

Recreation

Eastern Santa Cruz County is popular for recreation opportunities related to birding, biking, and scenic driving, and provides opportunities for a variety of other recreation activities, such as hiking, camping, hunting, boating, fishing, night sky viewing, and visiting wineries.

Recreation facilities in the analysis area are limited to existing designated Forest Service roads, with the exception of a developed trailhead for accessing the Arizona National Scenic Trail along National Forest System Road (NFSR) 58 (North Harshaw Road).

Environmental Consequences

Under all alternatives:

- Increased mining truck traffic and visual impacts from development of facilities along NFSR 49 and NFSR 58 (Harshaw Road) may result in some displacement of recreation users, such as cyclists, dirt bikers, campers, and hunters, from the roads and area surrounding the roads.

The following presents a comparison of effects between alternatives:

- #### Alternative 1 – No Action

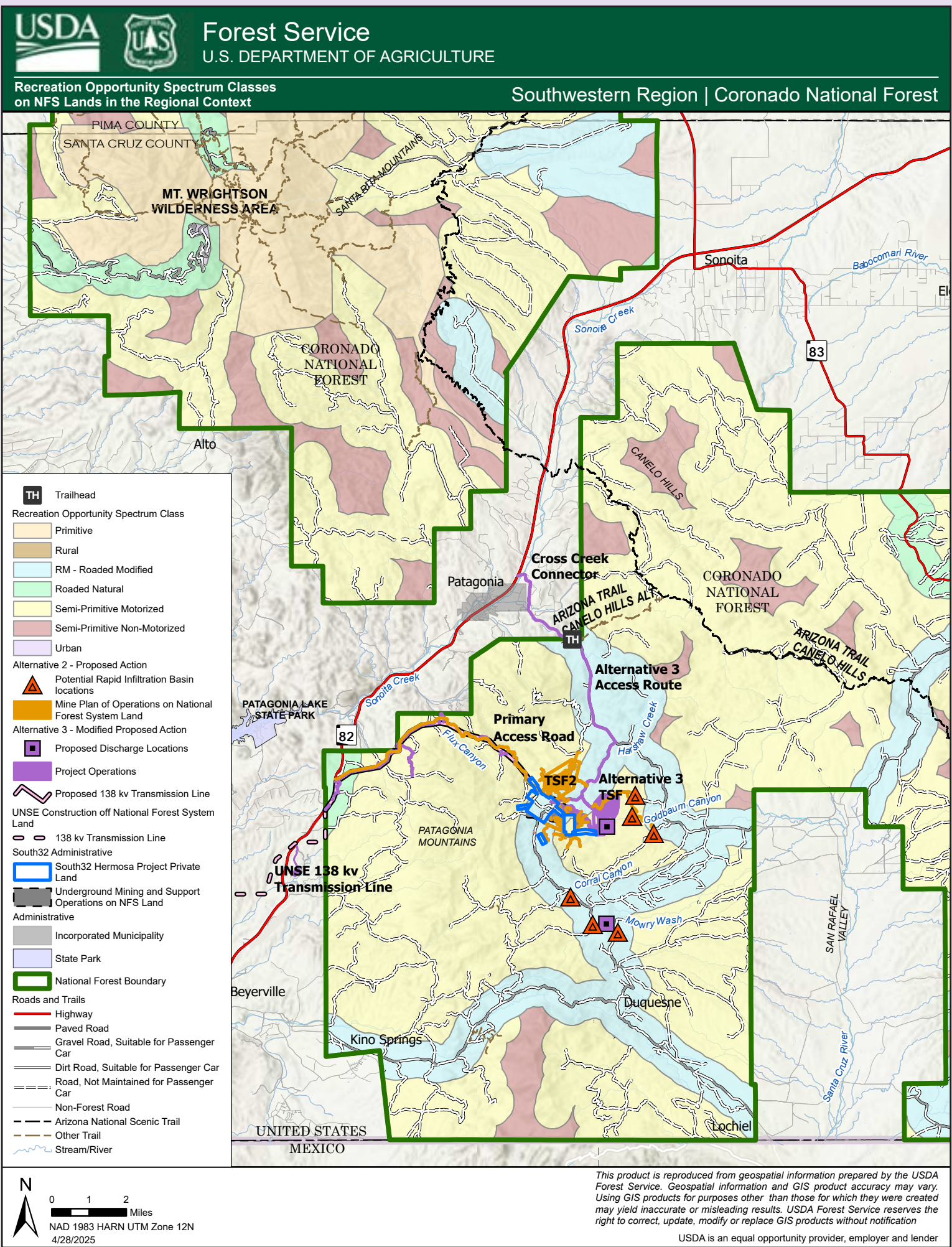
 - The Cross Creek Connector would be used by mining traffic to connect with NFSRs 49 and 58 (Harshaw Road) and access the mine site.
 - No acreage removed from public access for recreational use.
 - The recreation setting would be impacted along NFSRs 49 and 58 (Harshaw Road), but there would be no change to designations.

