EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The following information is provided as a convenient synopsis for the public. However, this synopsis is not a substitute for review of the complete Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). If there are any inconsistencies between this Executive Summary and the DEIS, the DEIS controls.

BACKGROUND

Smoky Canyon mining and milling operations were authorized in 1982 by records of decision (RODs) issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the mine and reclamation plan (M&RP) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for related off-lease activities. The adjacent mine pits are referred to as Panels A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Mining operations began in Panel A in 1984. As mining progressed through each mine panel, mine and reclamation operations were reviewed and the environmental effects assessed under the National Environmental Policy Act. Mining operations are complete in Panels A, C, D, and E and those areas are currently undergoing reclamation.

The BLM and USFS published the Smoky Canyon Mine, Panels F and G Final Environmental Impact Statement (2007 FEIS; BLM and USFS 2007) and issued RODs in 2008 approving the M&RP for Panels F and G subject to special conditions. The potential impacts of the East overburden disposal area (ODA) expansion onto 18 acres of off-lease National Forest System lands were analyzed in the 2007 FEIS. However, at the time the 2008 RODs were issued, it was determined neither the BLM nor the USFS had the legal authority to approve the expansion. The BLM regulations were revised in 2009 to allow the modification of a lease for purposes of permanent disposal of overburden materials if specific criteria are met and, as anticipated by the 2008 BLM ROD, Simplot has applied for a lease modification to accommodate an East ODA expansion, which would allow for the maximum amount of ore to be recovered from their phosphate lease.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action consists of five distinct components:

- Modification of the existing M&RP to allow construction and operation of an ore conveyor system between Panel F and the mill,
- Modification of Lease IDI-01441 by 280 acres to accommodate the 160-acre expansion of the previously approved East ODA (Panel G),
- Increase of the on-lease disturbance area of the previously approved South ODA (Panel G) by 19.4 acres for the temporary storage of chert to be used for eventual reclamation of the Panel G pit,
- Utilization of a GCLL instead of the currently approved geologic store and release cover over the in-pit backfill and the East ODA (Panel G), and
- Implementation of on- and off-lease stormwater control measures associated with the GCLL.

ACTION ALTERNATIVES

Two Action Alternatives to the Proposed Action were developed and fully analyzed in this DEIS. Under both of the Action Alternatives, the Panel F ore conveyor system and South ODA portions of the Project would be the same as under the Proposed Action.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action with Mixed Cover

The only difference between Alternative 1 and the Proposed Action is the use of a mixed cover. Under Alternative 1, approximately 143 acres would be covered with a GCLL and 250 acres would be covered with the geologic store and release cover approved by the 2008 RODs.

Alternative 2: Reduced East ODA Expansion with a Mixed Cover

Under Alternative 2, the proposed Panel G lease modification area would be 240 acres and the size of the East ODA expansion would be reduced. The location of the disturbance would be within the footprint of the Proposed Action. During reclamation, approximately 138 acres would be covered with a GCLL and 257 acres would be covered with a geologic store and release cover.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the decisions from the 2008 RODs would continue to govern development of the phosphate resources of Panels F and G. The currently approved M&RP would be executed and Lease IDI-01441 would not be modified. Approximately 50 percent of the phosphate ore in Lease IDI-01441, previously considered economically recoverable, would not be mined since there would not be sufficient storage area for the associated overburden/waste rock disposal external to the Panel G pit. There would be no reduction in the duration of mining Panel G, and overall disturbance would remain essentially the same as that approved in the 2008 RODs. Ore mined from Panels F and G would continue to be delivered to the mill via haul trucks. The geologic store and release cover described in the 2007 FEIS and approved by the 2008 RODs would be used in reclamation of overburden storage to limit or prevent the potential release of contaminants to the environment.

AGENCY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Following their review of the environmental impacts as discussed in the DEIS, the BLM and USFS have identified Alternative 2: Reduced East ODA Expansion with Mixed Cover as their Preferred Alternative for this Project because this alternative:

- Reduces the size of the proposed lease modification area by 40 acres.
- Reduces the amount of new surface disturbance by approximately 46 acres.
- Reduces the amount of disturbance within the Sage Creek IRA by approximately 47 acres.
- Includes a GCLL for the 138-acre expansion of the East ODA for additional protection of water resources, and allows for an increase in GCLL coverage in the final decision to provide greater conservatism.

