

# Emma Expansion Project

## Speak Up to Protect Water Supplies and Our Environment!

### Mining and Minerals Division Hybrid Public Hearing

Tuesday, August 16, 2022, 5 pm

In person

Grant County Veterans Memorial Business and Conference Center

3031 US-180, Silver City (Next to Ace Hardware)

AND

Online

<https://nmemnrd.webex.com/nmemnrd/j.php?MTID=mdeec7971ae2c47b60e003abfetc85e0c>

The public hearing on the Emma Expansion Project will take public comment on Freeport-McMoRan's application for a permit under the New Mexico Mining Act for mining operations and reclamation of the new open pit. The public is invited to attend and make public comment either in person or online.

This is a "new unit" under the Mining Act, therefore the Emma Project must comply with additional requirements including:

NMAC 19.10.5.508

- A. **Most Appropriate Technology and Best Management Practices** The mining operation and the reclamation plan shall be designed and operated using the most appropriate technology and the best management practices.
- B. **Assure Protection** The mining operation and completed reclamation shall meet the following requirements established to assure protection of human health and safety, the environment, wildlife and domestic animals.

### Background

Located on the southeast side of Tyrone just to the west of Highway 90, the Emma Project will cover approximately 337 acres of disturbance, including construction of an open pit 550 – 600 feet deep.

The project will require abandonment of the existing Tyrone-Thompson Road and development of a new road to access the Gila National Forest and the Burro Mountain Homestead. Additionally, a new haul road within the mine site will be built to transport ore from the open pit to leach stockpiles at the Tyrone Mine and waste rock to new and existing waste rock stockpiles at Emma and Tyrone. With a 5 – 6-year mine plan, the project is estimated to add 3 to 5 years of mine life to Tyrone's operation.

During operations, the open pit will need to be dewatered since it will extend 200 feet below groundwater and could impact domestic wells a half mile away and two springs inventoried by the US Geological Survey.

At closure, a pit lake will form that will exceed state water quality standards, posing a threat to wildlife. Freeport has proposed to remove the water from the pit lake, pumping it to the adjacent Tyrone Mine for process water or treatment in perpetuity.

**Gila Resources Information Project**

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## Concerns

### Water Supply

Freeport's groundwater modeling is inadequate to evaluate impacts to nearby wells and springs. It does not incorporate sufficient groundwater monitoring data and domestic well data, consider the extensive fracturing of the underlying rock, or communicate the high degree of uncertainty in its results.

*Recommendation* - Require a groundwater monitoring and mitigation plan to protect residential wells and springs.

### Air Quality, Noise, Light Trespass

Local residents, the closest living a half mile away, could be impacted by fugitive dust, noise, and light trespass.

*Recommendation* - Freeport should provide for public review its dust control plan, noise mitigation plan, and lighting plan that demonstrate the Emma operation will follow Best Management Practices to mitigate negative impacts to nearby residents. A formal grievance process should be put in place by Freeport to ensure accountability to its neighbors for nuisance mitigation.

### Reclamation

- Water quality of the pit lake at closure will exceed water quality standards for selenium, cobalt, copper and cadmium posing a risk to wildlife. The Emma Pit will require "perpetual treatment," pumping and treating of pit lake water forever.  
*Recommendation* - Freeport should minimize the area of the pit lake to mitigate risks to wildlife, in addition to standard wildlife deterrence measures.
- According to the Interstate Stream Commission's recently released 50-year water plan, climate change is predicted to result in more frequent and severe storm events.  
*Recommendation* - Freeport should demonstrate that it is considering best available science in its designs for storm water management to prevent overtopping of berms, erosion, and spills.
- *Financial Assurance recommendations* - Financial assurance should be posted to cover at least 100 years of water monitoring and treatment. The form of financial assurance should be in a letter of credit, cash trust, or surety bond rather than a risky Third-Party Guarantee to ensure resources are available for cleanup and reclamation should the company default.

## More information

**Gila Resources Information Project website** at [www.gilaresources.info](http://www.gilaresources.info)

The application and supporting documents for the proposed Emma project, including hydrogeology, noise, lighting, view shed, and wildlife are available on the Mining and Minerals Division website at: [https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/mmd/mining-act-reclamation-program/pending-and-approved-mine-applications/mining-applications-regular-existing/gr010re-tyrone-revision-21-1/?et\\_fb=1&PageSpeed=off](https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/mmd/mining-act-reclamation-program/pending-and-approved-mine-applications/mining-applications-regular-existing/gr010re-tyrone-revision-21-1/?et_fb=1&PageSpeed=off)