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03/08/2007 08:08 PM To
nevermined@earthlink.net
cc
petersleeth@news.oregonian.com, Docket Superfund@EPA
bcc

Subject
Formosa mine, Silver Butte, Oregon

Dear EPA,

I am writing to provide comments on the Formosa mine at Silver Butte, Oregon, for the public record.

For the past 2-3 years, I have been doing independent research on the occurrence of the California Condor in the Pacific Northwest.

I wish to bring to your attention the little-known fact that California Condors were observed at Silver Butte by Bill Brown, Forest Service lookout, in the period 1930-35.

This is one of a series of observations spanning more than a century in that area. These included the observations of: Donald McLeod, Hudson's Bay Company, in 1826; Titian Peale, ornithologist attached to the Ex.Ex under the command of Chas. Wilkes, in 1841; Roselle Putnam, one of the first settlers in the upper Umpqua, and daughter of Jesse Applegate, in 1852; George and Henry Peck of Drain in 1903 and 1904; and the above-mentioned Bill Brown. The span of records was thus 1826 to 1935, 110 years.

This is the longest series of records of condors in the Northwest. Condors frequented this area for generations, and was one of the most important areas in Oregon for condors.

I was therefore shocked and dismayed to read in The Oregonian on March 8 2007 of the contamination of creeks in the Umpqua watershed in the Silver Butte area by water runoff pollution from the Formosa mine.

The diet of condors in the Pacific Northwest included salmon and steelhead. It is also dismaying that this potential food supply has been impaired in two ways: 1) because of the simple reduction in salmonid numbers, and 2) because of the contamination of the watershed by heavy metal toxins from the mine. Any condors in the area would thus 1) find less food to support them, and 2) find food that is or might be

contaminated. Reintroduction of condors in this area would therefore put reintroduced birds at risk for two reasons, from a reduction in food supply and from poisoning. Poisoning is the principal reason for the disappearance of condors from all parts of its range, including both California and the Northwest, in the last 200 years.

If condors were to be at some time reintroduced to the Northwest, the Umpqua would have been one of the key sites I would have recommended for consideration. The pollution of the Umpqua watershed makes reintroduction to this part of Oregon much less attractive, the Umpqua much less a potential site than it could have been, and even a reason not to risk or bother at all.

The information provided above is derived from my research, in a paper titled "The Extent to which California Condors were Overlooked in Northwestern North America", which has been submitted for publication.

Sincerely,

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cc. Larry Tuttle, Center for Environmental Equity
Peter Sleeth, The Oregonian

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