- Includes use of the previously approved geologic store and release cover for approximately 257 acres, which would be protective of water resources and result in a more natural appearance after reclamation.

The Agency Preferred Alternative would reasonably accomplish the purpose and need for the federal action, while giving consideration to environmental, economic, and technical factors. This action is responsive to public input for limiting the amount of GCLL to be used and for reducing the amount of new disturbance within IRAs. While the Agencies have identified Alternative 2 as the Agency Preferred Alternative, consideration given to public comments on this DEIS may result in changes to this alternative.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The environmental effects of the Proposed Action were evaluated and compared to the Action Alternatives in **Chapter 4** of this DEIS. A listing of the primary environmental impacts for the Proposed Action and the Action Alternatives are shown in **Table 2.8-1**. This DEIS tiers to the 2007 FEIS (BLM and USFS 2007) and uses as much information as possible from that document as applicable to the Project to be analyzed. The environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and Action Alternatives are summarized in the following narrative.

Geology, Minerals, Topography, and Paleontology

There would be no impacts to geology, minerals, or topography for the Panel F component of the Project as the majority of the conveyor system disturbance would occur within existing disturbance. With only approximately 8 acres of proposed new disturbance, potential impacts to paleontological resources would be negligible.

Under the Proposed Action, geology and mineral resources at Panel G would be directly affected by the development of the South and East ODAs through the relocation of overburden from the pit to these expanded ODA locations. This would be a long-term, major, and local impact on these resources, although the chert temporarily stored in the expanded South ODA would be used for reclamation. Impacts to topography from the ODA expansions would be considered major for the mining period and moderate when reclamation would blend most of the regraded area with the adjacent terrain. Effects to paleontological resources from the development of the ODAs and the stormwater features would be negligible. Fossils in the geologic units that would be disturbed are likely to be found throughout the region wherever similar units exist and not restricted to the Project Area. The potential for acid rock drainage would be the same or less than was analyzed in the 2007 FEIS.

Impacts to geology, minerals, topography, and paleontology would be the same for Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 as under the Proposed Action, although there would be slightly less disturbance under Alternative 2. The use of a GCLL or geologic store and release cover would have no measurable impact to these resources.

Air Resources and Noise

Air Resources. The majority of emissions that would be generated from the Proposed Action would be similar to those described and assessed in the 2007 FEIS and would be from fugitive (dust) and mobile equipment (tailpipe) sources. The air emissions would occur only during active operations and would be completely dispersed or deposited at the conclusion of operations. A

large percentage of the fugitive particulate emissions generated from construction of the ODAs and the Panel F ore conveyor system would settle out quickly near their point of generation. Intensity of the air emission impacts from the Project would be minor at the site-specific perspective and negligible at the local and regional perspective. Metal and other potential pollutants (i.e., selenium) that would make up a small percentage of the dust generated would be considered insignificant.

In regards to climate change, the Proposed Action would not represent an increase over anticipated levels for the previously approved mining of Panels F and G. The use of an ore conveyor system would result in a reduction in haul truck traffic that would reduce the amount of CO_2 annually.

Under Alternatives 1, the acreage of disturbance and equipment operation would be the same as the Proposed Action; therefore, impacts to air resources and climate change would be the same. This would also be the case for Alternative 2, except there would be 46 acres less disturbance which may slightly reduce the overall impacts.

Noise. No noticeable noise effects would be anticipated at current residences along the Crow Creek road from the Panel F ore conveyor system under any of the Action Alternatives. The Proposed Action at Panel G is not anticipated to introduce any increased noise from what was analyzed in the 2007 FEIS.

Under Alternative 1, the acreage of disturbance and equipment operation would be the same as the Proposed Action; therefore, impacts to noise would be the same. Under Alternative 2, new surface disturbance would be approximately 46 acres less which would slightly reduce the overall impacts.

