

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Conservation Organizations Outline Concerns with Ivanhoe Electric Mining Exploration Plans in the Pinos Altos Area, Gila National Forest**

*Silver City, NM* -- Local and statewide conservation and community organizations submitted a letter to the Gila National Forest District Ranger outlining concerns with a massive new mining exploration project on the Gila National Forest being developed by Ivanhoe Electric, a U.S.-based mineral exploration company. In 2024, the company staked 642 lode claims covering 13,264 acres of Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private land encircling the community of Pinos Altos, located 8 miles north of Silver City and considered the “gateway” to the Gila National Forest and Gila Wilderness. Exploration activities could impact the forest’s natural resources and wildlife, recreational opportunities, property values of homes located adjacent to the Gila National Forest, and the local economy.

The lode claims were staked and recorded in November 2024 with the Grant County Clerk’s Office and BLM by Pinos Altos Exploration LLC, a subsidiary of Ivanhoe Electric. In May 2024, Ivanhoe announced that it had joined an “exploration alliance” with the Australian multinational mining company BHP to “accelerate the search for copper and other critical minerals” in the U.S., focusing initially in Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. According to an Ivanhoe press release, “over 110 square kilometers of unpatented mining claims have been staked across Arizona and New Mexico.”<sup>i</sup> The second “joint venture” phase of the alliance will “further explore and evaluate the exploration results to assess its technical and economic merit, and if agreed upon, to develop and operate a mine and associated infrastructure.”<sup>ii</sup>

Alarming, other companies are in the process of staking potentially hundreds of claims on Gila National Forest land north of Silver City, including Kennecott Exploration, the exploration arm of global mining giant Rio Tinto, and Nevada-based Celatus Copper USA. Corporations are rapidly laying claim to subsurface minerals in other areas around the state such as the Pecos.

In addition to a long list of concerns with the negative impacts of the exploration proposal, organizations request the Gila National Forest carry out public notice, public review and public

comment on the proposal and that they assess and consider the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of the mineral exploration in its decision making.

“The number of new mining claims is incredible, seemingly appearing overnight. It's like a modern-day ‘Gold Rush’ out there. We suspect they are driven, at least in part, by the regulatory rollbacks of the current administration. It can't be a coincidence that this huge amount of claim activity is happening all at once,” stated Todd Schulke, co-founder of the Center for Biological Diversity.

“Mineral exploration and industrial-scale mining are not at all appropriate in the Gila National Forest north of Silver City. This unique area is critically important to our region’s rich biological diversity, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, and tourism. This proposal could impact two Inventoried Roadless Areas that protect wildlife habitat and the quality of recreation experiences. As the gateway to the Gila National Forest, Gila Cliff Dwellings, and Gila Wilderness – the nation’s first Wilderness Area, mineral exploration and mining in this area would significantly impact Grant County’s economy and quality of life,” said Allyson Siwik, Executive Director of Silver City-based Gila Resources Information Project.

According to Donna Stevens, president of the Gila Native Plant Society, "The board and members of the Gila Native Plant Society are very concerned that the Ivanhoe Electric project will harm the native vegetation around Pinos Altos. A few rare plant species in this area are found nowhere else, and could be eradicated by this project. Once those plants are gone, they're gone for good."

#### Attachments:

- 1) Organization comment Letter
- 2) Map of 642 Ivanhoe Electric claims boundaries (staked by subsidiary Pinos Altos Exploration) based on Bureau of Land Management data available from the Mineral and Land Records System: <https://mlrs.blm.gov/s/research-map#12,32.84990098179421,-108.25575466504128>

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<sup>i</sup> Ivanhoe Electric press release, January 7, 2025. <https://ivanhoeelectric.com/news/ivanhoe-electric-and-bhp-exploration-alliance-advance-exploration-activities-in-the-southwest-united-states/>

<sup>ii</sup> Ivanhoe Electric press release, May 8, 2024. <https://ivanhoeelectric.com/news/ivanhoe-electric-announces-exploration-alliance-with-bhp-to-accelerate-the-search-for-copper-and-other-critical-minerals-in-the/>