



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Pocatello Field Office  
4350 Cliffs Drive  
Pocatello, Idaho 83204-2105  
(208) 478-6340

In Reply Refer To:  
3500  
IDI-012982  
IDI-036773  
IDI-037055

August 1, 2011

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has completed its assessment of Paris Hills Agricom (PHA) Inc.'s application to conduct exploratory drilling on a federally owned phosphate deposit known to exist under privately owned surface. The decision only allows exploration and does not include issuing any lease that would allow rights to mine. Leasing is outside the scope of this analysis. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, we prepared an environmental assessment to analyze the proposal and possible alternatives. We appreciate and have considered the input that you may have provided us during the process of preparing the assessment.

The BLM has issued a decision to approve the minerals exploration drilling plan subject to site specific conditions of approval and recommend that the BLM Idaho State Office issue a Phosphate Exploration License (IDI-37055) and Prospecting Permit (IDI-36773). All roads, drill sites, and other surface disturbance will be obliterated upon final reclamation (depending on the surface owner's desire). The BLM has signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for the project.

A copy of the BLM decision is attached. Thank you for your interest in the management of public natural resources. If you have any questions please contact Bryce Anderson, Project Manager, at the Pocatello Field Office at (208) 478-6353.

Sincerely,

  
David A. Pacioretty  
Field Manager

Enclosures:

BLM Decision Record and FONSI

## **Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record Paris Hills Prospecting and Exploration Drilling Program**

I have reviewed Paris Hills Agricom (PHA) Inc.'s Proposed Drill Plan and Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Environmental Assessment # DOI-BLM-ID-I020-2011-0018-EA, *Paris Hills Prospecting and Exploration Drilling Program* (EA) including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant impacts. I have taken into consideration the concerns of public scoping respondents, the recommendations of a BLM interdisciplinary resource specialist team, and local land owners.

I have reviewed the EA, have considered all alternatives, and have selected the Alternative one as described in Section 2.1 of the EA, along with the environmental protection measures outlined in Section 2.3 of the EA and the *Conditions of Approval* included at the end of this Decision Record.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of the project is to confirm historic drill results and more confidently define potential phosphate resources within the Paris Hills Property. The proposed exploration drilling would provide more detailed geologic data and information to determine the extent of the Meade Peak Member of the Phosphoria Formation within the BLM-managed mineral reservations. Additional information is needed to identify faulted areas as well as the thickness of overburden overlying the deposit. PHA would use the information to evaluate economic feasibility of recovering these phosphate reserves with future mining activities. Acquisition of the geologic and other scientific information from the exploration activities would also assist BLM in managing phosphate minerals and other resources within the site and vicinity.

### **Scoping**

On January 7, 2011, the BLM sent 56 scoping letters to agencies, businesses, organizations, individuals, city and county officials, and identified surface owners. A legal notice was published in the Montpelier NEWS-EXAMINER on January 12, 2011. The project was also posted on BLM's web-based NEPA database on January 31, 2011 ([https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa\\_register.do](https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do)). Eleven comments were received during the public comment period, with one comment received post-public comment period. Copies of these comments and responses are included in the project file.

### **Description of Alternatives**

Two alternatives were evaluated through the environmental analysis. Other alternatives were considered, but not carried through analysis because they did not meet the purpose and need of the project.

Alternative one is the Proposed Action Alternative and consists of a proposal to explore the nature and extent of the federally managed phosphate deposit utilizing approximately 62 exploration drill holes. This alternative requires the use of existing access roads where available as well as the construction of new temporary access roads. Construction of proposed access roads would yield a total estimated surface disturbance of approximately 5.2 acres. The alternative would also require a footprint of approximately 2,500 sq ft (50 x 50 ft) for each potential drill site. The total estimated area of disturbance for drill pads is approximately 3.8

acres. Alternative one also involves approval to drill on Federal Phosphate Lease IDI-012982 and recommends that the BLM Idaho State Office issue a Prospecting Permit (IDI-36773) for unleased lands outside of KPLA IDI-020417 as well as An Exploration License (IDI-37055) for unleased lands within KPLA IDI-020417. It should be noted that additional drilling or road building may be necessary to fully explore the deposit, depending on the initial drilling results. Those activities are also approved in this decision, to the point that environmental impacts do not exceed the scope of the impacts evaluated in the EA.

### **Decision Rationale and Statement of Land Use Plan Compliance**

Alternative Two, the No Action alternative was considered carefully, especially since the surface of the lands are under private ownership. However, I feel that with the full reclamation and other considerations, exploration can be conducted with minimal impacts to the surface owner. BLM will continue to work with the surface owner to ensure that both his needs and the government minerals management needs are met. Activities conducted under Alternative one, as mitigated by the Conditions of Approval in this decision, are predicted to meet environmental, planning, and other applicable established requirements. For these reasons, selection of the No-Action Alternative is not warranted.

