

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Carson City District Office

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

Project Lead: James Carter, Lead Archaeologist

Field Office: Sierra Front

Lead Office: Sierra Front

Case File/Project Number: Bureau of Land Management—LLNVC0200 L1010000 HP0000

Applicable Categorical Exclusion (cite section): 516 DM 11.8: J(8). Installation of minor devices to protect human life (e.g., grates across mines).

NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-NV-2012-C020-0018-CX

Project Name: Abandon Mine Lands Closure of the Combination Shaft, Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada

Project Description: In response to the 2008 Office of Inspector General audit and Nevada Department of Minerals concerns, BLM has identified the historic mining shaft opening known as the “Combination Shaft” as a high priority for an abandon mine lands (AML) closure in order to protect human health and safety. The Combination Shaft is a vertical hole measuring approximately 45 feet in length by 25 feet in width, with an excavated depth of more than 3,000 feet. In addition, the original rock wall (composed of cut stones) and a wooden head frame structure tower several dozen feet above the shaft against the side of a natural hill. The Combination Shaft is a historic property that contributes to the eligibility of the Virginia City National Historic Landmark.

The area of the shaft is currently surrounded by a modern barbed wire fence and with warning signs posted to “Stay Out and Stay Alive.” The fence has been stretched and does not prevent any person from crossing it and walking directly up to the shaft. Given the visibility of the feature and number of visitors each year, the BLM proposes to place a metal grate over the shaft opening. BLM proposes that design and installation would be provided by Ed Winchester (Frontier Environmental Solutions, Inc., Ridgecrest, CA). The proposed engineered gate would be near-ground level, allowing for visitor viewing from its perimeter, with the best viewing into the shaft from the west. It would be made of five or ten slats that were nearly 25 feet long, with 5.75 inch gaps in the expanded metal grating to allow bats to enter and leave the site. Gaps would be spaced four feet apart and run down the long axis of the structure. FESI would install concrete fill at and below ground surface in the shaft wall that has eroded underneath the front portion of the cut stone wall that holds the wooden head frame. This stabilization is necessary to

install a secure gate, which in turn will return the weight-bearing load that has been lost due to natural erosion and stabilize the historic fabric of the above-ground structure.

BLM proposes that the installation plans include a series of small signs, approximately 3.5 inches x 12 inches in size (about the size of a bumper sticker) mounted around the perimeter of the structure that implore visitors to stay off of the structure. Following installation of the gate, the fence will be removed.

Applicant Name: Nevada Division of Minerals

Project Location: Virginia City, Storey County

T. 17 N., R. 21 E.

Section 32, Lot MS-39, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, MDM

BLM Acres for the Project Area: ca. 0.13 acres

Land Use Plan Conformance (cite reference/page number): Page MIN-4 states "Identify hazards to the public around inactive and active mine claims through signing, fencing, or other appropriate means."

Name of Plan: NV – Carson City CRMP (2001).

Screening of Extraordinary Circumstances: The following extraordinary circumstances apply to individual actions within categorical exclusions (43 CFR 46.215). The BLM has considered the following criteria:

(Specialist review: initial in appropriate box)

<i>If any question is answered 'yes' an EA or EIS must be prepared.</i>	YES	NO
1. Would the Proposed Action have significant impacts on public health or safety? (project lead/P&EC)		AC
2. Would the Proposed Action have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (EO 11990); floodplains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (EO 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas? (wildlife biologist, hydrologist, outdoor recreation planner, archeologist)		AC WC PZ AC
3. Would the Proposed Action have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA 102(2)(E)]? (project lead/P&EC)		AC
4. Would the Proposed Action have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks? (project lead/P&EC)		AC
5. Would the Proposed Action establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects? (project lead/P&EC)		AC
6. Would the Proposed Action have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects? (project lead/P&EC)		AC
7. Would the Proposed Action have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the NRHP as determined by the bureau or office? (archeologist)		AC
8. Would the Proposed Action have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the list of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species? (wildlife biologist, botanist)		PZ B2D
9. Would the Proposed Action violate federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment? (project lead/P&EC)		AC
10. Would the Proposed Action have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EA 12898)? (project lead/P&EC)		AC
11. Would the Proposed Action limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007)? (archeologist)		AC
12. Would the Proposed Action contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and EO 13112)? (botanist)		B2B

SPECIALISTS' REVIEW: During ID Team consideration of the above Proposed Action and extraordinary circumstances, the following specialists reviewed this CX:

James Carter, Project Lead – Archaeologist/Native American Liaison
Dan Erbes, Geologist
Jo Hufnagle, Realty Specialist
Arthur Callan, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Niki Cutler, Hydrologist
Pilar Ziegler, Wildlife Biologist/BLM Sensitive Species - Wildlife
Dean Tonenna, Botanist - Natural Resource Specialist/BLM Sensitive Species - Plants
Brian Buttazoni, Planning & Environmental Coordinator

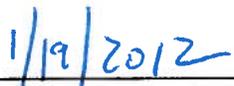
Although BLM Sensitive Species is not described in one of the 12 extraordinary circumstances question, review of the applicability of this CX has taken them into consideration.

CONCLUSION: Based upon the review of this Proposed Action, I have determined that the above-described project is a categorical exclusion, in conformance with the LUP, and does not require an EA or EIS. A categorical exclusion is not subject to protest or appeal.

Approved by:



Bryan S. Hockett
Acting Field Manager
Sierra Front Field Office



(date)



Abatement of Mine Hazard at the Combination Shaft
 T17N, R21E, Section 32
 Virginia City, Storey County, NV
 Virginia City, NV USGS 7.5' quadrangle
 1:24,000 scale



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