

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: Colorado Gulch Area Abandoned Mine Closures

NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2013-0020-CX

Lead Preparer: Tom Askew

Project or Serial Number (if applicable):

Project Description: Proposed closures of nine (9) dangerous mine openings that exist in areas easily accessible to the public. The features located in the proximity of the Colorado Gulch general area, near Hailey and Bellevue, Idaho, vary in size and configurations. These features consist of physical openings into unmaintained underground mine workings and take the forms of seven (7) open portals and two (2) vertical shafts. The features represented in this document are open providing unimpeded access by the general public and are a danger for persons or animals frequenting the area to fall into or enter into dangerous mine workings. These features in the Colorado Gulch area are easily accessible and are located in areas frequently used by hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and motorized vehicles for recreation. All of these are readily accessible by the general public from the main roads of travel in the area.

In association with these features are various historical structures and objects which are associated with the past mining industry of the area. Some of these structures have declined in integrity and have themselves become physical hazards to site visitors as well. Each site is to be evaluated individually as to whether it is feasible to save these structures or if they need to be removed due to the risk of injury to site workers and the general public.

The proposed projects for the locations listed below will utilize a number of different techniques to close/infill the open portal and shaft features. This will be done in an attempt to prevent future erosion or potential access by the general public into these mine features. The three types of closure techniques being proposed for these features are based on the factors of what is suitable for engineered effectiveness of the closure for type of opening and its characteristics, whether individual feature closures should be constructed to preserve potential animal habitat, and or to strengthen, protect, and preserve existing historical features and structures.

The two types of closures being proposed for these individual sites are as follows with a brief description of each type of closure. The first type of closure utilizes 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. These plugs are designed to be of sufficient

volume and strength to hold 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. PUF can be utilized for horizontal, angled, or vertical openings.

The second type of closure that will be utilized on select opening is known as grating or gating. This technique utilizes the construction of “bat friendly” gates and grates from steel materials that prevents the entrance into the mine opening by people, but allows animals access to the underground workings for use as habitat.

Utilizing these types of closures allows for minimal disturbance to the area. Displacement or disturbance to any plants or vegetation, with exception of those in the immediate adjacent area of the feature being closed, should be minimal to non-existent. The closures, where possible, would not disturb any historic features/structures at these sites, with the exception of failing structures which would be more dangerous to leave on site to onsite workers and/or the general public visiting those sites.

Project Locations and Proposed Closure Technique for their Features:

Site Name: Liberty Gem Mine

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Mahoney Butte

UTM Coord: 4814692 North 707241 East; Zone 11

T2N R17E Section 33 SW/SW

Boise Meridian

Blaine County, Idaho

There are two open shafts at this site. Both shafts have historic wooden head frame features associated with them. One headframe is stable and good shape on the southernmost shaft, while the northernmost shaft has been destabilized by erosion of the collar of the shaft and has collapsed into the hole. For the southernmost shaft, this one will be closed utilizing a steel grate system to cover the opening of the shaft. The grate will allow the utilization of the shaft by small wildlife and also fluctuating groundwater levels to flow out during periods of high water tables in the area. This grate system will be placed below the historic headframe structure preserving this feature.

The northernmost shaft will be closed utilizing an engineered PUF plug and native material backfill. This shaft also has a historic headframe over it, but has been compromised by erosion of the collar of the shaft and has fallen into the shaft. These structure remnants will be removed and an attempt to salvage historic items associated with it will be made. The removal of these materials associated with this headframe from the shaft will be necessary in order to successfully construct a PUF plug and backfill the shaft.

There is little to no vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.25 Acres from the proposed project closures at this site.

Site Name: Mineral Hill District #63

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Hailey
UTM Coord: 4817993 North 716588 East; Zone 11
T2N R18E Section 28 NE/NW
Boise Meridian
Blaine County, Idaho

There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing a steel “bat friendly” grate system. The grate will allow the utilization of the shaft by small wildlife and groundwater to flow out during periods of high water tables or recharge in the local area. This grate system will be pre-fabricated approximately 6’ back into a large culvert system. This system will then be pushed back into the mine opening and backfilled around utilizing a combination of PUF and local materials immediately adjacent to the portal.

There is little to sparse vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.1 acres from the proposed project feature closure at this site.

Site Name: Mineral Hill District #64

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Hailey
UTM Coord: 4818122 North 716733 East; Zone 11
T2N R18E Section 21 SW/SW
Boise Meridian
Blaine County, Idaho

There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing an engineered PUF/Backfill system. This technique was chosen to be utilized on this feature due to the adit either being mostly to all the way collapsed and/or the opening being a small prospect workings that is less than sixty (60’) feet in length and not conducive to being habitat to bats.