Alternative one is within the areas designated as open for solid leasable mineral exploration in the BLM's 1988 Pocatello Resource Management Plan (RMP; BLM, 1988). I have reviewed this land use plan as well as applicable regulations and determined that the proposed exploration project is consistent with the current 1988 land use plan.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision**

I have determined that the implementation of Alternative one, with the mitigation measures described below, and as set forth in the EA, will have *No Significant Impacts*, and thus an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. I am authorizing PHA to implement exploration drilling activities as outlined in their application and in accordance with the attached site specific conditions of approval that are formulated from environmental protection and other mitigation measures outlined in the EA. By this decision, I am authorizing PHA to conduct exploration on Federal Phosphate Leases IDI-012982 as well as recommending the BLM Idaho State Office to issue a Prospecting Permit (IDI-036773) and Exploration License (IDI-037055) to PHA.

### **Public Availability**

Copies of this EA and BLM decision will be available for review at the BLM Pocatello Field Office in Pocatello, Idaho, and on BLM's web-based NEPA database on August 1, 2011 ([https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa\\_register.do](https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do)). For further information contact: Bryce Anderson, BLM Pocatello Field Office, 208-478-6353.

### **Appeal Information**

Any party who is adversely affected by this decision has a right to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, in accordance with the provisions described in 43 CFR Part 4. A person who wishes to appeal must file in the office of the officer who made the decision a notice that he wishes to appeal. In this case, the deciding officer is the Field Manager, Pocatello Field Office, 4350 Cliffs Drive, Pocatello, Idaho 83204. This notice must be filed within 30 days after the

party is served with this decision. A petition for stay, if any, (43 CFR 4.21) must be delivered to the Idaho Falls District Office within the same 30-day period. The notice of appeal must identify the decision being appealed and may include a statement of reasons for the appeal and any argument the appellant wishes to make. If the notice of appeal does not include the statement of reasons for the appeal, the appellant shall file such a statement with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 801 North Quincy Street, Arlington, Virginia 22203, within 30 days after the notice of appeal was filed. The appellant shall serve a copy of the notice of appeal and of any statement of reasons and arguments on the Field Solicitor, U.S. Department of the Interior, Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse, 550 West Fort Street, MSC 020, Boise, ID 83724, not later than 15 days after filing the document. Service of the copy may be made by delivering the copy personally or by sending it by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.



David A. Pacioretty  
Field Manager

8-1-2011  
Date

Attached: Conditions of Approval

## **Paris Hills Exploration Plan 2011**

### **BLM Environmental Assessment # DOI-BLM-ID-I020-2011-0018-EA**

#### **Conditions of Approval**

The conditions of approval listed in this document are in addition to the best management practices, environmental protection measures, and other measures outlined in alternative one in the environmental assessment, as well as the plans and environmental protection measures set forth in the approved drill plan. Paris Hills Agricom (PHA) Inc., its contractors, and other entities involved in the project must adhere to the plans and stipulations set forth in the approved drill plan, in the EA, and this document. Any deviations from this drill plan must be submitted to the BLM for approval prior to action.

#### **General**

1. PHA has negotiated a surface use agreement with the surface owner of the project lands and is expected comply with all provisions of that agreement. PHA will submit a copy of the executed agreement to BLM before implementing operations approved in this plan. Alternatively, the surface owner may contact BLM to indicate that a suitable agreement is in place. In absence of a surface use agreement, exploration activities may be undertaken only after appropriate administrative proceedings have taken place allowing PHA legal access to the project lands.
2. PHA is responsible to ensure that all personnel contracted or otherwise doing work on the Project are aware of these conditions of approval and requirements and abide by all regulations and conditions of approval governing this Project.
3. The BLM may inspect the project at any time during the project, in order to ensure compliance with the approved operating plan, Best Management Practices, Environmental Protection Measures, and other established requirements. BLM will coordinate such inspections with PHA and surface land owners to allow for safe access to and from the site. PHA representative(s) will be allowed to accompany site inspections.

#### **Drilling/Data Collection**

1. PHA will provide BLM the following for each of the geologic boreholes:
  - (1) Electronic copies of the drill logs for each borehole;
  - (2) Gamma log of each borehole, if taken;
  - (3) Make drill cutting samples available for BLM inspection on every 2 foot interval for the total depth of the borehole, or as drill samples are returned;
  - (4) All lab analyses for any potential phosphate ore samples;
  - (5) Any other geologic or environmental information collected from the boreholes.