

INITIAL PUBLIC NOTICE

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), gives notice of intent to begin the process of evaluating two prospecting permit applications for hardrock geological exploration at Goat Mountain in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest on approximately 900 acres of land in Township 10 North, Range 6 East, Willamette Meridian, Skamania County, Washington. The permit applications were made by Ascot Resources Ltd. (Ascot) – a Vancouver, B.C.-based company incorporated in the State of Washington as Ascot USA, Inc.

Because the subject lands were re-acquired by the Federal government, the hardrock minerals are managed by the BLM (lead agency), while the surface and other resources of such lands are managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS). The agencies must, in the context of evaluating Ascot's prospecting permit application, prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the environmental impacts of the proposed exploration relative to reasonable alternatives.

This public notice is issued in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act; the National Historic Preservation Act; the Endangered Species Act, Executive Order (EO) 11988, Floodplain Management; EO 11990, Wetlands Protection; and EO 12898, Environmental Justice.

The purpose of the public scoping process is to facilitate determination of the nature and range of issues to be addressed in the EA, including alternatives. Ascot's pending application pertains only to mineral exploration at 23 pad sites, which are less than 400-square feet each, by using portable equipment and directionally drilling approximately 63 boreholes of 2- to 3-inches each. This work would take place over partially closed roads and drill pads, many of which were previously established by a company that held patent to these lands in the early 1980s. Most of the lands are in the blast zone from the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens and were salvage logged and reforested in the 1980s. The total disturbance area for all pads would be less than ¼ acre. Access to these sites would require the temporary reactivation of approximately 1.7 miles of partially closed roads.

Comments concerning the proposed action, alternatives, and preliminary identification of environmental issues, will be accepted from the public; local, state and Federal agencies; Tribes; and other interested parties in order to scope the EA and contribute to the decision-making process. Comments should be made in writing and submitted at the public open houses, or on the BLM website listed below, or mailed to the responsible official listed below. Scoping comments must be received prior to midnight March 16, 2012, to be considered for inclusion in the public record.

An informal open house will be held in Longview, Washington, on Wednesday, February 15, 2012, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Cowlitz Regional Conference Center, Loowit Room, 1900 7th Avenue. A second open house will be held in Morton, Washington, on Thursday, February 16, 2012, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Lyle Community Center, 700 W. Main Street. Comments may be submitted at both meetings.

Additional information about the project, including a project area map, drilling sites and equipment, scoping report, and other related information, can be obtained from the BLM website at:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/programs/minerals/prospecting>

Comments can be submitted on the internet or through email at:

[BLM OR Prospecting EA@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_Prospecting_EA@blm.gov)

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

BLM Responsible Official:	USFS Responsible Official
BLM Oregon/Washington State Office Edward W. Shepard - State Director Attn: Prospecting Permit (OR-936.2) P.O. Box 2965 Portland, OR 97208	USFS Gifford Pinchot National Forest Kristie Miller - Cowlitz Valley District Ranger 10024 US Highway 12 Randle, WA 98377-9105