

ATTACHMENT A

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN DISTRICT/MOUNT LEWIS FIELD OFFICE**

DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2012-0059-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2012-0059-EA dated January 2013. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the Proposed Action with the project design features identified in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment; individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as described in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required as per section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2012-0059-EA has been reviewed through the interdisciplinary team process; as well as being sent to the Nevada State Clearinghouse and the public for a 30-day comment period. One comment letter was received containing two comments. These comments did not identify any significant new issues or concerns that warrant additional analysis. The comments did not result in any revisions to the EA; therefore, a second public comment period is not necessary. Copies of the comments and BLM responses are provided in Attachment B.

After consideration of the of the environmental effects of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) preferred alternative (the Proposed Action) described in the EA and the supporting documentation, it has been determined that the Proposed Action identified in the EA is not a major Federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of human environment.

It has been determined that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan and its amendments, and is consistent with the plans and policies of neighboring local, county, state, tribal, and federal agencies and governments. This finding and conclusion is based on my 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.

Context

The BLM, Mount Lewis Field Office (MLFO), has prepared an EA to analyze the impacts of conducting exploration-related activities at the Pleasant View Exploration Project (Project) by Halliburton Energy Services Inc. (HES) for the purpose of locating additional mineral resources from mining claims in the Project Area. In November 2011, HES submitted to the MLFO the Pleasant View Exploration Project Plan of Operations (Plan) and Reclamation Plan. The Plan

was assigned BLM case file number NVN-090457. The Plan was deemed complete on May 31, 2012. The Pleasant View Exploration Project (Project) is located approximately 14 miles southeast of the town of Battle Mountain, Nevada. The Project is located entirely on public lands administered by the BLM MLFO in all or portions of Section 2, Township 30 North, Range 46 East (T30N, R46E) and Section 34, Township 31 North, Range 46 East (T31N, R46E), Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (MDBM), Lander County, Nevada. The Project area encompasses approximately 698 acres.

The Proposed Action is to expand the Notice-level exploration activities on public lands that are currently being conducted under a Notice approved by MLFO (BLM case file number NVN-089501). This Notice would be vacated with the approval of the Plan and the remaining reclamation requirements under this Notice would be incorporated into the reclamation requirements of the Plan. The Proposed Action would be to conduct exploration activities, which would include construction of new exploration drill roads, pads, and sumps, improvement of existing and unreclaimed exploration roads, overland travel to some drill sites, and maintenance of existing access roads (within the Project Area). HES also plans to construct a laydown area on a previously disturbed area, remove an existing barite stockpile to a transfer site and then to an existing facility for processing, and reclaim the site.

Under the Proposed Action, HES proposes to conduct exploration related activities that will create approximately 41.3 acres of total surface disturbance over the three-year life of the Project. The 41.3 acres of disturbance includes 19.4 acres of new disturbance, 4.5 acres of existing Notice-level disturbance, and 17.4 acres of existing historic disturbance to be used and reclaimed by HES.

For a complete description of the proposed project, please refer to the EA, Section 2.1, Proposed Action.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations on implementing NEPA, the EA identifies, describes, and evaluates resource protection measures that would mitigate the possible impacts of the proposed project. The short and long-term impacts as disclosed in the EA are not considered to be significant to the human environment. The short-term impacts from implementation of the Proposed Action are local; they are not regional or national in nature. The long-term impacts resulting from the Proposed Action would be mitigated by ongoing reclamation during the life of the project and final reclamation upon completion of the project.

Intensity

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Potential impacts to the environment as identified in Chapter 3 of the EA include the following: potential for spread of noxious weeds and invasive non-native species within the Project Area; wetland/riparian sedimentation from nearby surface disturbance; temporary vegetation loss; temporary wildlife habitat loss and displacement due to project activities and human presence; potential release of hazardous, regulated materials, and drilling fluids; employment for up to 4 individuals per drilling crew who may be hired locally; a minor increase in local revenues from

lodging, goods and services utilized by the employees during exploration activities. Many of these impacts would be minimized by the Environmental Protection Measures as well as by the concurrent reclamation and other measures committed to by HES.

The EA identifies both Air Quality and Visual Resources as present but not affected by the Proposed Action. Travel on dirt roads and drilling within the Project Area have the potential to create fugitive dust and vehicle emissions. Fugitive dust would be controlled by minimizing surface disturbance and utilization of other environmental protection measures described in Section 2.1.12 of the EA. The potential impacts would be temporary and would cease upon completion of the project and successful revegetation of the Project Area.

The EA addresses visual resources in section 3.14. The impacts to visual resources by the proposed action would be short term. Successful reclamation of the site would minimize the linear contrasts with the natural landscapes caused by drill roads. The Project Area is located in an area designated as VRM Class IV and the project meets all of the requirements associated with that classification.

Impacts that would be avoided or minimized by operating and reclamation measures committed to by HES are presented in Chapter 2 and by the BLM operating and reclamation measures. Reclamation and revegetation of the project disturbance would gradually reestablish soils, vegetative cover and wildlife habitat. None of the environmental impacts disclosed above and discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA are considered significant.

Reclamation would be completed to the standards described in 43 CFR 3809.420 and Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 519A. Reclamation would meet the reclamation objectives as outlined in the United States Department of Interior Solid Minerals Reclamation Handbook #H-3042-1, Surface Management of Mining Operations Handbook H-3809-1, and revegetation success standards per BLM/Nevada Division of Environment Protection (NDEP) "Revised Guidelines for Successful Mining and Exploration Revegetation."

