

The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club has more than 7,000 members in New Mexico. The Sierra Club mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet. We are here today to request that the Water Quality Control Commission consider the scarcity of water in our state, much of which is high desert. This scarcity is exacerbated by the current drought.

Contamination of our water resource makes it unavailable for domestic, human, wildlife, and riparian uses.

We believe that the proposed rule is ineffective in protecting the waters of New Mexico from new sources of copper mining pollution. We are even more alarmed about the proposal's absolute lack of control over existing facilities - see 20.6.7.20B (2) relating to existing leach stockpiles, 20.6.7.21C(2) relating to existing waste rock stockpiles, and 22B(2) and existing crushing, milling, concentrating, smelting or tailings impoundments..

It appears that the copper industry wants to reduce the cost of mining in an ever-depleting resource at the expense of our groundwater. This is in clear violation of the WQCC's charge of ***adoption of regulations "to prevent or abate water pollution in the state or in any specific geographic area or watershed of the state...or for any class of waters."***