Water Resources

Panel F. Under all Action Alternatives, the construction and use of an ore conveyance system between Panel F and the existing mill would have no more than a negligible effect on surface water quantity or quality, compared to the conditions predicted in the approved 2007 FEIS. There would be no additional impact to groundwater quantity or quality as a result of the construction and use of an ore conveyance system between Panel F and the existing mill, including the related ore stockpile and crusher, beyond the groundwater conditions predicted in the approved 2007 FEIS.

Panel G – Groundwater. The proposed Panel G component of the Proposed Action would change infiltration characteristics (and thus, groundwater recharge) compared to the approved Panel G M&RP because: 1) the proposed GCLL cover would reduce deep percolation through the seleniferous overburden, compared to rates predicted for the approved geologic store and release cover analyzed in the 2007 FEIS; and 2) the areal extent of seleniferous overburden in Panel G would increase under the Proposed Action. Specifically, the GCLL would cover approximately 392 acres, compared to the approximately 366 acres to be covered by the geologic store and release cover as analyzed in the groundwater model for the 2007 FEIS. The reduced recharge due to the GCLL (compared to the previously approved cover) would not be expected to have more than a negligible effect on the amount of groundwater storage within the localized area of the Wells Formation aquifer.

Components of the Proposed Action with the potential to impact groundwater quality are the increased seleniferous footprint and use of a GCLL instead of the approved geologic store and release cover. Because the proposed GCLL cover would allow approximately 44 percent of the recharge volume that was predicted for the approved geologic store and release cover, one would expect the same percentage effect on contaminant loading, and thus on final concentration in groundwater after mixing. This represents an improved effect over the 2007 FEIS in regard to groundwater quality beneath and down gradient of Panel G, including locations where groundwater discharges to the surface. The magnitude of this effect is likely to be long-term and minor to moderate.

Alternative 1 would have the same areal extent of seleniferous overburden as the Proposed Action, but two types of covers would be used. Of the total 392 acres that would be covered, 143 acres would be covered by a GCLL and 250 acres would receive the previously approved geologic store and release cover, which would increase recharge (almost double) and groundwater flow (by an estimated 8.5 feet) over the Proposed Action. This alternative would have a long-term, moderate decrease in groundwater quality, compared to the Proposed Action, beneath and down gradient of Panel G, including locations where groundwater discharges to the surface. Alternative 2 would have essentially the same effect on groundwater quantity and quality as for Alternative 1.

Panel G – Surface Water. Compared to the approved M&RP for Panel G, the Proposed Action would result in a greater disturbance area that would have runoff directed to stormwater control features (ponds and ditches), thus potentially incrementally reducing runoff that reaches Deer Creek and the Wells Canyon drainage and intermittent stream. This would likely result in a minor to moderate change in stormwater runoff flows in these two stream channels. Implementation of the proposed GCLL would have a negligible, long-term impact to surface water quantity in Deer Creek, Books Spring, and lower Crow Creek. Baseflow reduction may change due to long-term topographic alteration; however, the proportional net change to baseflows would likely be negligible. The Proposed Action disturbances would not cause the total amount of land in a hydrologically disturbed condition to rise above 30 percent in any of the affected HUC 5 or HUC 6 watersheds.

The Proposed Action effect on selenium concentrations in Deer Creek, Crow Creek east of Panel G, and Books Spring represents a measurable (improved) effect over the 2007 FEIS. The magnitude of this effect is likely to be long-term and minor to moderate. Another potential source of surface water quality impacts from Panel G disturbances would be due to release of eroded sediments into stream channels. However, the analysis in **Chapter 4** found that the Proposed Action would have no additional surface water quality impacts due to sediment releases.

Effects to surface water quantity would be essentially the same under Alternatives 1 and 2 as they would be under the Proposed Action. The selenium criterion would continue to be met in both Deer Creek and Crow Creek near Deer Creek, although concentrations are predicted to be slightly greater than they would be under the Proposed Action. Regarding surface water quality impacts from the potential release of eroded sediments into stream channels, impacts under Alternatives 1 and 2 would be identical to those described under the Proposed Action. Selenium concentrations under Alternative 2 are predicted to be somewhat greater than they would be

under the Proposed Action and slightly more than Alternative 1, although the selenium criterion would continue to be met.

