

Mining operation slowed by snail



Photo:Lance Gilbertson

Mohave Shoulderband (*Helminthoglypta greggi*)

Saturday, April 18, 2015

BY JILL BARNES NELSON

MOJAVE – A little snail could slow down the mining operation on Soledad Mountain.

A year after the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services disallowed an emergency order of protection for the Mohave Shoulderband Snail, it now says it has received additional scientific information to conduct a study under the Endangered Species Act.

The snail is said to live on the Soledad Mountain and two nearby areas where work is underway by the Golden Queen Mine to extract gold and silver.

Representatives of the Golden Queen Mine fought the emergency listing last year stating that the proposal was flawed and disputed the assertions about the danger to snail by the mine.

They said there were no photos of the snails or snail shells on the mountain, along with no field trip logs listing any findings.

Tierra Curry, a senior scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity, said this was great news for those trying to safeguard the survival of the snail.

“Without the Endangered Species Act, the mine could drive the Mohave Shoulderband to extinction,” he said. “It would forever erase an irreplaceable piece of California’s natural heritage for short term economic gain.”

Golden Queen President Lutz Klingmann said he believes the FWS announcement is only a procedural follow up to last year’s rejection.

“We are still actively mining,” he said.

The company has begun pre-production mining with about 20 mine employees and another 50 construction workers.

The snail is said to be one-half inch tall with a light brown spiraling shell that is pale pink on the underside. The Center for Biological Diversity said its research has 17 known locations of the snail of which 10 are in the area of the mine.

They also feel that eight of the snail's habitats would be destroyed by the mining operation.

Golden Queen Mining officials said the area had extensive environmental documented studies done between 1990 and 1999, and again between 2006 and 2012. The mine received three permits that allow the company to construct their facilities and begin mining and processing operations.