- #### Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

 - 578 acres would be removed from public recreation use near the mine site and rapid infiltration basin sites.
 - Most mining traffic would shift from NFSRs 49 and 58 (Harshaw Road) to the Primary Access Road.
 - A smaller number of users would choose different locations to recreate due primarily to mine-related traffic, though at a lower rate than Alternatives 1 and 3, due to lowered levels of traffic on Harshaw Road.
 - The recreation setting would be impacted, becoming more developed along the new Primary Access Road, around the mine, and at rapid infiltration sites .
 - The new Primary Access Road would improve recreation access to the Flux Canyon area.

- #### Alternative 3 – Modified Proposed Action

 - 468 acres would be removed from public recreation use near the mine site.
 - Mining traffic would continue on NFSRs 49 and 58 (Harshaw Road) and on the Cross Creek Connector for life of mine.
 - Some users would choose different locations to recreate due to the highest rate of mine-related traffic on Harshaw Road.
 - The recreation setting would be impacted, becoming more developed around the mine and along the transmission line.



Land Use and Land Management

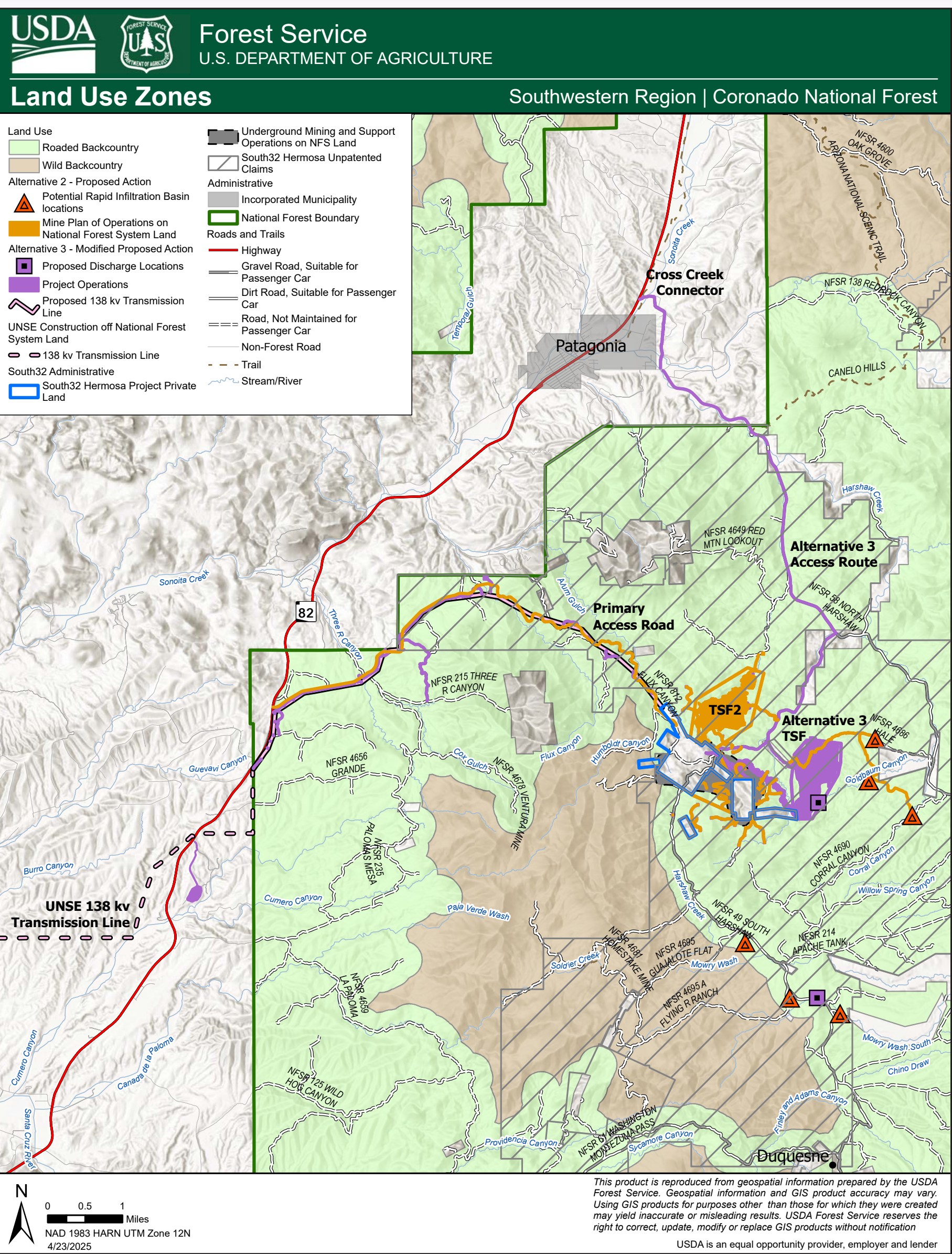
Land ownership of the analysis areas of all alternatives includes private land (owned by South32 Hermosa and others), National Forest System (NFS) land, and local government land (owned by Santa Cruz County).