There is little to sparse vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed. The only disturbance of vegetation would be those directly adjacent to the portal itself.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.1 acres from the proposed project feature closure at this site.

Site Name: Mineral Hill District #60

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Hailey

UTM Coord: 4818431 North 715973 East; Zone 11

T2N R18E Section 20 SE/SE

Boise Meridian

Blaine County, Idaho

There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing an engineered PUF/Backfill system. This technique was chosen to be utilized on this feature due to the adit either being mostly to all the way collapsed and/or the opening being a small prospect workings that is less than sixty (60') feet in length and not conducive to being habitat to bats.

There is little to sparse vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed. The only disturbance of vegetation would be those directly adjacent to the portal itself.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.1 acres from the proposed project feature closure at this site.

Site Name: Snoose Mine (Upper) A1 and A2 portals

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Hailey

UTM Coord: 4818482 North 716621 East; Zone 11

T2N R18E Section 21 NW/NW

Boise Meridian

Blaine County, Idaho

The A1 Portal Closure:

There is one open portal to a decline at this site. There had been an attempt to close and backfill this opening in 2006 which is now failing and eroding back into the decline. The work being proposed for this closure is in maintenance of the prior closure. This decline will now be closed utilizing an engineered PUF/Backfill system. This technique was chosen to be utilized on this feature due to the adit either being mostly to all the way collapsed and/or the opening being a small prospect workings that is less than sixty (60') feet in length and not conducive to being habitat to bats.

There is little to sparse vegetation within the immediate boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed. The only disturbance of vegetation would be those directly adjacent to the portal itself.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.1 acres from the proposed project feature closure at this site.

The A2 Portal Closure:

There is one open portal at this site. This portal had previously been closed utilizing a “bat friendly” gate in 2006 by BLM. Due to the failure of the hillside this gate is now compromised and can be easily breached by a member of the public to gain access into the old mine workings. This portal will be closed utilizing the construction of a culvert “bat friendly” gate system. This technique was chosen to be utilized on this feature due to The grate will allow the utilization of the shaft by small wildlife and groundwater to flow out during periods of high water tables or recharge in the local area. This gate system will be pre-fabricated approximately 6’ back into a large culvert system. This system will then be pushed back into the mine opening and backfilled around utilizing a combination of PUF and local materials immediately adjacent to the portal.

There is sparse vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.10 acres from the proposed project feature closure at this site.

Site Name: Mineral Hill District #57

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Hailey

UTM Coord: 4817968 North 715636 East; Zone 11

T2N R18E Section 29 NW/NE

Boise Meridian

Blaine County, Idaho

There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing a steel “bat friendly” grate system. The grate will allow the utilization of the shaft by small wildlife and groundwater to flow out during periods of high water tables or recharge in the local area. This grate system will be pre-fabricated approximately 6’ back into a large culvert system. This system will then be pushed back into the mine opening and backfilled around utilizing a combination of PUF and local materials immediately adjacent to the portal.

There is little to sparse vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.10 acres from the proposed project feature closure at this site.

Site Name: Misty Peak Mine (*formerly the Edres Mine*)

USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Bellevue

UTM Coord: 4813788 North 715997 East; Zone 11

T1N R18E Section 4 NE/NW

Boise Meridian

Blaine County, Idaho

There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing a steel “bat friendly” grate system. The grate will allow the utilization of the shaft by small wildlife and groundwater to flow out during periods of high water tables or recharge in the local area. This grate system will be pre-fabricated approximately 6’ back into a large culvert system. This system will then be pushed back into the mine opening and backfilled around utilizing a combination of PUF and local materials immediately adjacent to the portal.

There is little to sparse vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work areas at this site that would be disturbed with the closure operations being proposed.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.10 acres from the proposed project feature closure at this site.

Plan Conformance

The proposed actions conform 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.”

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the following extraordinary circumstances listed below apply:

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>

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.		
Yes	No X	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> <i>The proposed actions at sites identified as potential habitat for bats are designed to preserve those habitats.</i> <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>
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		
Yes	No X	Rationale: <i>No Federal, State, Local or tribal laws would be violated or require the acquisition of special permits for the proposed work.</i>
10. The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)		
Yes	No X	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>
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).		
Yes	No X	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>

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 X	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 is 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>
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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