September 2026 Update on the Community Protection & Benefits Agreement (CPBA) Process

Throughout September, the Town of Patagonia, the City of Nogales, Santa Cruz County, and South32 (the Signatories) continued working toward a Community Protection & Benefits Agreement (CPBA) for the Hermosa project.

Work focused on reviewing community feedback, developing the agreement, strengthening plans for independent monitoring, and improving how information about the CPBA process is shared with the public. The Signatories also agreed on several steps to make information more accessible, such as continued monthly website updates and public access to responses to community comments.

What We Worked On

Community Engagement and Public Information

The Signatories continued reviewing questions and comments submitted through the CPBA website. Comments are being organized by topic to help identify common questions, community concerns, and issues that may need additional review or responses. This process also helps the Signatories better understand which topics should be addressed as the agreement develops.

To improve transparency, the Signatories agreed that responses to public comments will be posted on the CPBA website rather than shared only with the individuals who submitted them. This will allow community members to see questions raised by others and the responses.

Community protection survey responses are reviewed separately from general website comments. Survey information helps identify potential protections and monitoring priorities, while public comments and questions are considered through the website comment review and response process.

Independent Assessment of Protections Needed

The Signatories engaged Spheros Environmental to serve as an independent expert to review protection measures to ensure the Hermosa Project meets an acceptable level of care for the environment. Spheros is reviewing existing environmental studies, monitoring plans, and community questions to identify where additional information or protections may be needed. As part of this work, Spheros has developed an ABC process that organizes questions raised through the Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and CPBA website by how they can be addressed. Their findings and recommendations will be integrated into the CPBA.

Independent Monitoring and CITE

One of Spheros' early recommendations was to form a Committee of Independent Technical Experts that the Signatories can rely on to assist with technical questions or issues that may arise over time. The role of CITE will be integral to how independent monitoring will be conducted under the CPBA and is being developed to support independent technical review and monitoring of community protections. The Signatories intend to provide additional information explaining the CITE's responsibilities, structure, and proposed membership. These efforts are intended to help residents understand who will conduct independent monitoring, what will be monitored, and how monitoring information will be used.

Community Benefits Planning

The Signatories are refining how community benefit opportunities will be evaluated during the initial years of the CPBA. This includes developing clear criteria for reviewing proposals and establishing a consistent process for determining which projects may qualify for support. Early community benefits are expected to focus on identified community needs. As the Hermosa project advances, the agreement may provide opportunities for longer-term investments that reflect broader community priorities and goals.

Related Technical Work

The University of Arizona Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Spheros' protection and monitoring work continue to progress, with the HIA now expected to be issued in the first quarter of 2027.

The information developed through these independent technical efforts is expected to help inform future discussions regarding community health, protections, monitoring, and implementation of the CPBA.

Community Input

<u>September Website Submissions</u>

- 0 Comment/Message

Comments, questions, and other feedback submitted through the CPBA website continue to be reviewed and considered by the Signatories. The Signatories agreed to make responses to applicable public comments available on the website, helping ensure that information provided in response to one community member can also benefit others.

Community feedback remains an important part of the CPBA process. It helps the Signatories identify areas requiring additional information, understand community concerns and priorities, and consider how protections, monitoring, benefits, and public engagement should be addressed as the agreement develops.

Responses to appropriate public comments will continue to be prepared as part of this process.

Stay Informed and Involved

Whether you have a question about environmental protections, want to learn more about potential community benefits, or are interested in how independent monitoring will work, the CPBA website is a place to find information and share your feedback.

Visit www.cpba-hermosa.org for monthly updates, future newsletters, responses to community questions, and information about the continuing development of the agreement.

Thank you for your continued interest and participation in the CPBA process.