



USDA Forest Service  
Caribou-Targhee National Forest  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/caribou-targhee>

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USDI Bureau of Land Management  
Idaho Falls District  
<http://www.id.blm.gov/>

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## PUBLIC SCOPING LETTER

August 13, 2012

### Husky 1-North Dry Ridge Phosphate Mine Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

#### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this letter is to notify you that the public scoping period under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the Husky 1-North Dry Ridge Phosphate Mine EIS is underway. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) are co-lead agencies preparing the EIS and public involvement is an important part of this process. We ask for your input to help us determine the scope and significant issues to analyze in this EIS.

Please take the time to read the following information and let us know your concerns about the proposed action and the decisions to be made. We appreciate your contribution of time and effort, and believe the information you share with us will lead to a better decision. Please submit your comments according to the procedures described at the end of this letter. The information will be used to help us prepare a draft EIS. The draft EIS itself will be subject to a separate public comment period.

The BLM, Idaho Falls District, and Forest Service, Caribou-Targhee National Forest (the Agencies), will prepare this EIS to inform our decisions on the proposed Husky 1-North Dry Ridge Phosphate Mine and Reclamation Plan (MRP) submitted by Nu-West Mining, Inc. which does business as Agrium Conda Phosphate Operations (Agrium). The proposed mining would occur on existing Federal phosphate leases, as well as on off-lease areas located in Caribou County, Idaho, approximately 19 miles northeast of Soda Springs, Idaho (**Figure 1**). The EIS will evaluate the effects of the Project to the human environment including effects on area natural resources. Alternatives to the proposed action and the no action alternative will also be evaluated, as well as appropriate mitigation measures.

As the agency designated to manage federally leased minerals such as phosphate, the BLM is the lead agency in preparation of the EIS. Since the leases are primarily located on National Forest System lands (Soda Springs Ranger District), the Caribou-Targhee National Forest will act as the joint-lead agency. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) has statutory authority over surface water and groundwater and will be closely involved in the preparation of the EIS as a cooperating agency. IDEQ will provide technical and regulatory guidance to the project effort, particularly those portions relating to water quality. BLM and Forest Service will solicit information throughout the analysis process from other agencies including the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

#### PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose and need for the Agencies is to evaluate and respond to the MRP submitted by Agrium. Agrium proposes mining phosphate ore contained within Federal phosphate leases I-05549 (Husky 1), I-8289 (North Dry Ridge), and a portion of ID-04 (Maybe Canyon) as well as in areas north and south of the

Husky 1 lease and adjacent to the North Dry Ridge lease. Some non-extractive or ancillary activities are proposed on unleased parcels of National Forest System lands and private lands. Agrium seeks to exercise their right to develop their federal phosphate leases, in accordance with federal law and the terms of their leases, and to obtain the necessary approvals and permits to do so.

## **FEDERAL DECISIONS TO BE MADE**

The BLM and the Forest Service will make separate, but coordinated decisions related to Agrium's MRP for Husky 1-North Dry Ridge Mine. Both decisions will be based on the EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The BLM will decide whether to approve, approve with changes, or deny the proposed MRP. The BLM will also decide whether or not to approve the proposed lease modifications and will determine appropriate land use authorizations on leased lands. The Forest Service will make recommendations to the BLM concerning surface management on leased lands within the Caribou-Targhee National Forest including removal of vegetation and reclamation requirements. The Forest Service will make decisions on mine-related activities, such as topsoil stockpiles, proposed to occur off-lease within the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may also make decisions related to Federal permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

The MRP describes Agrium's detailed plans for open pit mining phosphate ore in two different areas (Husky 1 and North Dry Ridge) shown in **Figure 2**. These areas are separated by the historically operated, now inactive, Maybe Canyon Mine. Portions of the Maybe Canyon Mine are currently undergoing investigation and remediation through the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). It is anticipated that mining of the North Dry Ridge area will occur for the first 2.6 years, followed by approximately 11 years of mining on the Husky 1 deposit. Overburden (soil and rock overlying the phosphate deposits) must be removed in order to gain access to the phosphate ore. Initially, overburden from North Dry Ridge will be placed in the existing North Maybe Canyon pit as backfill, followed by overburden placement in the North Dry Ridge pit as mining progresses and room is made available. Overburden from Husky 1 would be placed in an external waste dump and into the existing South Maybe Canyon southern pit as backfill. As mining progresses through the Husky 1 deposit, overburden would be backfilled into the South Maybe Canyon pits, and backfilled into the Husky 1 pits. Phosphate ore mined from the pits would be transported in trucks via new haul roads to an existing haul road leading to the Maybe Canyon tipple, where it would be loaded onto rail cars for transport to Agrium's Conda Phosphate Operations Plant in Conda, Idaho.