Soils

Under all Action Alternatives, the Panel F ore conveyor system would result in new surface disturbance of approximately 8 acres, since the majority of the conveyor system would be constructed within previously mined out areas within Panel F and within the existing haul road. The Panel G portion of the Project would result in the new disturbance of approximately 161 acres of soil resources under the Proposed Action and Alternative 1. This represents an approximate 12 percent increase in the total amount of soil disturbance analyzed and approved in the 2007 FEIS. Under Alternative 2, new surface disturbance from the East ODA expansion and stormwater control features would be approximately 46 acres less than under the Proposed Action, which would result in slightly less overall impacts to soil resources compared to the Proposed Action or Alternative 1, but the types of impacts to soils would be the same. Growth medium would salvaged from disturbed areas and eventually used for reclamation under all Action Alternatives.

Vegetation

Under all Action Alternatives, the Panel F ore conveyor system would result in new surface disturbance of approximately 8 acres, since the majority of the conveyor system would be constructed within previously mined out areas within Panel F and the existing haul road. All new disturbance would occur within the aspen vegetation cover type.

Under The Proposed Action and Alternative 1, expansion of the South and East ODAs and development of the stormwater features would result in direct and indirect impacts to approximately 161 acres of vegetation resources. Areas reclaimed with a GCLL would never be allowed to reforest; this would be 392 acres for the Proposed Action and 143 acres for Alternative 1.

The direct impact from vegetation removal would be predominately long-term and within mainly aspen and aspen/conifer vegetation cover types. This represents an approximate 12 percent increase in the total amount of vegetation resources analyzed and approved for disturbance in the 2007 FEIS. The potential indirect impact of selenium accumulation in future vegetation communities growing on the reclaimed areas would be minimal. If accumulation were to occur, the impact to vegetation itself would be local, long-term, and negligible. No threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, or sensitive plant species are known or expected to occur in the Project Area based upon previous surveys and suitable habitat requirements. With the implementation of environmental protection measures, impacts from noxious weeds would be site-specific, short-term, and minor.

The same types of impacts would be anticipated under Alternative 2, but to 46 fewer acres. Approximately 138 acres (254 acres less than the Proposed Action) would be covered by the GCLL, which would only be reseeded with shallow-rooting species. Approximately 257 acres would receive a geologic store and release cover, which could be reseeded with deeper rooted species. This would eventually result in a more natural vegetation community than that described for the Proposed Action and Alternative 1.

Wetlands

No waters of the U.S., including wetlands, were identified within the Project Area for the Panel F ore conveyor system, thus there would be no impacts under any of the Action Alternatives. The Panel G portion of the Project would have a negligible impact (0.002 acres) to wetlands under all Action Alternatives. The existing U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit for the Panel G mining area would likely be amended to include this additional wetland impact or an applicable nationwide permit would be obtained.

Wildlife

The Proposed Action would disturb approximately 170 acres in a variety of habitats that are currently utilized by threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, or sensitive species and other wildlife. All disturbance would be within or immediately adjacent to existing mining activities associated with Panels F and G. The Panel F ore conveyor system would disturb approximately 8 acres of aspen habitat, within or immediately adjacent to mining activities. All wildlife crossing over the conveyor at the three crossing locations along the existing haul road would be at risk from vehicle collisions and predation due to the need to funnel the wildlife to one of the three crossing locations.

The Proposed Action at the Panel G area would disturb approximately 161 acres of wildlife habitat including approximately 150 acres of forest, 6 acres of mountain snowberry and sagebrush, and 5 acres of forbs.

Losses in forb/graminoid habitats would be short term. Disturbances in most habitats (i.e., conifer and aspen forest, mixed forest/brush, and shrub communities) would constitute long-term habitat losses, as these habitat types would not be allowed to reestablish on the area covered by the GCLL.

