



SAVE THE SCENIC
SANTA RITAS
ASSOCIATION

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For Immediate Release**

Pima County backs SSSR's formal protest challenging April 29 Auction of 160 acres

Tucson—Pima County sent a [letter](#) today supporting Save the Scenic Santa Ritas' formal [protest](#) pending before the State Land Department challenging the April 29 auction of 160 acres of State Trust Land in the Santa Rita Mountain foothills that Hudbay and its partner, Mitsubishi, intend to use as a mining waste dump for the proposed Copper World mine.

“Again, we request this property be withdrawn from auction,” Pima County Administrator Jan Leshar states in the March 12 letter to Land Commissioner Robyn Sahid supporting SSSR's protest. Leshar's letter to Sahid comes three days after she [asked](#) Governor Katie Hobbs to postpone the land sale.

SSSR filed the formal protest challenging the land auction on March 6. (See [press release](#).) Sahid has until April 22 to decide whether to accept the protest and withdraw the auction or move ahead with the land sale. Hudbay is expected to be the only bidder on the land the state has valued at \$993,000.

“Pima County continues to provide insightful leadership in its unwavering commitment to protect the Santa Rita Mountains and the critical watershed it provides to southern Arizona from needless destruction by this unnecessary mine,” SSSR Executive Director John Dougherty says. “We are thankful for the county's unflinching opposition to this mine.”

Leshar's letter states Pima County has the same concerns raised by SSSR that the state-approved appraisal “undervalued” the land.

Leshar notes that Pima County has applied for and purchased many parcels of State Trust Land. The state appraisals, she writes, often included “hypothetical conditions and extraordinary circumstances that disregarded impediments to development and existing land use or zoning designations, resulting in an inflated appraised value of the land.

“This was not the case for this 160-acre property which was appraised based on the zoning classification of Rural Homestead even though the appraisal acknowledges that the parcel will not be used for Rural Homestead uses and that the proposed use is industrial.”

Industrial land would be valued much higher than Rural Homestead and generate more revenue for the State Land Trust, whose primary beneficiary is the state's public school system.



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Acquiring the State Trust Land would allow Hubday to process more than 41 million tons of copper ore worth hundreds of millions of dollars. A 2023 Hubday technical report states obtaining additional land would provide Hubday the space to dump millions of tons of mine tailings generated from processing this ore. Without the additional land, the ore would be stockpiled.

Leshner's letter also supported SSSR's contention that the State has failed to determine the "monetary impact" from Copper World's groundwater pumping on "large State Trust land holdings" in the area.

Copper World plans to install four production wells east of the Santa Cruz River that are close to thousands of acres of State Trust Land. The company intends to pump more than 9 million gallons of groundwater a day in an area that is already suffering from land subsidence.

"The state should not be offering to sell State Trust Land that will be used to facilitate the development of a massive copper mine that will drain more than 170 billion gallons of water from the aquifer and reduce the value of thousands of acres of State Trust Land," Dougherty says. "This auction clearly is not in the best interest of the state."

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