



News Release

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www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/

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Southern Arizona Mining Company Pays for Past Natural Resource Damages

-Comments Sought on Draft Resolution-

Cyprus Tohono Corporation has paid \$825,000 to compensate for past injuries to wildlife and lost use of groundwater resources near the Cyprus Tohono Mine site. The funds will be utilized in two phases. The first phase will compensate residents of the Tohono O'odham Nation's community of North Komelik for damages resulting from past lost use of groundwater. The second phase will restore or replace wildlife lost near the mine. At this time, comments are being sought on the first phase of the restoration.

The community of North Komelik, located 32 miles southwest of Casa Grande, Ariz., will receive \$78,710 for past lost use of appliances and water fixtures. The compensation will allow North Komelik residents to replace household appliances that were degraded by contaminated groundwater. Cyprus Tohono Corporation provided an alternate water supply source for the village in 2003, mitigating the impact to village households.

An assessment of wildlife damages documented that at least 67 migratory birds were lost as a result of alleged exposure to water found with traces of acid and high metal concentrations associated with mining operations. The restoration's second phase funds will be used to restore and replace wildlife habitat to compensate for the loss of wildlife. A habitat restoration plan has not yet been developed; public comment on the plan will be sought at a later date.

The U.S. Department of Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs) and the Tohono O'odham Nation have formed a Trustee Council that will oversee the planning and distribution of funds per a consent decree entered into with Cyprus Tohono Corporation. The Trustee Council and mine have entered into the agreement in good faith to avoid prolonged and complicated litigation and to expedite delivery of restoration dollars to tribal members and wildlife restoration projects. Under the consent decree, Cyprus Tohono Corporation does not acknowledge liability for the contamination. The Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund action has yet to be completed.

Copper mining at the site began in the 1880s with several ownership changes since. Cyprus Tohono Corporation, a subsidiary of Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold Inc., has conducted copper mining and leaching operations at the site since 1987. The facility is currently on care and maintenance status, with various environmental activities and studies ongoing.

The draft Phase I Restoration Plan is available at the Sif Oidak District Office, 32 Miles South of Casa Grande, 1 North Komelik, Casa Grande, AZ 85222; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/> or by calling 602-242-0210.

The draft Phase 1 Restoration Plan will be available for 30 days for public comment. Comments can be emailed to CyprusTohonoNRD@fws.gov or mailed to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona 85021.

After the comment period closes on October 29, 2009, the Trustee Council will review comments and make appropriate changes before releasing the final Phase I Restoration Plan and restoration funds.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.