

Legal Notice

Public Comment Opportunity

Goat Mountain Hardrock Prospecting Permit Applications Environmental Assessment

Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service (FS) is releasing an environmental assessment (EA) related to two hardrock prospecting permit applications from Ascot USA, Inc. (Ascot) for geotechnical exploration within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in the vicinity of Goat Mountain northeast of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument in western Washington.

In 2011, Ascot submitted two applications for hardrock prospecting permits for approximately 900 acres in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in northwestern Skamania County, Washington. Since the subject lands were purchased by or donated to the Federal government, hardrock minerals are available for prospecting only by permit issued by the BLM with the consent of the FS, which manages the surface and other resources of the lands.

The "Goat Mountain Hardrock Prospecting Permit Applications Environmental Assessment" (BLM-OR-WA-0000-2016-0001-EA) is a modification of the same assessment originally issued in 2012. Adjustments were made in response to a 2014 ruling by the U.S. District Court in Oregon. The modified EA analyzes a number of additional items, including: *consistency with the Gifford Pinchot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan; potential impacts on groundwater resources; critical habitat for northern spotted owl and cultural properties recently identified by the Cowlitz Tribe.*

Based on the modified EA, the FS will determine whether or not to consent to issuance of the prospecting permits along with such terms and conditions needed to protect other resources and to comply with applicable land use plans. If the FS consents, then the BLM will decide whether to issue the prospecting permits based on the modified EA and the FS consent decision. The prospecting permits, if issued, would grant Ascot the exclusive right to prospect on and explore for hardrock mineral deposits during the term of the permits. Any future proposal for leasing and site development would be subject to public notification, separate NEPA analysis, and administrative action by the Agencies.

This announcement begins a 30-day public comment period for the EA. This comment period is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this activity an opportunity to make their concerns known. Those who participate and provide timely comments during this public review or during the original (2012) scoping period will be eligible to object to the Forest Service decision pursuant to 36 CFR Part 218 or to appeal the BLM decision pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4. The assessment, associated information, and guidance on how to comment are available at:

BLM OR/WA Minerals Program: < <http://stg.or.blm.gov/or/programs/minerals/prospecting/> >

BLM National ePlanning Register: < <http://1.usa.gov/1NFp1eT> >

US Forest Service: < <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46996> >

Issues raised in objection must be based on previously submitted written comments specific to the proposed project or activity unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities to comment. Comments received during this public review of the EA period will be considered, and a revised (if necessary) EA and draft of the Forest Service Decision Notice will be released for a 45-day review and objection period.

How to Comment and Timeframe: Written and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the date of publication of this notice in The Chronicle, Centralia, WA and The Columbian, Vancouver, WA. The publication date in the newspapers of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this proposal. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 218.25(iv) prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Comments can be submitted to either:

Email: < BLM_OR_Prospecting_EA@blm.gov >

Postal: U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Oregon/Washington
State Office
Attn: Goat Mtn. Project
(OR-936.2)
P.O. Box 2965
Portland, Oregon
97208-2965

In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for objection eligibility. In cases using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed above, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period and ensure that their comments have been received. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 218.

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