Land ownership would not change under any alternative, but NFS land would become more developed and have changing land uses under the two action alternatives.

National Forest System Roads (NFSRs) 49 and 58 (Harshaw Road) would be used to some extent under all alternatives and are maintained by Santa Cruz County.

Environmental Consequences

The following presents a comparison of effects between alternatives:



Alternative 1 – No Action

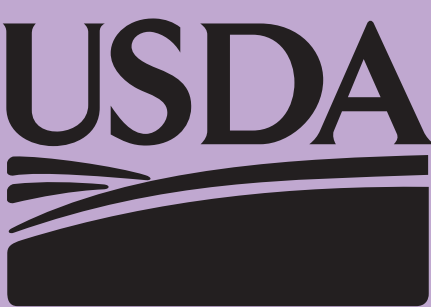
- No change in acres of NFS or mine site land use, but intensity of use would increase.
- Use of NFSRs 49 and 58 (Harshaw Road) would increase.
- The Cross Creek Connector being built as a bypass on Santa Cruz County land would be used for the entire life of the mine.
- No change in land use for power supply.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

- 738.1 acres of NFS land would change land use.
- Construction of the tailings storage facility, access roads, and mine facilities would change mine site land to developed.
- Public access would be restricted around the tailings storage facility and some Project components adjacent to South32 private land. Fencing would be installed around groundwater management wells and rapid infiltration basins.
- Approximately 4.7 miles of the Primary Access Road would be new construction, some of which parallels the existing Barriles Tank Road. 2.9 miles of new construction would occur where currently there are no existing roads.
- No change in land use for power supply.

