

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **U.S. Forest Service Releases South32 Hermosa's Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

*South32 encourages community members to participate in 45-day public comment period*

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) today released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for South32's Hermosa project – a key milestone in the federal permitting process to enable the full development of the critical minerals site.

As part of the review, the USFS identified its preferred alternative for how Hermosa should proceed with its mine plan of operations (MPO) after weighing the benefits and environmental impacts of the proposed actions. Preferred alternatives include the construction of a 138kv power line, a primary access road, a dry-stack tailings facility updated in the [latest MPO](#), and direct water discharge in the Patagonia Mountains.

As the first mining project added to the federal FAST-41 permitting program, reserved for infrastructure projects vital for the nation, Hermosa is currently the only advanced mining project in the United States capable of producing two federally designated critical minerals – zinc and manganese.

"We are designing Hermosa from the ground up so that it is safer, more efficient and less impactful to the environment, combining state-of-the-art technology with best-in-class mining techniques, to deliver minerals America needs for its national and energy security," said Pat Risner, Hermosa President.

"As our Draft EIS shows, South32's approach to managing environmental risks advances the project in a way that protects public health and safety, biodiversity and water, and honors the cultural and Tribal legacy of the region," Risner added.

As all of Hermosa's mining will be done from private lands, initial project development required state permits from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) which have been

obtained. That construction is underway and already 40% complete. A federal permit is required to fully develop the project, including building a 138kv power line and other ancillary infrastructure.

Based on Hermosa's MPO originally released in 2024 and since updated with greater environmental protections, the Forest Service drafted the Draft EIS after analyzing a range of alternatives for power, access, tailings and water management to minimize impacts to the surrounding environment. The USFS considered, compiled, and proposed a preferred alternative now available for review and comment.

"As USFS finalizes its review, we look forward to continue working with our federal, state, local and Tribal stakeholders to deliver on our aim of setting a new standard for sustainable mining and developing a project that benefits the region now and for generations to come," said Brent Musslewhite, Hermosa Project Director of Environment and Permitting.

### **Public Comment Period Details**

Interested community members can submit comments related to the Draft EIS [online](#), via email at [sm.fs.r3cnfnepa@usda.gov](mailto:sm.fs.r3cnfnepa@usda.gov) or in person (in writing) at planned public comment meetings. Public comments will be received through June 23, 2025. Additionally, the USFS is hosting public meetings in Patagonia and Nogales on May 27th and 28th, respectively, where community members can also submit comments.

The Draft EIS and supporting documents are publicly available on the USFS's Coronado National Forest [website](#).

The release of the Draft EIS is the latest step in Hermosa's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. A final environmental impact statement is expected in early 2026, which aligns with an estimated timeline for a record of decision in summer 2026. Each step will include multiple rounds of public feedback and discussion, and members of the public are encouraged to participate.

With a surface footprint of 750 acres and projected to use approximately 90% less water than other mines in the region, Hermosa has been designed to minimize its environmental impact.

Once in operation, the project, across its zinc and manganese deposits, would help transform and grow the local economy and could create up to 900 good-paying jobs and support investment across surrounding communities for decades to come.

A video overview of the project's proposed expansion of ancillary infrastructure onto Forest Service lands is available [here](#). Should community members have any questions, please feel free to contact [askhermosa@south32.net](mailto:askhermosa@south32.net) or visit the [FAST-41 dashboard](#) to track the Hermosa project's permitting in real time.

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### **About South32 Hermosa**

Located in a historic mining district in the Patagonia Mountains of Southern Arizona, South32 Hermosa is currently the only advanced mine development project in the United States that could produce two federally designated critical minerals — manganese and zinc — both of which are essential minerals for powering the nation's energy future. Learn more at [www.south32hermosa.com](http://www.south32hermosa.com).

Hermosa is a polymetallic development comprised of a zinc-lead-silver sulfide deposit, a battery-grade manganese deposit and an extensive, highly prospective land package with the potential for further polymetallic and copper mineralization.

### **Media Relations**

Taja Vivens	Lina Betancourt
M +1 520-425-3471	M +1 514-210-1822
E <a href="mailto:Taja.Vivens@south32.net">Taja.Vivens@south32.net</a>	E <a href="mailto:Lina.Betancourt@south32.net">Lina.Betancourt@south32.net</a>