

Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management

OFFICE: *Lower Sonoran Field Office (LSFO)*

NEPA/TRACKING NUMBER: *DOI-BLM-AZ-P020-2013-0023-DNA*

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: *AZA-36178*

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: *Big Nob Mineral Material Sale*

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: *T. 7 S., R. 2 E., Section 1, G&SR, Pinal County, Arizona*

APPLICANT (if any): *S & T Hotsprings, LLC*

A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures

The current operator, S & T Hotsprings, LLC requests a new mineral material sales contract for removal of 250,000 tons of weathered granite over a term of 5 years. This is an existing pit located on split estate lands with surface ownership by the State of Arizona. Operations have been taking place at the site under several negotiated sales contracts since 1989. Production is from two quarries; a north pit mined for red colored granite, and a south pit, which is mined for gold colored granite. Proposed operations will be consistent with mining activities currently taking place at the site. Surface use is authorized by the State Land Department under Special Land Use Permit No. 23-115876-04, with a total permitted acreage of 63.07 acres. Disturbance area remains within approved operating area as defined in AZ-020-99-106.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: *Lower Sonoran and Sonoran Desert National Monument Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan*

Date Approved/Amended: **9/15/2012**

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Page 2-70: MM-1.1.12: "All BLM-administered lands not recommended for withdrawal or segregated from minerals actions will be open to discretionary mineral materials

disposal via sales or free-use permits on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with resource management objectives”.

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Bureau of Land Management Phoenix Field Office Environmental Assessment AZ-020-99-106, dated January 2000.

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

- 1. Is the proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the exiting NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?**

The proposed action and geographic area is the same, as that analyzed in Environmental Assessment AZ-020-99-106.

- 2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?**

Yes, proposed action is consistent with actions previously analyzed and reviewed in Environmental Assessment AZ-020-99-106.

- 3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, and updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

Yes, the proposed action is consistent with actions previously analyzed and reviewed in Environmental Assessment AZ-020-99-106. Sections that were not addressed in the above referenced EA are as follows:

Visual Resource Management Inventory Class - the lands described in this action are classified as VRM Class IV in the “Lower Sonoran Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (Plan), September 2012”. Management objectives as described on page 3-34 of the Plan, indicates VRM Class IV allows for “modification of the landscape character where changes may subordinate the original composition and character”. As a result, no impacts are expected to Visual Resources.

Air Quality – An Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Air Quality

Control General Permit #56312 is in place and on file. This permit was issued April 23, 2012, for a period of five years; expiration date is set at April 23, 2017.

Wildlife/Threatened and Endangered Species – The quarry site is located approximately 27 miles northwest of a known Lesser Long-Nosed Bat roost site, for which a 40 mile foraging habitat buffer has been established. In addition, columnar cactus densities within the site are relatively low (approx. less than 15/acre). A combination of these two factors indicates low forage habitat quality in the area associated with the quarry. Sonoran Desert Tortoise (SDT) habitat is not located within the project site, but is within 1.25 miles of Category 2 habitat. This distance is buffered by a creosote flat, which has been fragmented by roads and residential development. Authorization of a new 5 year contract is expected to have a “No Effect” on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed or BLM sensitive species or habitat.

Wilderness – As described in EA-AZ-020-99-106, the subject lands are approximately 3 to 5 miles north of the Table Top Wilderness area. No newly inventoried wilderness areas or areas with wilderness characteristics have been identified within or near the project area. No impacts to wilderness resources are expected.

National Energy Policy – The National Energy Policy requires an evaluation of access limitations to Federal lands in order to increase energy production. The Proposed Action is not an energy exploration or development project and has no impact on potential oil and gas exploration and development, as the area is generally unsuitable for those actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would have no effect on the National Energy Policy.

Cultural Resources – Two separate cultural resources surveys were performed as defined in EA-AZ-020-99-106. A comparison of the previous survey boundaries with satellite imagery indicated a small area outside the northwest section of the North Pit, as well as an area adjacent to the southeast section of the South Pit were not adequately covered. A cultural resources pedestrian survey of these two areas was performed in July, 2013 by a BLM staff archaeologist. Results of this survey yielded one small isolated artifact located within the northwest survey section. No cultural resource sites were observed within or near the new survey areas. No impacts to any significant cultural resources are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Action.

Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes, the direct and indirect impacts of the current proposal are substantially unchanged. Proposed activities are a continuation of those previously covered in Environmental Assessment AZ-020-99-106. No new areas are affected.

4. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA documents(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Public involvement and interagency review associated with the existing NEPA document includes all know interested parties and is believed adequate for the proposed action.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Resource/Agency Represented</u>
Karen Conrath	Geologist	Lower Sonoran Field Office
Cheryl Blanchard	Archaeologist	Lower Sonoran Field Office
Andrea Felton	Natural Resource Specialist, Range	Lower Sonoran Field Office
Ronald Tipton	Wildlife Biologist	Lower Sonoran Field Office
Dave Scarborough	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Sonoran Desert National Monument
Kelly Shepard	General Manager	S. & T. Hotsprings, LLC

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents

CONCLUSION:

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

_____/S/_____
Karen Conrath, Geologist, Lower Sonoran Field Office

_____/S/_____
Leah Baker, Planning & Environmental Coordinator

_____/S/_____
Edward Kender
Acting Lower Sonoran Field Office Manager

_____**08/30/2013**_____
Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.