Agrium proposes building new facilities to support the project, including a staging area, fuel storage area, dust suppression water wells, storm water retention ponds, haul roads, stockpile areas, and a train load-out facility (tipple). They also propose to use the existing shop and office facilities at the Dry Valley Mine. The MRP describes concurrent reclamation practices for the project, including backfilling pits as mining progresses, grading slopes, capping overburden disposal areas, re-establishing drainages, surface stabilization and revegetation.

Approximately 1051 acres on National Forest System and private lands could be impacted by the project. Potential impacts that will be analyzed in the EIS include: impacts to ground water and surface water quality from dissolved selenium and other metals (some of the overburden has naturally high levels of selenium); changes to groundwater and surface water quantity, uptake of contaminants by vegetation; loss of soil resources; changes to air quality; loss of wildlife (and fisheries) and their habitats; displacement of livestock grazing; impacts to wetlands; reduced opportunity for recreation; impacts to roadless areas; changes in soci-economics such as employment; reduced opportunity to implement Native American rights, treaties, and land uses; and changes to visual resources.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND SCHEDULE

The project objective is to prepare an EIS consistent with the NEPA to: (1) analyze and document the environmental and socioeconomic effects of the activities proposed in the MRP and alternatives to the proposed action; (2) evaluate, if necessary, mitigation measures to reduce site-specific environmental consequences; and (3) to inform agencies decisions related to the MRP. The tentative schedule is to release a draft EIS for public comment in January 2015 and publish a final EIS and Agency Records of Decision in Fall 2016.

The BLM and Forest Service will use and coordinate NEPA public participation to assist the agencies in satisfying public involvement requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Information about historic and cultural resources, including identification and evaluation of potential impacts and mitigation measures will be documented in the EIS. The BLM and the Forest Service will consult with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and other policies.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Agencies have arranged three public scoping open house meetings. You are invited to attend any of the scoping meetings. Agency representatives will be available to talk about the project and the EIS process and answer any questions you have. In addition, written and oral comments will be accepted at the public scoping meetings:

### **Wednesday September 5, 2012**

**7 – 9 pm**  
BLM Office  
4350 Cliffs Drive  
Pocatello, ID

### **Thursday September 6, 2012**

**7 – 9 pm**  
Soda Springs City Hall  
9 West 2nd South  
Soda Springs, ID

### **Friday September 7, 2012**

**4 – 6 pm**  
Shoshone-Bannock Hotel Event Center  
1-15 Exit 80, Simplot Road  
Fort Hall, ID

## HOW TO COMMENT

The BLM and Forest Service are seeking input and written comments from Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies as well as individuals and organizations who may be interested in, or affected by, the proposed project. To assist the agencies in identifying and considering issues and concerns related to the proposed Project, comments for scoping should be as specific as possible. Scoping comments will be used in: 1) identifying potential issues; 2) narrowing the potential issues and identifying key issues; 3) exploring alternatives in addition to no action and the proposed action; and 4) identifying potential environmental and social effects of the proposed Project.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments will be accepted. Comments should be postmarked on or before September 17, 2012. Please reference Husky 1-North Dry Ridge Mine EIS on all correspondence.

Send written and facsimile comments written to:

**Husky 1 – North Dry Ridge Mine EIS**  
**C/O Tetra Tech**  
**2525 Palmer Street, Suite 2**  
**Missoula, MT 59808**  
**Fax No: (406) 543-3045**

Send comments via email to: [BLM\\_ID\\_HUSKY1NDR\\_EIS@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_ID_HUSKY1NDR_EIS@blm.gov)

For further information contact:

Bill Stout  
BLM, Pocatello Field Office  
4350 Cliffs Drive  
Pocatello, ID 83204  
(208) 478-6367

Project-related information is also available at the BLM and Forest Service websites:

- BLM Website for NEPA documents Idaho

<http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/content/id/en/info/nepa.html>

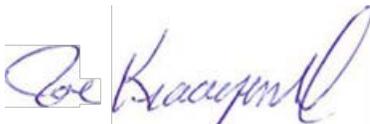
- Click on the link to the NEPA Register
- From the State list choose Idaho, from the Document Type list choose EIS and click on the Search button
- Click on the link to [DOI-BLM-ID-I020-2012-0047-EIS](#) next to the Husky1-North Dry Ridge Phosphate Mine Project Name

- Caribou-Targhee National Forest

<http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=37878>

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents will be available for public review at the BLM Pocatello Field Office and will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). They will be published as part of the EIS and other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name and/or address from public review or disclosure under the FOIA, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. The BLM will honor such requests to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, are available for public inspection in their entirety.