Preliminary determinations for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, or sensitive species and specific impacts to other wildlife species include the following:

- The Project May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect Canada lynx. Impacts to transient lynx would be site-specific, short-term, and minor.
- If the species is listed, the Project May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect greater sage-grouse as a candidate species.
- The Project would Not Likely Jeopardize the Continued Existence of North American wolverines.
- The Project would have No Impact on spotted bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, peregrine falcon, or boreal toad.
- Impacts to bald eagles and amphibians and reptiles would be site-specific, short-term, and negligible.
- Indirect impacts to boreal owls and flammulated owls would be site-specific, long-term, and negligible to minor.
- Impacts to Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, great gray owls, and three-toed woodpeckers would be site-specific, short- to long-term, and negligible to minor.
- Impacts to northern goshawks are expected to be site-specific, long-term, and minor to moderate.

- Neither peregrine falcon individuals nor suitable habitat for this species is known to occur within the analysis area, thus there would be no impact to this species.
- Impacts to gray wolves would be site-specific, short-term, and negligible to minor.
- Impacts to migratory birds, including neotropical landbirds, would be site-specific, short-term, and minor to moderate.
- Overall impacts to big game are expected to be site-specific, short- to long-term, and minor.
- Impacts to predators, raptors, and upland game birds would be site-specific, short-term, and negligible to minor.

Impacts to wildlife resources under Alternative 1 would be the same as those described for the Proposed Action. Impacts to wildlife resources under Alternative 2 would also be the same, with the exception that approximately 46 acres of habitat impacts would not occur. Use of a mixed cover under Alternatives 1 and 2 would not be expected to change impacts to wildlife resources from those described under the Proposed Action.

Fisheries and Aquatics

No impacts to intermittent and perennials stream channels or potentially suitable habitat for fisheries, amphibians, or aquatic resources would occur from the Panel F ore conveyor system.

Negligible impacts to surface water and groundwater from the Proposed Action are anticipated. The GCLL would be expected to reduce potential long-term impacts to the quality of potentially impacted water resources to an even greater extent than the previously approved geologic store and release cover. Thus, no impacts to Yellowstone cutthroat trout are expected from the Proposed Action. Aquatic influence zones would be impacted by components of the Proposed Action in and around the Panel G area. These impacts would be site-specific, long-term, and negligible to minor.

The substitution of a geologic store and release cover for a GCLL on approximately 250 acres under Alternative 1 would not affect the ability to meet water quality standards, so no associated impacts to fisheries and aquatics would be anticipated. As such, impacts to fisheries and aquatics under Alternative 1 would be the same as described under the Proposed Action.

Overall, impacts to fisheries and aquatics under Alternative 2 would generally be the same as described for the Proposed Action and Alternative 1. The location of the disturbance for Alternative 2 would be within the footprint of the Proposed Action, but there would be approximately 46 fewer acres of disturbance, including 1.8 fewer acres of impacts to aquatic influence zones.

Grazing Management

Under all Action Alternatives, there would be a minor impact to grazing due to reduction in suitable acreage and direct loss of animal unit months. Should the reduced animal unit months be shifted to another allotment, there would be a minor increase in the impacts of grazing on that allotment. Such a shift could only be accomplished if the gaining allotment were presently stocked below the authorized stocking rate and could accommodate additional animals. If the affected allotments have not been routinely grazed at the maximum stocking rate, or if reductions in the stocking rate would not be enforced, there would be no impact to grazing lease holders.

Once the Project Area has been reclaimed and forage is matured, use of the allotment reduced by the Project would be restored. Implementation of the GCLL would be expected to permanently increase the area available for grazing because that area would not be allowed to reforest.

Impacts to grazing under Alternative 1 would be the same as described under the Proposed Action, except 250 acres would be covered by a geologic store and release cover instead of a GCLL. Impacts to grazing under Alternative 2 would be similar to those described for the Proposed Action, except there would be 46 acres less disturbance overall and 257 acres would receive a geologic store and release cover rather than a GCLL. Under Alternatives 1 and 2, the geologic store and release cover would be revegetated with deeper rooted species, thus the amount of forage would not be increased as much as under the Proposed Action in the long term.