Alternative 3 – Modified Proposed Action

- 646.4 acres of NFS land would change land use.
- Construction of the Alternative 3 tailings storage facility, access roads, and mine facilities would change land to developed.
- Public access restricted around tailings storage facility and some Project components adjacent to South32 private land. Fencing would be installed around groundwater management wells.
- Use of NFSRs 49 and 58 (Harshaw Road) would increase. The Cross Creek Connector would be used for mine access for the life of the mine.
- Land use from transmission infrastructure would become more intensive, adding a higher-voltage line in addition to the existing smaller-voltage line.
- Land use would change from undeveloped to developed where new facilities are proposed in areas where there are no existing facilities.



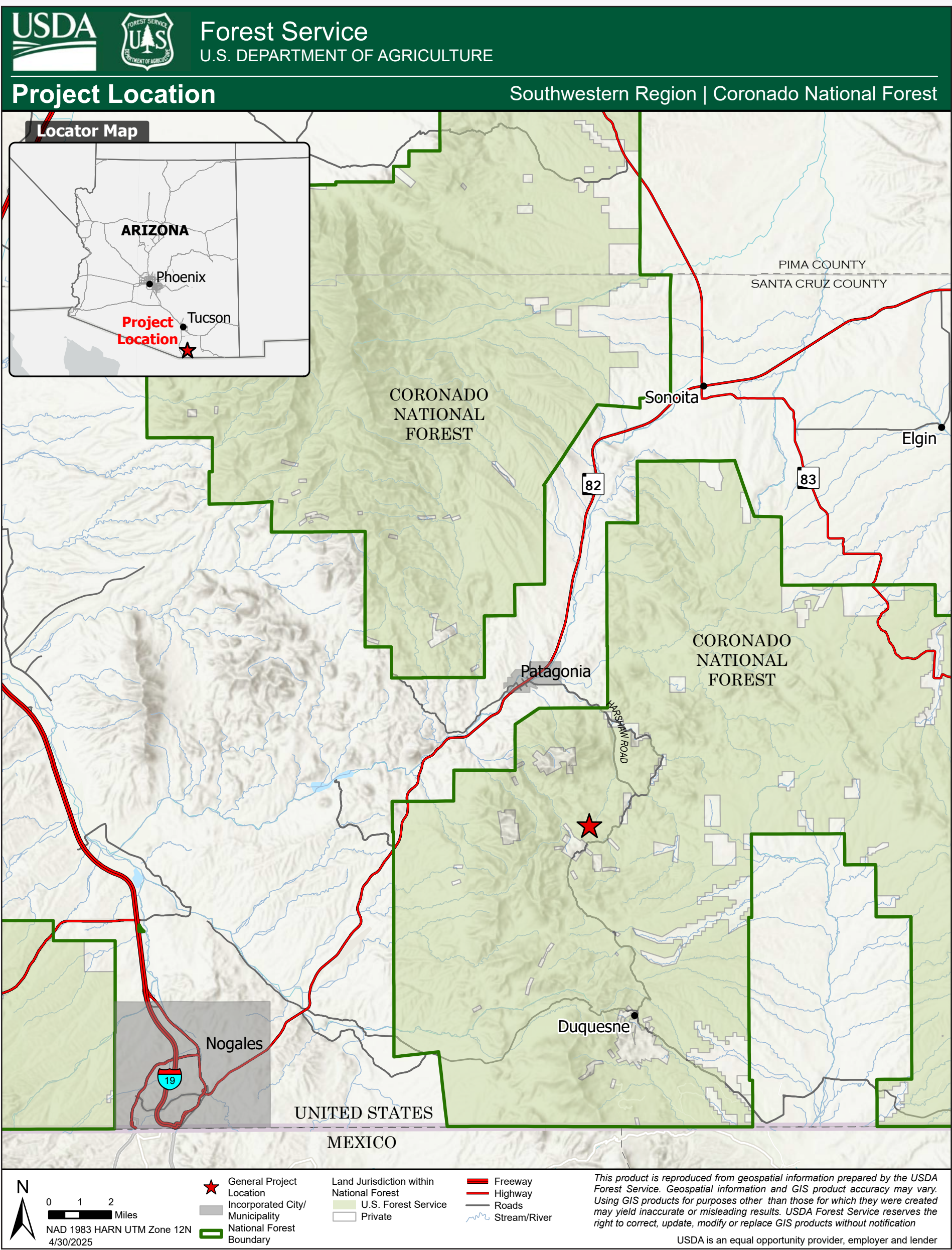
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Economic and Social Values

