

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
FOR
Rockwood Lithium Inc.'s
Proposed Goat Island Mineral Material
Sale**

BLM EA Number: DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2013-0049-EA

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2013-0049-EA, dated June 2014. After consideration of the environmental effects of the Proposed Action described in the EA and supporting documentation, I have determined that the Proposed Action with the mitigation measure identified in the EA is not a major federal action and 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 is not required as per section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act.

I have determined the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved 1997 Tonopah Resource Management Plan 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's) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

CONTEXT:

The project is a site-specific action directly involving up to 50 acres of BLM-administered public land that does not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. Rockwood Lithium Inc. has submitted an application of a non-competitive mineral materials sale under the requirements of the 43 CFR§ 3600, Mineral Material Disposal. The mineral materials proposed for sale would be extracted from and expand existing pits located near Silver Peak, Esmeralda County, NV

INTENSITY:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The EA considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the Proposed Action.

Due to the mitigation measures presented in the EA, there would be no adverse impacts to air quality, water quality, cultural resources, or migratory birds, including raptors. Adverse impacts would occur to the soils which would be removed from the Clayton Valley playa. These impacts are considered minor given the amount of soil being removed in relation to the size of the playa. These impacts are described in detail in Chapters 3 and 4 of the EA. None of the environmental impacts discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of the EA are considered to be significant.

2) The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.

The Proposed Action would have no effects on public health and safety because Rockwood Lithium is obligated to abide by Federal and State regulations designed to safeguard human health and safety. Human health and safety are likely to be enhanced because the mineral materials would be used to maintain dikes preventing leakage and lining future ponds to prevent seepage.

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

The area where the mineral materials would be extracted has been largely disturbed by similar extractive activities in the past and there is no chance that intact cultural deposits could occur there. Undisturbed areas of the project area were surveyed for cultural resources with negative findings.

There are no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers within 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 be controversial. The BLM coordinated with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) by an informal e-mail describing the Proposed Action and asking for their concerns. NDOW had no concerns with regard to the proposal.

The EA (DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2013-0049-EA) was made available for public review and comment on the BLM's National NEPA Register Page accessed through the Battle Mountain District website from June 8, 2014 to July 7, 2014. As of the signing of this Decision Record, no substantive comments were received.

In addition, a certified letter was sent to the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe on May 14, 2014 asking if they had any comments and concerns in relation to the project. The Tribe indicated that since the area was previously disturbed and no blasting would occur they had no comments or concerns.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The effects to the human environment from implementing the Proposed Action are well-understood and do not involve unique or unknown risks. The extraction of mineral materials is a well-known and well-understood aspect of multiple use land management. There would be no uncertain or unknown risks.

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 is a fairly routine aspect of multiple use land management and does not create any significant or unusual effects for future considerations.

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

Chapter 4 of the EA discusses past, present, and future actions that have occurred in the northeastern portion of the Clayton Valley Playa including, lithium production, mineral material extraction, residential development and geothermal exploration drilling. The cumulative effects to natural and cultural resources are considered moderate within the 28,256-acre Cumulative Effects Study Area (CESA) due primarily to lithium production activities and its associated evaporation ponds. The Proposed Action would add an additional 14 acres of disturbance which is negligible compared to the 6,426 acres of existing disturbance in the CESA.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The Proposed Action would have no effect on resources listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP because most of the project area has been previously disturbed and the results of recent Class III cultural resource survey on undisturbed areas indicate that there are no cultural resources present.

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), as amended, of 1973.*

There are no Threatened or Endangered species (plant or animal) that occur within or near on the project area.

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

Chapter 1 of the EA provides a discussion of the environmental laws and regulations that apply to the Proposed Action. The implementation of the mitigation measures presented in Appendix A of the EA would ensure that no applicable Federal, State, or local law would be violated.



Timothy J. Coward
Field Manager

7/15/2014
Date