FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Walker Lane Minerals Corp.
Isabella Pearl Project

Finding of No Significant Impacts

DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2018-0007-EA

U.S. Department of the Interior
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May 2018
It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.
BACKGROUND

Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2018-0007-EA analyzed the No Action Alternative and Proposed Action. The Proposed Action, as described in Chapter 2 of the EA, would develop and operate an open-pit mine, a waste rock dump, and a heap leach facility near Luning, Nevada. The proposed mine site and processing facilities are to be located in the Santa Fe Mining District.

The project area encompasses approximately 490 acres. All intended areas of disturbance have been inventoried for cultural and biological resources. Components of the Proposed Action are as follows:

- Open-pit area encompassing three ore bodies
- Oxide ore stockpile
- Crushing and screening facility
- Leach pad divided into two cells

CONTEXT:

The proposed project is to develop and operate an open-pit mine, a waste rock dump, and a heap leach facility. In February 2017, WLMC, submitted the Plan of Operations and Reclamation Plan, Isabella Pearl Project, Luning, NV (Welsh Hagen 2017) to the BLM. The BLM notified WLMC that the plan of operations must meet minimum standards required for the BLM to begin processing the mining operation application.

Mining claims in the project area are owned by WLMC. Modern exploration conducted in the project area before WLMC acquired it was completed by a Combined Metals-Homestake joint venture, which leased the Isabela claims in 1987. Combined Metals-Homestake drilled at least 175 rotary and core holes from 1988 to 1990.

In 2006 TXAU Investments Ltd., operating under its subsidiary Isabella Pearl, LLC (IPLLCC), acquired the property and drilled 19 core holes under a Notice of Intent for Exploration Activities to provide material for metallurgical testing. IPLLCC completed 7 additional confirmation core holes in 2008. It completed eight geotechnical borings and 16 shallow test pits in the vicinity of the proposed processing facility and waste rock dump in 2008.

In 2009, IPLLCC drilled two monitoring wells and in 2010 drilled three hydrogeological holes to test for groundwater elevations in the area of the proposed open pit. In 2012, IPLLCC drilled five holes to provide additional samples for rock characterization testing and three monitoring wells in the area of the proposed open pit. In 2013, IPLLCC drilled two water test holes and a production water well, upgradient of the open pit.

WLMC acquired the property in 2016 and drilled 10 holes for mineral grade confirmation and metallurgical analyses. WLMC also drilled a production water well downgradient of the project area in the historic Santa Fe corridor.
WLMC proposes to conduct additional mineral exploration, which would include access road maintenance, road building, drill pad construction, and exploration drilling.

**INTENSITY:**
The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1) **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.**

None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA (see Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed any known threshold of significance, either beneficial or adverse. The Proposed Action is to develop and operate an open-pit mine, a waste rock dump, and a heap leach facility near Luning, Nevada. The Proposed Action is further described in the EA (refer to Chapter 2.1, Proposed Action).

The following resources were analyzed for impacts: geology and minerals, soils, air quality, water resources, vegetation and invasive, nonnative and noxious species, wildlife, migratory birds, sensitive species, land use, recreation and access, socioeconomics, and visual resources. There were no adverse impacts from the proposed action.

2) **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.**

The Proposed Action is not likely to affect public health or safety. See EA section 3.2, Table 3-2, Other Resources. Adherence to applicable federal, state and local regulations would ensure that no soil, ground water, or surface water contamination would occur with any adverse effect to worker health and safety or to surrounding communities.

Potential public health and safety issues would pertain to access, water quality, and chemical spills. Access is addressed in Section 3.12 and includes such protection measures as fences around the project, signs, and speed limits.

Water quality is addressed in Section 3.7, and any chemical spills would be contained according to the emergency response plan and reported in accordance with federal and state laws; therefore, public health and safety is not discussed as a separate issue topic in this EA.

3) **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.**

No park lands, prime farmlands, congressionally designated wilderness areas, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers are on or near the project area. No species listed under the Endangered Species Act are known to occur in the project area.
As part of the environmental protection measures of the Proposed Action (see Section 2.1.6, Environmental Protection Measures), WLMC has committed to avoiding discovered cultural resources of significance, or it would mitigate impacts in a manner acceptable to the BLM; therefore, these characteristics have been found not to be adversely affected by the Proposed Action.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The Proposed Action is not expected to have effects on the quality of the human environment that are highly controversial, as defined in 43 CFR § 46.30.¹ None of the methods or tools used in the evaluation of potential impacts are scientifically controversial. The Public Draft EA did not receive any substantive public comments.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

There are no known direct, indirect, or cumulative effects identified in the EA that are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks, as demonstrated through the analysis.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The proposed action will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision about future consideration. Completion of the EA does not establish a precedent for other mining projects of similar size or scope. Any future projects within the project area or in surrounding areas will be analyzed on their own merits and implemented, or not, independent of the actions currently selected.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions have been considered in the cumulative impacts analysis within the EA (Chapter 4). The cumulative impacts analysis examined all of the other appropriate actions and determined that the proposed action would not incrementally contribute to significant impacts. In addition, for any actions that might be proposed in the future, further environmental analysis, including assessment of cumulative impacts, would be required prior to authorization of surface disturbing activities.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

No adverse effect to these resources was identified as a result of the proposed action. If future

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¹ Controversial refers to circumstances where a substantial dispute exists as to the environmental consequences of the proposed action and does not refer to the existence of opposition to a proposed action, the effect of which is relatively undisputed (43 CFR § 46.30).
development is proposed, site-specific NEPA analysis and mitigation will minimize any risk to districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

No species listed under the Endangered Species Act are known to occur in the project area. Suitable habitat for the listed species does not occur in the project area (GBE 2017).

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

As described in the EA, the Proposed Action does not violate any known Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for protection of the environment.
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION

This finding and conclusion is based on the consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA, and all other information available to me.

Based on the analysis of the Walker Lane Minerals Corp. Isabella Pearl Project, EA# DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2018-0007-EA, I have determined that implementation of the alternatives will not have significant effects on the human environment and an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described above.

Kenneth R. Collum
Field Manager
Stillwater Field Office

Date
5/11/18