

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:** Star and Mammoth Gulch Area Abandoned Mine Closures FY14

**NEPA Number:** DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2014-0018-CX

**Lead Preparer:** Tom Askew

**Project or Serial Number** (if applicable):

**Project Description:** Proposed closures of four (4) dangerous mine openings that exists in areas easily accessible to the public. The features located in the general vicinity of the Star and Mammoth Gulches, west of the Big Wood River near Hailey and Bellevue, Idaho. These openings vary in size and configurations. The features consist of physical openings into unmaintained underground mine workings and take the form of four (4) open portals. The features represented in this document are open providing unimpeded access into dangerous unmaintained mine workings by the general public. The features in the Star and Mammoth Gulch areas are easily accessible and are located in areas frequently used by hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, hunters, and motorized vehicles for recreation. All of the features are readily accessible by the general public from the main roads and trails of travel in the area.

The proposed projects for the specific locations listed below will utilize similar techniques to close or infill the open portal features. This work will be conducted in an attempt to prevent future slope degradation by erosion and potential access by the general public into dangerous unmaintained mine features. The type of closure technique proposed for these open mine features is based on several physical condition factors, the potential for bat habitat, and other characteristics which aid in determining what is the most suitable for engineered effectiveness to close the each individual opening. In utilizing this approach will insure that individual feature closures are constructed to preserve potential wildlife habitat, and or to prevent access to the unmaintained deteriorating underground workings for public safety.

The type of closure being proposed for each of these individual sites is as follows with a brief description for this type of closure. The closure technique often termed "PUF-ing" (Poly-Urethane Foam) consist of infilling the majority of the opening with an engineered poly-urethane foam material plug (PUF). 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 will have approximately 3-4 feet of backfill of local soil or waste rock materials placed on top of it to protect the foam materials from ultra-violet decay, weathering, burrowing animals, and/or wild land fires. PUF can be utilized for horizontal, angled, or vertical openings.

Utilizing this type of closure 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 when present, 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: Mineral Hill #75**

**USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Bellevue**

**UTM Coord: 4817927.034 North 717408.134 East; Zone 11**

**T2N R18E Section 28 NENE**

**Boise Meridian**

**Blaine County, Idaho**



There is one open portal at this site which is located in Star Gulch. This portal will be closed utilizing a five (5) Cu. Yd. Poly-Urethane Foam plug and soil/waste rock back fill. All work at this location would be performed by hand tools. This is a shallow prospect hole and its configuration is not conducive of being suitable for long term bat habitat.

Disturbance to the existing vegetation within the boundaries of the proposed work area at this site will be minimal with the closure technique being proposed.

Ground disturbance at this site would be less than 0.1 Acres from the proposed project closures at this site.

There are no known or observed historical structures associated with this feature that would be disturbed during the closure process.

**Site Name: Mineral Hill District #80**

**USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Bellevue**

**UTM Coord: 4816841.242 North 718620.488 East; Zone 11**

**T2N R18E Section 27 SESW**

**Boise Meridian**

**Blaine County, Idaho**



There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing an engineered one (1) Cu. Yd. PUF/Backfill system. This technique was chosen to be used on this feature due to the portal either being partially to fully collapsed and/or the opening being a small shallow prospect working that is not conducive to being suitable habitat for 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. All work at this site will be performed with hand tools.

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

There are no known or observed historical structures associated with this feature that would be disturbed during the closure process.

**Site Name: Mineral Hill District #84**

**USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map:** Bellevue

**UTM Coord:** 4817267.923 North 718471.765 East; Zone 11

T2N R18E Section 27 NESW

Boise Meridian

Blaine County, Idaho



There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing an engineered two (2) Cu. Yd. PUF/Backfill system. This technique was chosen to be utilized on this feature due to the portal either being partially to fully collapsed and/or the opening being a small shallow prospect workings that is not conducive to being suitable habitat for 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. All work at this site will be performed with hand tools.

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

There are no known or observed historical structures associated with this feature that would be disturbed during the closure process.

**Site Name: Mineral Hill District #85**

**USGS Quad 7.5 Minute Map: Bellevue**

**UTM Coord: 4817030.128 North 717972.693 East; Zone 11**

**T2N R18E Section 27 NWSW**

**Boise Meridian**

**Blaine County, Idaho**



There is one open portal at this site. This portal will be closed utilizing an engineered four (4) Cu. Yd. PUF/Backfill system. This technique was chosen to be utilized on this feature due to the portal either being partially to fully collapsed and/or the opening being a small shallow prospect workings that is 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. All work performed at this portal will be conducted with the use of hand tools.

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

There are no known or observed historical structures associated with this feature that would be disturbed during the closure process.

## Categorical Exclusion Documentation

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

|  |           |   |
|--|-----------|---|
| <b>1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.</b>   |           |   |
| <b>Yes</b>   | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|  | <b>X</b>  | 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.   |
| <b>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.</b> |           |   |
| <b>Yes</b>   | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|  | <b>X</b>  | 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.   |
| <b>3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].</b>   |           |   |
| <b>Yes</b>   | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|  | <b>X</b>  | 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 Colorado Gulch AML closure projects performed in the same general area. |

**4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.**

|            |           |   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|            | <b>X</b>  | 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. |

**5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.**

|            |           |  |
|------------|-----------|--|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>  |
|            | <b>X</b>  | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> |

**6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.**

|            |           |  |
|------------|-----------|--|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>  |
|            | <b>X</b>  | <p>The proposed action would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The proposed action does not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</p> |

**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.**

|            |           |   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|            | <b>X</b>  | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</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.**

|            |           |   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|            | <b>X</b>  | <p>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.</p> <p>The proposed actions at sites identified as potential habitat for bats are designed to preserve those habitats.</p> <p>A special animal species assessment was completed in February 2014 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.</p> |

**9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.**

|            |           |   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|            | <b>X</b>  | <p>No Federal, State, Local or tribal laws would be violated or require the acquisition of special permits for the proposed work.</p> |

**10. The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)**

|     |    |  |
|-----|----|--|
| Yes | No | <b>Rationale:</b>  |
|     | X  | 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. |

**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 | <b>Rationale:</b>  |
|     | X  | 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) |

**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 | <b>Rationale:</b>   |
|     | X  | 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. |

**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  
Clare Josaitis, Rangeland Management Specialist

Environmental Coordinator: /s/ Lisa Cresswell      Date: 9/8/2015

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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/ Codie Martin      Date: 9/8/2015

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Codie Martin  
Shoshone Field Office Manager