Sincerely,

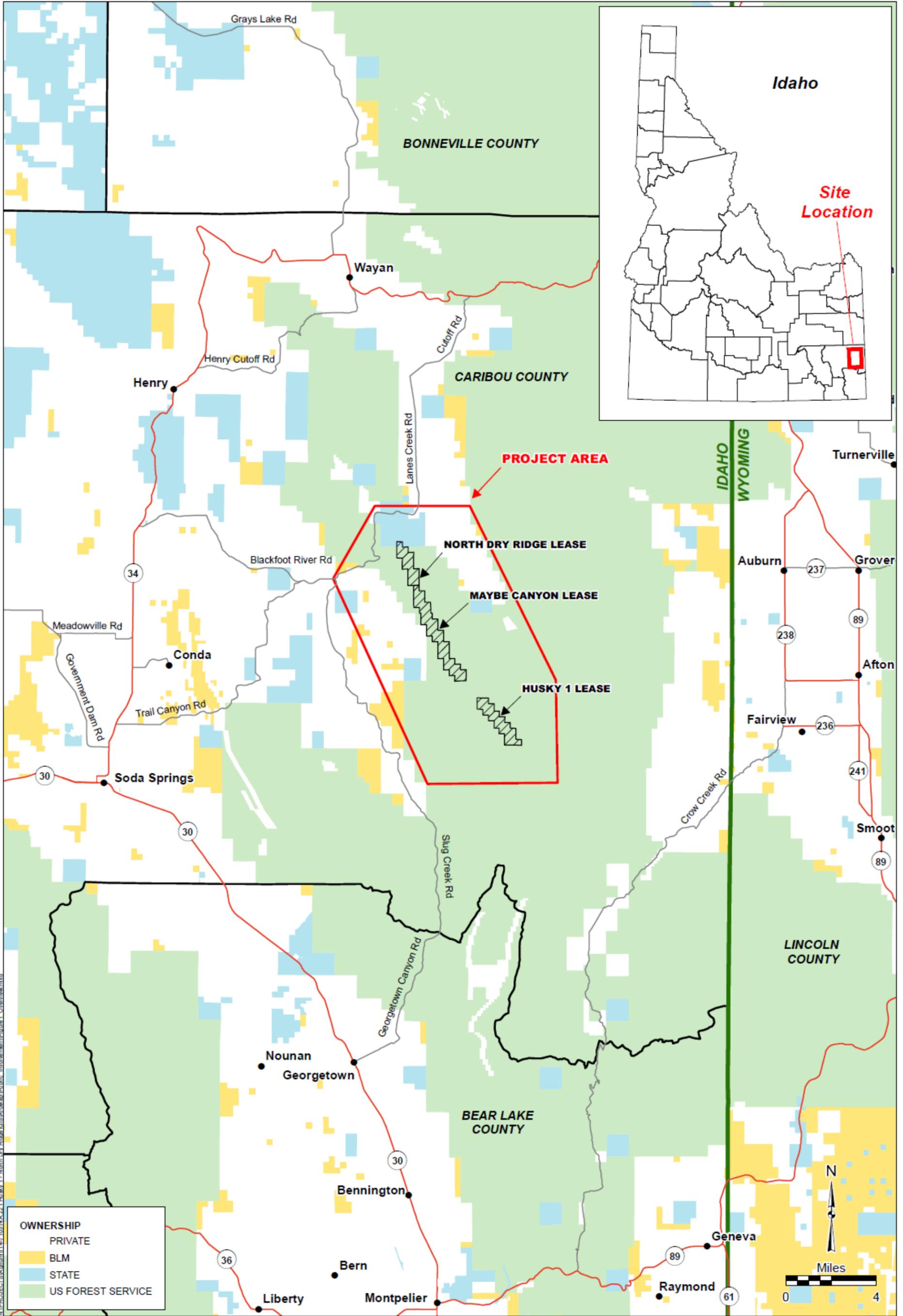


JOSEPH KRAAYENBRINK  
District Manager  
BLM, Idaho Falls District



BRENT LARSON  
Forest Supervisor  
Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Enclosures: Figure 1 – Project Location Map  
Figure 2 – Project Site Map