The economic and social values discussion in the EIS used publicly available information, such as demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau, to determine baseline conditions. The analysis used an economic model to determine economic impacts of the project.

Mine operations could have both negative and positive socioeconomic impacts. Beneficial impacts could include employment opportunities for the life of the mine. Adverse impacts could include a change to the perceived scenic setting in the national forest and increased mine traffic, which could affect recreationists and other users of the Coronado National Forest.



Environmental Consequences

Under all alternatives:

- South32 anticipates nearly all employment would be staffed by Santa Cruz County residents—either from its current labor force or in-migrating workers.
- Project construction can be expected to result in in-migration of workers that would relocate permanently or temporarily to Santa Cruz County.
- Increases in jobs, labor income, and population may generally be expected to represent positive improvements for many Santa Cruz County residents and businesses. However, other residents may perceive such changes as diminishing their quality of life and sense of place. For those residents, the Project may represent an adverse social impact.

The following presents a comparison of effects between alternatives:

Alternative 1 – No Action

- The duration of impacts would be 50 years.
- 1,962 average annual construction jobs.
- 1,837 average annual jobs in Santa Cruz County during operations.
- \$21 million to \$24.5 million annual tax revenues to Santa Cruz County.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

- The duration of impacts would be 70 years.
- 2,087 average annual construction jobs.
- 2,381 average annual jobs in Santa Cruz County during operations.
- \$22.3 million to \$25.8 million annual tax revenues to Santa Cruz County.