Recreation and Land Use

Recreation. The Panel F ore conveyor system would cross an area surrounded by mining-related development and result in the isolation of small areas from the recreational land base. This would result in negligible impacts to recreation because the recreational experience in these areas is already diminished by the surrounding mining activities.

The ODA expansions and stormwater control features in Panel G would remove these areas from the recreation land base for the life of the Project. Given the surrounding available recreation resource, impacts from temporary restriction of these areas from the recreation land base due to the Proposed Action would be minor.

Short-term impacts to recreation under the Action Alternatives would be the same as described under the Proposed Action. Under Alternatives 1 and 2, the area covered by a GCLL would be reduced by substituting a geologic store and release cover on portions of seleniferous overburden. The geologic store and release cover would eventually host a more diverse vegetation community, including trees and shrubs, and would ultimately blend in better with surrounding areas. As such, the recreational value of these areas in the long term would be higher than those covered by the GCLL. Alternative 2 would result in approximately 46 acres of less disturbance to the recreation land base in the vicinity of Panel G.

Land Use. Under the Proposed Action, the Panel F ore conveyor system would cross lands designated as Management Prescription 5.2, Vegetation Management. The area that would be impacted by the conveyor system contains suitable timber, and suitable timber within Prescription 5.2 contributes to allowable sale quantity. Suitable timber, a portion of which contributes to the allowable sale quantity, would be cleared for temporary (short-term) construction access and for the conveyor system route (long-term). Because of the extremely small amount of acreage impacted, the Proposed Action would have a negligible impact on Management Prescription 5.2, aspen-conifer suitable timber, and to the allowable sale quantity for the life of the Project.

Under the Proposed Action, the Panel G portion of the Project would impact lands with Management Prescription 6.2, Rangeland Vegetation Management, and disturb suitable timber; however, suitable timber within Prescription 6.2 does not contribute to the allowable sale quantity. Under the Proposed Action, the lease expansion area would be converted from Prescription 6.2 to Prescription 8.2 and suitable timber would be cleared. Reforestation of reclaimed surfaces would not be implemented in areas covered by the GCLL. Therefore, the

GCLL would have a long-term impact on suitable timber, and that area could not contribute to the allowable sale quantity. Because of the relatively small amount of acreage impacted, the Proposed Action would have a minor impact on Management Prescription 6.2, suitable timber, and to the ASQ for the life of the Project.

Impacts to land use under the Action Alternatives would be similar to those described under the Proposed Action. Under Alternatives 1 and 2, the area covered by a GCLL would be reduced by substituting a geologic store and release cover on approximately 250 and 257 acres respectively, of seleniferous overburden. Use of a geologic store and release cover would result in less of a long-term adverse impact on suitable timber because the reseeding and planting islands of diversity may eventually lead to growth of suitable timber, whereas the area covered by the GCLL would never be allowed to reforest.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

Within the Project Area, the Sage Creek and Meade Peak Roadless Areas are designated as General Forest Theme. Phosphate mining is an allowable use under this theme, where the lands are expected to provide a variety of goods and services as well as a broad range of recreational opportunities and conservation of natural resources. During active mining, as authorized for Panels F and G, the Project Area would not be available for recreation, grazing, or timber production. Upon completion of active mining and reclamation, the Project Area would again be available for multiple uses under the General Forest Theme.

Impacts to certain wilderness attributes of the affected Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) would be degraded by the Project and return to a stable condition post-reclamation. The Proposed Action would affect the Sage Creek Roadless Area portion of the Project Area suitability for wilderness designation due to the noticeably modified nature of the area after reclamation and the requirement to maintain the area covered by the GCLL free of trees. Overall impacts to the wilderness attributes of the Sage Creek and Meade Peak Roadless Areas within the Project Area would be short- and long-term and minor because of the relatively small portion of the IRAs affected by the Project.

Because of the relatively small proportion of the Sage Creek and Meade Peak Roadless Areas that would be impacted by the Project, the overall impacts to the roadless characteristics of the both IRAs within the Project Area would be short-term and minor. Overall long-term impacts to roadless characteristics of both IRAs were judged to be negligible because most characteristics would be stable after reclamation.

Compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule for the Sage Creek Roadless Area under the Action Alternatives would be the same as described for the Proposed Action. Impacts to wilderness attributes and roadless characteristics within the SCRA would be similar to those described for the Proposed Action; however, under Alternatives 1 and 2, a geologic store and release cover would be substituted for the GCLL on approximately 250 and 257 acres respectively. Compared to areas covered with a GCLL, the geologic store and release cover would eventually host a more diverse vegetation community, including trees and shrubs, and would thus be more likely to resemble the surrounding natural vegetation scheme. As such, there would be a lower level of impacts to wilderness attributes and roadless characteristics from the Action Alternatives compared to the Proposed Action.

Compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule, impacts to wilderness attributes, and impacts to roadless characteristics within the Meade Peak Roadless Area under the Action Alternatives would be the same as the Proposed Action. This is because the disturbance location and acreage of the South ODA in the Meade Peak Roadless Area would be the same under all Action Alternatives.

Visual and Aesthetic Resources

Project disturbance would be viewed in the context of other surrounding mining activities and disturbance as viewed from any vantage point. During daylight hours, the Panel F conveyor system would blend with the surrounding activity and disturbance, and may not be distinguishable as an addition to the existing mining disturbance. The conveyor system would be lit at night and, depending on the angle of view, would appear as an even series of lights or blend to appear as one bright light. Overall impacts to visual resources from the Panel F portion of the Project under all Action Alternatives would be negligible to minor as the conveyor system would be viewed in the context of existing mining disturbance that has had a major impact on visual resources, does not meet the visual quality objectives, and occurs in an area of low scenic integrity.

Under the Proposed Action, the East ODA expansion would slightly expand the area of disturbance that would be visible as a result of the mining activities approved by the 2008 RODs. This would make the disturbance slightly more noticeable than with the No Action Alternative. During mining of Panel G, the East ODA disturbance would grow over time. Activity associated with the Proposed Action would not be noticeable during daylight hours, although dust columns may be perceptible. The glow of lights or intermittent headlights may be visible at night. Overall impacts to visual resources from the Panel G portion of the Project would be minor as viewed in the context of other approved mining activities, which were found by the 2007 FEIS to have a major impact on area visual resources, to not meet the visual quality objectives for the area, and to result in low scenic integrity. In the long term, the area covered by the GCLL would never be allowed to reforest and would not resemble its pre-disturbance vegetation scheme. As the natural contours could never be fully restored, differences in topography may always be noticeable to a certain degree.

The acreage and the height of the disturbance under Alternative 1 would be the same as described for the Proposed Action. Visibility of the Project and all other aspects of impacts to visual resources would be the same for Alternative 1 as the Proposed Action, except for those related to the mixed cover. The geologic store and release cover would cover 250 acres and would be revegetated with deeper rooted species including shrubs and trees; therefore, it would appear more natural and consistent with the surroundings than the GCLL, which would never be allowed to reforest. As such, impacts to visual resources under Alternative 1 would be somewhat less than those described for the Proposed Action.

Compared to the Proposed Action, Alternative 2 would result in 46 acres less disturbance associated with the East ODA. The area covered by a GCLL would be less than under the Proposed Action; however, the GCLL would cover the entire area of the East ODA, which is the area most visible from the eastern viewpoint along Trail 103. Overall, impacts to visual resources would be less under Alternative 2 compared to the other Action Alternatives because fewer acres would be disturbed, fewer acres would be covered with a GCLL, and the area of eliminated impacts is visible from the eastern viewpoint along Trail 103.

Cultural Resources

No cultural resource sites are located within the Panel F portion of the Project Area, thus there would be no impacts to eligible cultural resources from the ore conveyor system under all Action Alternatives. Two historic sites are present in the Panel G portion of the Project Area; however, neither are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and these sites do not require further management. No prehistoric sites were found. Despite the fact that there would be 46 acres less disturbance under Alternative 2, impacts to cultural resources would not be reduced or avoided. Therefore, impacts to cultural resources would be the same under all Action Alternatives.

