

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Twin Falls District
Shoshone Field Office
400 West "F" Street
Shoshone, ID 83352

Categorical Exclusion Review and Decision

Project Name: Treasure Vault Mine Decline Closure

NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2012-0033-CX

Lead Preparer: Tom Askew

Project or Serial Number (if applicable): ID0054-00022

Project Description: Proposed closure of a dangerous mine decline that exists adjacent to the public road which goes through the Treasure Vault mine site. The decline is approximately 30 feet deep entering the ground at a 45° angle. The collar of the decline portal in approximately 18'X18' in size and is open providing unimpeded access by the general public and a danger for persons or animals frequenting the area to fall into the decline. This area is easily accessible and frequently used by hikers, bikers, and motorized vehicles for recreation and is readily accessible from the main road of travel in the area.

The decline feature is currently not opened to the main underground workings of the mine. This is due to collapsed materials in the decline walls forming a "bridge" which creates a "false floor". The decline is believed to still be interconnected to the main underground workings of the mine as evidenced by water which flows into the collar of the decline from meteoric events does not pond or fill up the opening. There is also evidence the materials around the collar of the decline are eroding into the lower workings without any significant accumulation of sediments. This situation is dangerous, as the materials which are now sealing the decline, may only be a very thin layer of debris and fill which could collapse and reopen the decline to the main underground workings of the mine. The vertical depth of this decline is reported in historic records as being approximately 200'.

In association with this decline portal is a historic wood framed "Tipple" (ore car dump) which is in jeopardy of being compromised and lost, due to the erosion of materials near and around the framework supports. The compromising of the support structure of this "Tipple" can not only cause the loss of this structure, but also become a physical hazard to site visitors as well.

The proposed project for this site is to close/infill the decline feature to the surface to prevent further erosion or potential access by the general public into this mine feature. The proposal would utilize a technique often termed "PUF-ing" (Poly-Urethane Foam) which consist of infilling the majority of the opening with an engineered poly-urethane foam material plug designed to be sufficient of holding the weight of a person or animal walking across the top of

the opening. The designed PUF plug would have approximately 3-4 feet of backfill of local waste rock materials placed on top of it to protect the foam materials from ultra-violet decay, weathering, burrowing animals, and/or wildland fires. The materials proposed to be utilized for the backfilling operations would come from the adjacent waste rock piles at the mine site.

In utilizing this type of closure there would be minimal disturbance to the area. It should not displace or disturb any plant or vegetation except for those in the immediate area of the decline portal. The backfill materials would come from waste pile located adjacent to the decline which is void of any vegetation. The closure would not disturb any historic structures at this site, but would stabilize the existing wooden “Tipple” head frame from erosional loss around its support foundation. It is unlikely that the decline opening is being currently used by bats due to the smooth concrete walls lining the upper portion of this decline, the relatively shallow nature of the opening, and it being exposed to full daylight during portions of the day. No evidence by visual inspection of this feature has indicated use by bats or their potential presences.

Project Location:

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Richardson Summit
UTM Coord: 481157 North 705976 East; Zone 11
T1N R17E Section 8 NW/SE
Boise Meridian
Blaine County, Idaho

Plan Conformance

The proposed action conforms to the terms, conditions and decisions of the Sun Valley Management Framework Plan (MFP) approved in 1981. Although the proposal is not specifically provided for under the plan, it complies with the purpose and intent of the plan. Recreation Objective R-7 provides for the “dispersed forms of recreation on all public lands in the planning area.” Extensive recreation has continued to increase throughout the area, and the proposal mitigates one of the potential hazards that may be encountered by the public. Lands Objective L-9 provides for “eliminating conditions that contribute to lowering public land quality.” The removal of the potentially hazardous conditions fulfills that objective.

Categorical Exclusion Reference

The action described above generally does not require the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), as it has been found to not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. The applicable Categorical Exclusion reference is found in 516 DM 112.5 H. Other (8), which allows for the installation of minor devices to protect human life (e.g. grates across mines). Categorical Exclusion reference 516 DM 11.5H. Other (10) also applies to the proposal. This reference states, “Removal of structures and materials of non-historical value, such as abandoned automobiles, fences, and buildings, including those built in trespass and reclamation of the site when little or no surface disturbance is involved.”