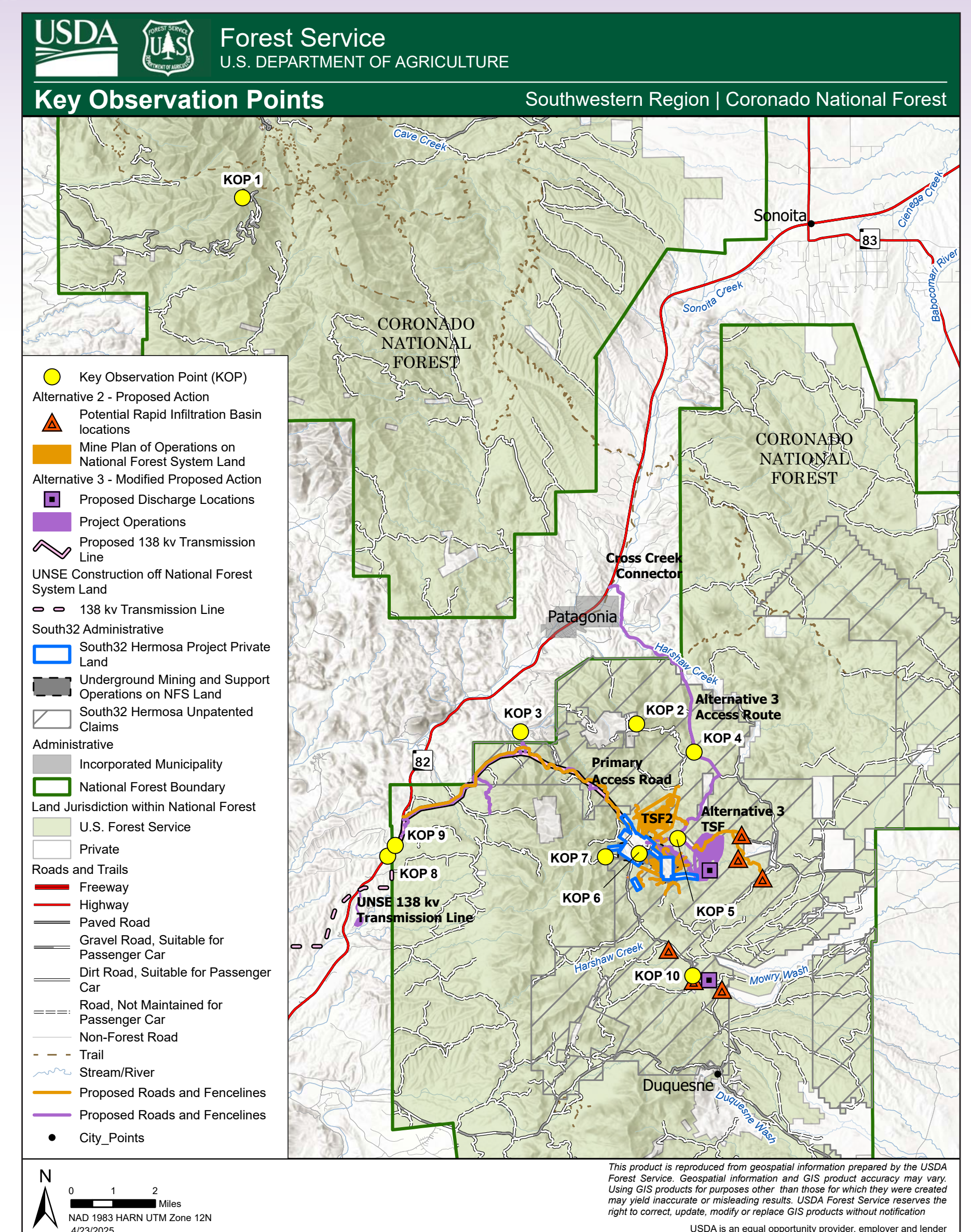
Alternative 3 – Modified Proposed Action

- The duration of impacts would be 70 years.
- Employment would be similar to Alternative 2.
- Tax revenue to Santa Cruz County would be similar to Alternative 2.