Native American Concerns and Treaty Rights Resources

None of the Action Alternatives would impact land status, tribal historical/archaeological sites, rock art, sacred sites, socioeconomics, environmental justice, or air quality associated with Treaty Rights. Beneficial impacts to water resources would be expected from implementation of the GCLL. Adverse impacts to resources of concern or associated with Treaty Rights under the Proposed Action and Alternative 1 would be negligible to minor. Under Alternatives 1 and 2, substitution of a geologic store and release cover for the GCLL on approximately 250 and 257 acres respectively would not affect the ability to meet water quality standards, and no additional impacts to fisheries would be anticipated. Because Alternative 2 would disturb 46 fewer acres than the Proposed Action or Alternative 1, overall impacts to Native American concerns and Treaty Rights resources would be slightly less than under the other Action Alternatives.

Transportation

Because the Panel F ore conveyor system would not impact any public access routes, it would have no impact on public transportation. The conveyor would not affect employment at the mine, and thus would not result in indirect impacts to transportation on public access routes in the area surrounding the mine.

Under all Action Alternatives, access to Panel G would occur along the previously approved haul road. As a result, there would be no new impacts to transportation from Project activities at Panel G beyond those previously analyzed in the 2007 FEIS. There would be no traffic associated with the any of the Action Alternatives to the Panel G area via Crow Creek Road or the Wells Canyon Road. Use of the mixed cover under Alternatives 1 and 2 and the reduction in disturbance under Alternative 2 would not affect transportation.

Social and Economic Resources

Employment at the mine would not change under any of the Action Alternatives or No Action Alternative.

Property values along Crow Creek Road may be affected by the Proposed Action due to perceived changes in the environment of the Project Area, as the Proposed Action could affect some of the areas' characteristics/amenities that subjectively affect property values (i.e., noise, visual, recreation). These impacts may be positive or negative and may change over time as desired property characteristics change. Most of the expected disturbance related to the Proposed Action would be approximately two miles or more from the Crow Creek Valley area.

The Proposed Action would result in continued economic benefits to Bannock, Caribou, and Power counties in Idaho, and Lincoln County, Wyoming, in the form of royalty payments and property taxes. These payments would be estimated to remain unchanged under the Proposed Action. However, under the No Action Alternative, royalty payments may be reduced as approximately 50 percent of the phosphate ore in Lease IDI-01441would not be mined.

The Proposed Action would not result in impacts to land ownership, population, demographics, personal income, local infrastructure, local government finances, agricultural economics, the phosphate industry, property taxes, or mine profits taxes beyond those described in the 2007 FEIS because mine and plant production would not change from that evaluated in the 2007 FEIS. The continuing ore supply to the Pocatello fertilizer plant would be as described in the 2007 FEIS.

Impacts under Alternatives 1 and 2 would be the same as the Proposed Action because neither use of a mixed cover under the alternatives nor the reduction of disturbance under Alternative 2 would affect socioeconomics.

Under the No Action Alternative, when the economically viable phosphate resource is ultimately exhausted, the total lifespan of mine operations at the Smoky Canyon Mine and production of phosphate at the Don Plant would be reduced due to the amount of ore not mined from Panel G, potentially resulting in adverse long-term indirect impacts.

Environmental Justice

Impacts to environmental justice would be the same under all Action Alternatives. While there are individual households that are either minority or low income, the communities of Afton and Fairview in Wyoming and the loose community of ranchers along Crow Creek Road as a whole are not considered environmental justice communities. Members of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, based in Fort Hall, Idaho, have reserved Treaty Rights to utilize federal lands in the Project Area for hunting, fishing, and gathering. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes represent both a population (readily identifiable collection of persons) and a community (readily identifiable social group who reside in a specific locality, share government, and have a common cultural and historical heritage) that could be affected under environmental justice. Analysis contained in **Chapter 4** of this DEIS determined that this Project would not cause disproportionately high and adverse effects on any minority or low-income populations as per EO 12898 regarding environmental justice.

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