The No Action Alternative represents no change to the current management direction. Under the No Action Alternative, exploration activities in the Project Area would continue under the existing Notice approved by MLFO (BLM case file number NVN-089501).

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

The effects of the Proposed Action on both employees and public health and safety are considered to be positive. Compliance by HES with both BLM and NDEP mining regulations, along with compliance with the Mine Safety and Health Administrations' regulations would ensure employee and public safety.

Through adherence to resource mitigation measures, and Best Management Practices (BMPs), the Proposed Action would not result in potentially substantial or adverse impacts to public health and safety. Public safety would be maintained throughout the life of the Project. HES would commit to the following environmental protection measures to insure public health and safety:

- All equipment and other facilities would be maintained in a safe and orderly manner.
- Personnel working at the site would keep the occasional public out of operational area.
- All sumps and other small excavations that pose a hazard or nuisance to the public, wildlife, or livestock would be adequately fenced to preclude access to them.
- The Project would not use pesticides or herbicides, therefore would not pose a health or human safety risk.
- Existing roads within the project boundary that are disturbed during the proposed action would be reclaimed, by HES, to their pre-disturbance condition in order to provide continued public access through the area.
- Unpaved roads are well maintained and accommodate two-lane traffic to and from the project area.
- Trash and regulated wastes would be contained and hauled to an approved landfill.
- Portable chemical toilets would be used for human waste.
- Drill sites and storage yards would be located off of existing roads.
- Only nontoxic fluids would be used in the drilling process.
- Emissions of fugitive dust from disturbed surfaces would be minimized by utilizing appropriate control measures.

The project and its potential effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

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

The Project Area is located in the foothills of the Shoshone Mountain Range. The nearest town is Battle Mountain, Nevada, which lies approximately 14 miles northwest of the project area. There are no park lands, prime farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers in the vicinity.

There are no known cultural resources located within the Project Area. If a cultural site is located within the area of proposed disturbance, the identified cultural site(s) would be avoided.

In addition, the EA did not identify any significant impacts to unique species or their habitats that may occur in the Project Area.

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 highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment. The parameters of the exploration activities, along with associated reclamation of the drill holes, drill pads and sumps, roads, and ancillary facilities are well established. The Project Area is isolated from human habitations. Except for mining, mineral exploration and recreation, the Project Area is typically uninhabited. Battle Mountain, the nearest town, is 14 miles from the Project Area.

The reclamation should return the land to its pre-exploration uses of livestock grazing, mineral exploration, dispersed recreation, and wildlife habitat.

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 effects of the Proposed Action identified in the EA that are considered highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Exploration activities similar to what has been included in the Proposed Action have been conducted numerous times over many years on BLM-administered land and the effects are well understood. This is demonstrated through the effects analysis in Chapter 3 of the EA.

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 a future consideration. Completion of the EA does not establish a precedent for other assessments or authorization of other exploration projects including additional actions at the Pleasant View site. Any future projects within the area or in surrounding areas will be analyzed on their own merits, independent of the actions currently selected.

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

Direct and indirect impacts of the Proposed Action were analyzed in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) of the EA. None of the environmental impacts disclosed under item 1 above and discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA are considered significant. Past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions have been considered in the cumulative impacts analysis within Chapter 4 of the EA. The cumulative impacts analysis examined all of the affected resources and all other appropriate actions within the Cumulative Effects Study Area and determined that the Proposed Action would not incrementally contribute to any significant impacts. In addition, for any actions that might be proposed in the future, further site-specific environmental analysis, including assessment of cumulative impacts, would be required.

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 or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

The area of potential effect (APE) for this Project is defined as the 698-acre Project Area. A Class III cultural resource inventory of the entire APE was completed by P-III Associates in May 2011 and August 2012. Several isolated finds were documented. In summary, no unevaluated or NRHP-eligible sites were found.

HES has committed to avoid all known eligible and potentially eligible sites, as described in the Plan. There are no districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing

in the NRHP within the Project area. There are no significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources that would be lost or destroyed by the exploration project. If HES discovers any cultural or palcontological resource during project activities that might be altered or destroyed by operations, all project activities in the vicinity would be halted, the discovery would be left intact and reported to the authorized BLM officer.

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 (ESA) of 1973.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NNHP) and the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) were contacted to obtain a list of threatened and endangered and sensitive species that have the potential to occur within the Project Area. In addition, the BLM Sensitive Species List and Special Status Species (threatened and endangered) lists for the Battle Mountain District were evaluated.

The BLM and NDOW have identified that the pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) has the potential to occur within the Project Area. Seven sensitive raptor species are known to occur within the Project vicinity, which are: Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrines*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*), Ferruginous Hawks (*Buteo regalis*), Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*), and Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*).

Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) sign was noted in the project area although the Project Area is not within the currently delineated preliminary priority or general habitats.

Impacts to threatened and endangered and special status species or their habitat from the proposed action are analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4 of the EA. These impacts are expected to be minimal, based on the implementation of the design features outlined in Sections 2.1.12.

The action complies with the ESA, in that potential effects of this decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973, as amended.

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

The Proposed Action will not violate or threaten to violate any federal, state, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.


 Christopher J. Cook
 Field Manager
 Mount Lewis Field Office

2/4/2013
 Date