



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

OCT 23 2009

The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords
U. S. House Representatives
1728 Longworth Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Giffords:

As you know, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently sent a letter to a constituent group in Arizona regarding the proposed Rosemont Copper Project in Pima County, Arizona. When I reviewed an initial draft of the letter, I was unsatisfied with USDA's response and asked that that particular letter and any correspondence on this topic be held up until I was satisfied that we had undertaken a thorough review. Mistakenly, the letter was sent. I take full responsibility for this and for any inconvenience and misunderstanding that the letter may have caused.

The Forest Service is reviewing the issues surrounding the Rosemont Project as part of its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act. As part of that review, the Forest Service is examining both the proposed mine and a no-action alternative in its environmental impact statement. No decisions have been made with respect to issuing a record of decision for the proposed mine and none will be made until we have completed a thorough review of the proposed mine, the mine plan of operation and any required mitigation.

As part of our on-going review and at your and Congressman Grijalva's invitation, Deputy UnderSecretary Jay Jensen is touring the proposed mine area on Saturday. His purpose for being there is to review the actions that the Forest Service has taken to date with respect to the proposed mine. In addition, as part of this review, he will examine the proposed mine in the context of USDA regulations and any other applicable federal statutes and regulations.

USDA looks forward to working with you and other relevant stakeholders as we address this proposed mine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary