



ARIZONA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

644 N. Country Club Drive, Suite E
Mesa, Arizona 85201

February 4, 1997

Congressman J. D. Hayworth
1023 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hayworth:

The Arizona Wildlife Federation Board of Directors has reviewed the proposed Pinto Creek mining operations of Cambio, Inc. By unanimous vote, a position was adopted by the Board opposing this project. A large segment of the 28-mile length of Pinto Creek flows year round and supports a healthy cottonwood-willow (*Populus fremontii*-*Salix* spp.) riparian forest. The riparian vegetation provides important habitat for breeding neotropical birds and a wide diversity of other wildlife species and the creek serves as an important movement corridor. The elusive Eared Trogon (*Euptilotis neoxenus*), a rare neotropical bird, has been sighted in the Pinto Creek region, and botanists have recently discovered a hornwort - a small water-loving moss that is rare in Arizona - in the area. The National Forest has found more than 8 miles of Pinto Creek eligible for *Wild and Scenic River* designation based on its scenic, riparian and ecological values. Furthermore, Region IX of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency has declared Pinto Creek "an aquatic resource of national importance," a designation that has only been given 7 times nationwide since it was established in 1992.

Cambio, Inc., a Canadian company, is proposing to build the Carlota Copper Mine right on top of the Pinto Creek and its tributary, Powers Gulch. The main pit would be directly in Pinto Creek, forcing the permanent relocation of approximately a mile of the creek out of the pit area and into a diversion channel. The heap leach pad would lie in Powers Gulch, requiring another mile-long permanent diversion channel for that tributary, and posing a threat of pollution in Pinto Creek. The massive siltation of Pinto Creek would destroy riparian resources for miles downstream.

The mine will use an estimated 1600 acre-feet of water per year (750-1,200 gallons per minute) from three to five wells along Pinto Creek, with the highest water use in the summer when surface flows in the creek are the lowest. During dry years, the mine's water demands might completely dry up Pinto Creek. Furthermore, Carlota would not be the only draw on the water in Pinto Creek.

When the mine is shut down in 20 years, the legacy to Pinto Creek will be harsh. A mile of Pinto Creek will be confined to a permanent diversion channel lined with soil cement. Over in Powers Gulch, the heap leach pad will contain spent ore that cannot be neutralized. The area would have to be permanently monitored, despite "restructuring" of the heap to promote runoff, to ensure that no acid mine drainage is leaking into the creek system. Reclaimed areas will be revegetated, but the natural riparian systems cannot be reestablished.

(480) 644-0077 FAX: (480) 644-0078 www.azwildlife.org Email: awf@azwildlife.org

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This project cannot be approved due to the irreparable damages to natural resources. The destructive nature of this project cannot be mitigated in a satisfactory, causing undue and unnecessary damages to natural resources, a clear violation of NEPA. The only possible mitigation that may be acceptable would be through a land exchange with Cambio, Inc., whereby the U. S. Forest Service would acquire private lands within the Tonto National Forest boundaries. The lands would be of a similar nature and resource value as that of Pinto Creek. This option may be impossible since there are few "Pinto Creeks" left that are of similar character and value. An EIS amendment would be necessary to consider the land exchange option.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to comment on this project. We would appreciate your thoughts on this issue at your earliest possible convenience.

Sincerely,

Mark Hullinger
AWF President

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