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1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>The project would have a positive impact on public health and safety by enhancing and improving protection of the general public from physical and other potential hazards that are being mitigated at these project sites.</i>
2. 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 (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>There are no areas specified as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness Study Areas, Monuments, and other areas with special designation. The proposed action will not occur in a floodplain or wetland area. The proposed actions would not significantly impact a floodplain or wetland area.</i>
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>There are no known controversies over environmental effects pertains specifically to disagreement over the nature of the impacts among those with special expertise. Controversy does not reflect the level of public concern, support or opposition for an action. The impacts of the action are well-known and demonstrated in other projects that have been implemented and monitored in the AML program such as the Kelly Gulch AML closure projects performed in the same general area.</i>

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>Categorically excluded actions generally have very predictable consequences well established as insignificant. The proposed project action impacts based on specialist analysis and other like AML projects would not create circumstances and unique or unknown environmental risks.</i>
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>The proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.</i> <i>The proposed action is not connected or does not have a direct relationship to other actions that would require further environmental analysis and would not set a precedent for future actions that would normally require environmental analysis.</i>
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>The proposed action would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</i> <i>The proposed action does not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</i>
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>The proposed action would not have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Historical Places as determined by either the bureau or office.</i> <i>A cultural resource survey was conducted for the project area in October 2011, with a determination that no eligible cultural resources would be affected by the proposed actions.</i>

<p>8. 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.</p>		
<p>Yes</p>	<p>No X</p>	<p>Rationale: <i>The proposed actions would not have a significant impact 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.</i></p> <p><i>The proposed actions at sites identified as potential habitat for bats are designed to preserve those habitats.</i></p> <p><i>A special animal species assessment was completed in September 2013 for the proposed project sites. It was determined that these proposed actions would not adversely impact any special status, including endangered or threatened, animal species or their habitat above current levels.</i></p>
<p>9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.</p>		
<p>Yes</p>	<p>No X</p>	<p>Rationale: <i>No Federal, State, Local or tribal laws would be violated or require the acquisition of special permits for the proposed work.</i></p>
<p>10. The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)</p>		
<p>Yes</p>	<p>No X</p>	<p>Rationale: <i>The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898). The effect would equally be the same as for the general population in the general area.</i></p>
<p>11. 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 (Executive Order 13007).</p>		
<p>Yes</p>	<p>No X</p>	<p>Rationale: <i>Consultation with tribes regarding Indian sacred sites must take place. The projects as proposed would not impede or interfere with 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 (Executive Order 13007)</i></p>

12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive 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 Executive Order 13112).

Yes	No	Rationale: <i>Introduction as well as spread of noxious weeds, non-native and invasive species within the area must be considered. All equipment to be utilized during the projects are to be cleaned prior to entering a site to ensure no introduction of spreading noxious weeds, non-native and invasive species. Any disturbed soil areas will be reclaimed and reseeded with an appropriate project seed mixture for the local area and soil types. The sites will be monitored for any potential future need to abate and control the spread of noxious weeds, non-native and other invasive species.</i>
	X	

Resource surveys and review of the potential impacts of the proposed action was completed by the following:

Tom Askew, Project Lead
 Gary Wright, Wildlife Biologist
 Lisa Cresswell, Archaeologist/Shoshone Field Office NEPA Coordinator
 Danelle Nance, Natural Resource Specialist

Environmental Coordinator: /s/ Lisa Cresswell Date: 11/19/13
 Lisa Cresswell
 Shoshone Field Office NEPA Coordinator

Approval and Decision

Based on a review of the project described above and field office staff recommendations, I have determined that the project is in conformance with the land use plan and is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis. It is my decision to approve the action as proposed, with the following stipulations (if applicable):

Authorized Officer: /s/ Elizabeth Maclean Date: 11/20/13
 Elizabeth Maclean
 Shoshone Field Office Manager