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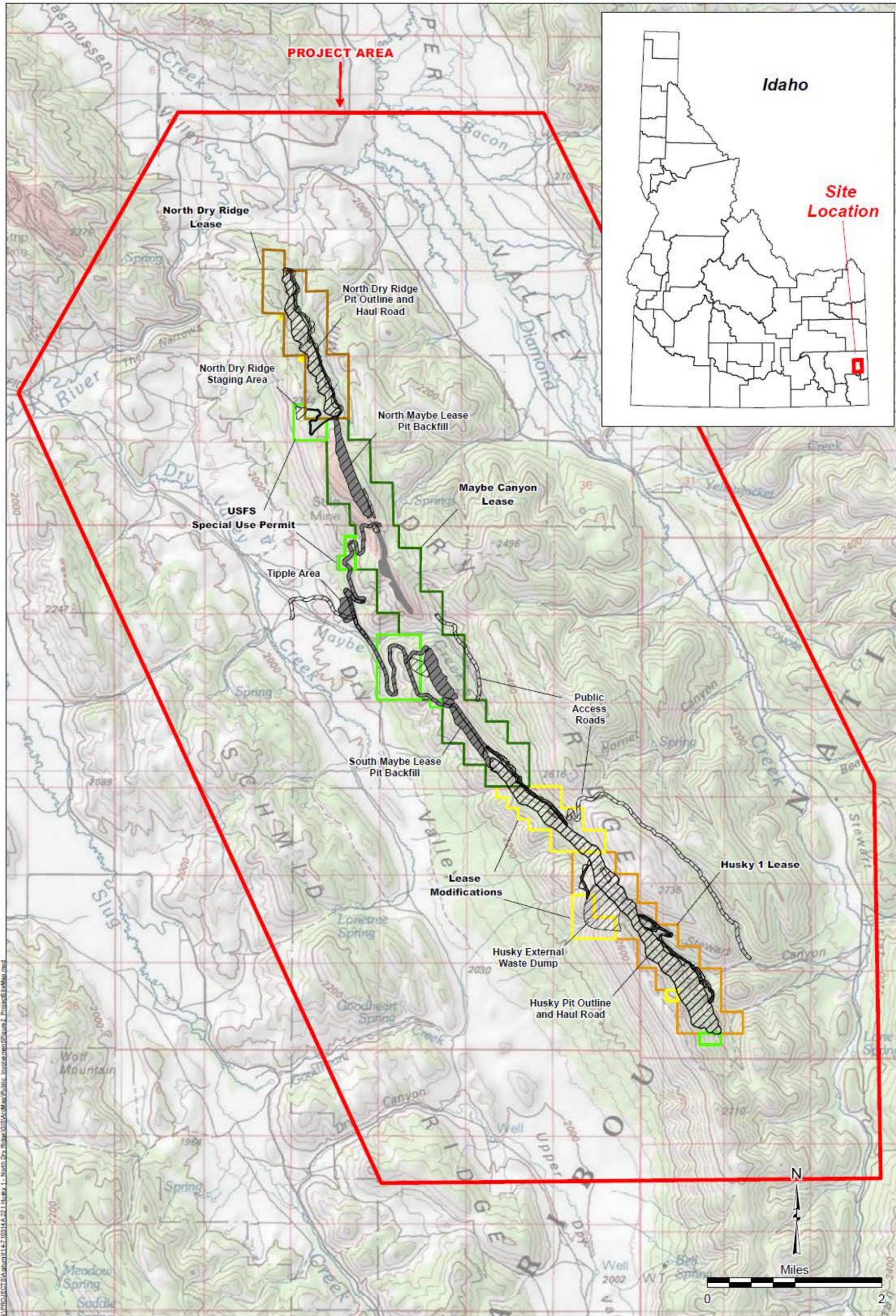
Figure 1

**Project Location Map  
Husky 1 - North Dry Ridge  
Caribou County, ID**

114-710314A



- City / Town
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Baseline Studies Project Area
- ▭ County Border
- ▭ State Border
- ▨ Agrum Lease Boundaries



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USGS 100K Topographic Map: Soda Springs - 1982

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Figure 2

**Project Site Map  
Husky 1 - North Dry Ridge  
Caribou County, ID**

114-710314A



- North Dry Ridge Lease
- Maybe Canyon Lease
- Project Area
- Special Use Permits
- Lease Modifications
- Husky 1 Lease Boundary
- Proposed Mine Disturbance Boundary
- Previous Mine Disturbance (based off of Orthoimagery)