

Judith Stepan

As residents of Arizona or people with family, friends or property in Arizona, we're requesting a 180-day extension of the public comment period currently open for the Copper World aquifer protection permit. The Santa Rita Mountains are a vital source of water for southern Arizona, and we believe a thorough review of the proposed permit is crucial to protecting the region's precious waterways and aquifers. Arizonans need a chance to chime in. It's unreasonable to expect us to meaningfully engage with this complex permit in only 50 days, especially when the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality took 455 days to analyze and complete it. A 180-day extension of the public comment period would allow affected residents, stakeholders and experts time to fully engage with the permitting process by doing the following:

- Seek independent expert opinions through consultations with scientists, engineers and other qualified professionals who understand the permit and its implications.
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the impacts the permit could have on the region's watersheds, aquifers and surrounding environment.
- Prepare and submit thoughtful and detailed comments to the agency.

We also request the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality hold a public hearing ahead of the comment period deadline for the communities most affected by the proposed permit. Hosting a hearing would let people share diverse perspectives with agency representatives and strengthen public trust and transparency in the permitting process. People and wildlife in Arizona could be harmed by the Copper World Project's use of water. To provide substantive comments to the agency, Arizonans need more time to review the permit and its many impacts. We, the 852 undersigned, urge you to extend the comment period and host a public hearing that will benefit both Arizonans and the agency — ensuring a better decision-making process for all.