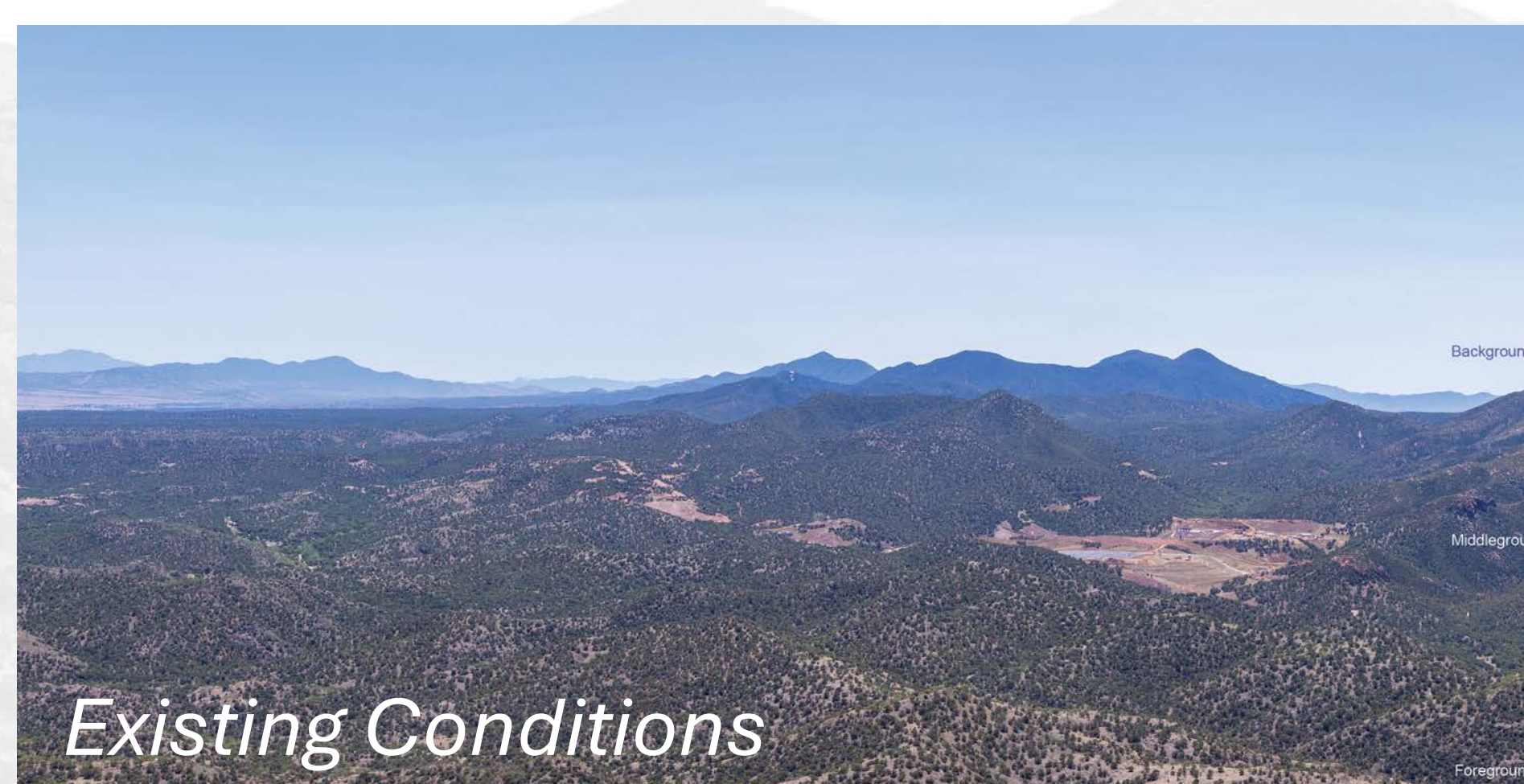
Visual Resources (Scenery)

- Visual resources (scenery) include the analysis area's valued scenic character attributes such as landforms and vegetation that create a sense of place.
- The Hermosa Critical Minerals Project is located in the Patagonia Mountains, which attract visitors with a wide variety of scenery and recreation settings, impressive landscape views, and night sky viewing opportunities.
- The Forest Service assessed 10 key observation points (KOP), as shown in the map on the right, which provide representative views of the analysis area.
- For each KOP, existing and predicted scenery conditions were evaluated, with consideration given to factors such as landscape visibility and potential changes to scenic character and scenic integrity.
- Predicted scenic character and scenic integrity were evaluated in terms of the Forest Plan's scenic integrity objectives (SIOs), which identify the maximum allowable change to the "intactness" of scenic character in the analysis area. Throughout the analysis area, a High SIO is prescribed, meaning that valued scenic character attributes such as vegetation and landform should appear natural.
- Visual simulations of each alternative were created for each KOP, and resulting contrasts with scenic character and changes to scenic integrity were analyzed.



Environmental Consequences

- There are only minor differences between effects from Project elements on National Forest System land under Alternative 1 – No Action and Alternative 2 – Proposed Action from most KOPs.
- Under Alternative 3 – Modified Proposed Action, the overhead transmission line would be visible from a portion of SR-82 which is part of the Patagonia-Sonoita Scenic Road (AZ State Hwy 82), a state scenic byway.



Examples of existing conditions and Alternative 3 simulated conditions from two KOPs are shown at left.

Upper images – midground view of mine site from Red Mtn. (KOP 2).

Lower images – foreground view of transmission line from Hwy 82 (KOP 9).

