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CONTACT: Mark Shaffer, Director of Communications, (602) 771-2215

ADEQ Announces Draft Water Quality Permit for ASARCO Mining Operations in Hayden

PHOENIX (Sept. 29, 2008) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Steve Owens announced today that ADEQ has proposed a draft water quality permit to ensure that ASARCO’s mining operations in Hayden and Winkelman are in compliance with current water quality laws and regulations.

"This is a strong permit that will protect precious groundwater resources in the area and ensure that Asarco operates in compliance with Arizona’s current water quality laws," Director Owens said.

The permit, known as an Aquifer Protection Permit (APP), is proposed for the ASARCO LLC—Hayden Operations facilities in Pinal County. The permit will ensure that the company uses the best available control technology to minimize pollution from its activities, including copper smelting, sulfuric acid generation and loading stations, landfill operations, and tailings impoundments. All of these activities have the potential to pollute the area’s groundwater. The permit will require ASARCO to protect the area aquifer from pollution.

In addition, the draft permit requires the company to submit to ADEQ a municipal wastewater disposal plan, which will include a plan to stop the wastewater discharge to tailings impoundments within a year of the permit’s issue. Currently, the company is discharging raw sewage from the local communities into the tailings impoundment. ADEQ has been working with local officials to help develop a plan for proper wastewater treatment and disposal.

The permit regulates the mine for current and future operations, including the closing and post-closing periods. It also requires the company to prove that it has the financial capability to operate the mine.

ADEQ will accept public comments on the draft permit through Oct. 17. Comments on the draft permit can be sent to Steve Vevang, ADEQ, Groundwater Section, 1110 West Washington Street, MC5415B-3, Phoenix, AZ 85007.