plan

Is there a place for mining in the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan?

- Old, abandoned mines are considered “cultural resources”
 - “These reflect the importance of silver, gold, lead, and copper mining in Pima County’s history”
- Current mines and land being utilized by individual claim owners are considered damaging to cultural resources
 - “...four sources that historically have been damaging to cultural and historical resources: urbanization, agriculture, *mining* and road construction.”

Arizona Mining

- Mining is an important part of Arizona and Pima County’s history and culture
- Arizona ranks 3rd in non-fuel mineral production
- Total mineral production for 2004 was over \$3.3 billion
- Arizona produced over 60% of the nation’s copper in 2004



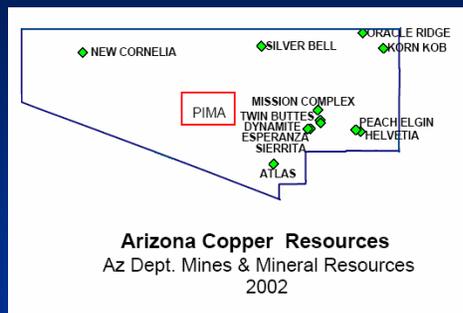
http://www.geomineinfo.com/mining_photos.htm

History of Mining in Arizona

- “Arizona” from the name of a silver mine “Arizonac” southwest of Nogales
- 1540 - Spanish explorers enter AZ in search of rumored, gold laden, “Seven Cities of Cibola”.
- 1700’s - Father Kino brings Christianity and agriculture to Indians. Peaceful relations with Indians allows silver mining in Tucson & Tubac.
- 1853 - Gadsen Purchase & acquisition of Arizona Territory facilitated small pockets of gold mining.
- 1872 - Large Indian reservations established, creating peace in the area. Silver and copper mining surge ahead of low priced gold.
 - Copper eventually becomes the predominant mined mineral in Arizona
- See it yourself: Bisbee, Jerome
 - Mining towns, historical museums, mine tours

Copper Mining

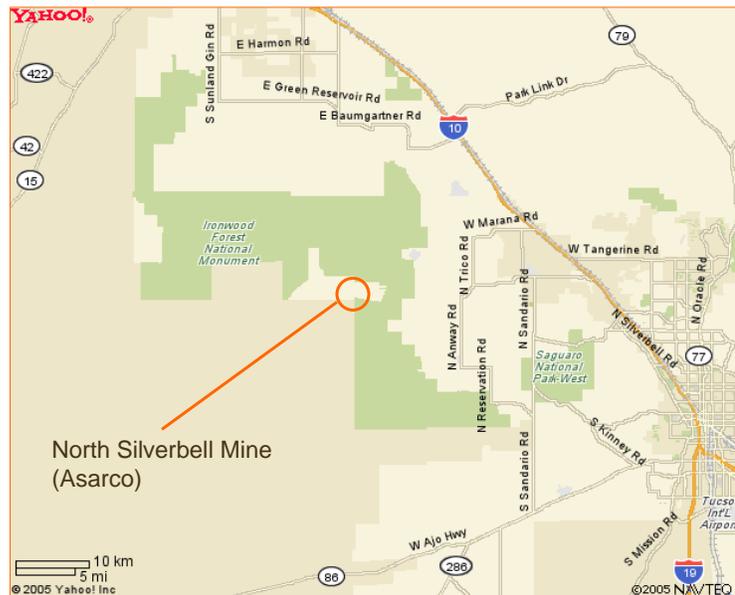
- In the late 19th century, copper mining was one of the primary means by which the Arizona Territory was transformed from a wilderness to a modern, industrial economy.
 - Postal offices, mills, power plants, roads, and railways were established due to mining ventures
- In 2003, the AZ copper industry had a combined impact of over \$2.691 billion on the AZ economy
 - 18,000 jobs for Arizonans
 - \$1.718 billion in revenues for other AZ businesses
 - \$156 million in revenues for AZ state & local governments



The “Copper State”

- Productive land use
 - 2003: 185,000 acres of more than 72,960,000 in Arizona used for copper mining
 - Less than .25 of 1%
- In 2003, AZ copper producers (ASARCO Inc., BHP Copper Inc., Phelps Dodge Corps & small firms) mined and processed 67% of copper mined in the United States.
 - AZ copper companies exported 8% of the metals to other countries, offsetting the nation’s foreign trade deficit by \$129 million
 - AZ copper industry workers were paid average annual earnings of \$49,900 and \$75 million in pensions and other benefits went to former employees living in AZ.
 - \$312 million (47%) of direct purchases by AZ copper industry went to businesses in Pima County.
- Today, copper mining is still one of the big “Cs” in the Arizona economy, along with cotton and cattle.

What's wrong with this picture?



Giving back to the Community

- Giving back to the community
 - \$156 million to state and local government from copper industry
 - Arizona Foundation for Resource Education
 - Future of mining
- Education
 - Tombstone – teach tourists about the gold rush
- Phelps Dodge
 - “Copper: More Than A Metal” community outreach program
 - grants, partnerships, in-kind donations, financial contributions
- Asarco
 - Mineral Discovery Center: exhibits, Discovery theater, mine and mill tour

Benefits of Mining in Pima County

- Mining may help protect Sonoran Desert biodiversity
 - Ex: lesser long-nosed bat uses abandoned mines as habitat
- Pastime
 - Tucson Desert Gold Diggers-- Private club for recreational mining
- Independent claim owners
 - ~430 claims held by individuals in Pima County
 - ~235 individual claim holders



<http://home.att.net/~desert-gold-diggers/gold/finds01.htm>

Flaws in the Plan

- Miners and mining in general are being ignored
 - What will happen to mines currently operating on protected lands?
 - Who's thinking about the independent claim owners?
- Decisions are being rushed
 - 2002: \$250,000 spent to complete an entire economic impact study in only 16 weeks
 - Doubts about the scientific validity of this study

What needs to be done

- Mining should be protected as a cultural heritage in the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan
 - The cultural, historical, and economic value of mining in Pima County should not be ignored
- New national parks and monuments should not encompass current mines
- Decisions that affect any industry, including mining, made by this plan need to be given sufficient time to be fair to all parties involved