

# **DETERMINATION OF NEPA ADEQUACY (DNA)**

## **U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management**

**OFFICE:** Eastern Interior Field Office

**TRACKING NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2016-0018-DNA

**CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:** FF096399 (2920)

**LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** Fairbanks Meridian, T. 2N, R. 2E, Section 7 SE1/4 of the SE1/4, Section 8 SW1/4 of the SW1/4, Section 17 W1/2 – excepting the land subject to PLO 7763 ((76 FR 23334)(2011)), Section 18, Section 19 Lot 1, and Section 20 W1/2 and W1/2 of the E1/2 – excepting the land subject to PLO 7682 ((72 FR 71940)(2007)), excepting any ground subject to conflicting valid existing rights pursuant to PLO 3708.

**APPLICANT:** Fairbanks Gold Mining Inc.

### **A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures:**

Applicant wishes to amend Land Use Permit #FF096399 (2920) to allow for an additional 20 acres of disturbance to continue mineral assessment activities outlined in the existing Plan of Use. There would be no changes to the project boundaries, number of holes drilled, or drilling methods as described in the Environmental Assessment.

### **B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance**

The Lands are: 1) owned by the United States; 2) managed by the BLM; 3) subject to PLO 3708, as modified by PLOs 6709, 7682, 7710, and 7763 (collectively the Withdrawal); 4) have been selected by the State of Alaska pursuant to the Alaska Statehood Act; and 5) are almost entirely covered by State Mining Claims located by an FGMI affiliate pursuant to Alaska Statute (A.S.) 38.05.275 and Alaska Administrative Code (AAC) 11AAC 86.115.

The proposed action, which specifically requires an affirmative finding by NOAA, is consistent with the Withdrawal, and therefore conforms with all BLM, programs, and policies for the Lands. The proposed action is in conformance with the State of Alaska's Tanana Area Basin Plan for State Lands (2014).

The proposed project is located in an area without an approved BLM land use plan. Per 43 CFR 1610.8(b)(1), the BLM prepared an environmental assessment (DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2014-0005-EA) to assess the impacts of the proposed project and inform the field manager's decision.

**C. Identify applicable NEPA documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.**

- Environmental Assessment, Gilmore Land Use Application, Fairbanks Gold Mining Inc., DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2014-0005-EA, September 2014
- Fort Knox Geotechnical Exploration Area: Cultural Resources Survey, Fairbanks, Alaska, February 2014

**D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria**

**1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?**

The new proposed action is a continuation of the previously approved actions (DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2014-0005-EA) and would occur within the original project boundaries with the same resource conditions as analyzed in the existing NEPA document.

**2. Is the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?**

There have been no new environmental concerns, interests, or resource values identified at the project site since publication of the existing NEPA document. The range of alternatives discussed in the existing NEPA document adequately covers the new proposed action because it is a continuation of the previously approved action using the same techniques and methods established in the original 2920 Land Use Plan.

**3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

No new information or circumstances have been identified that would invalidate the existing NEPA documents. It is reasonable to assume that new circumstances would not substantially change the assessment of the proposed action. There have been no changes to endangered or sensitive species lists which affect the geographic analysis area.

**4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?**

The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects from the implementation of the new proposed action are similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA documents. Adherence to BLM and NOAA stipulations outlined in the original 2920 permit will ensure minimal additional effects. The increased area of ground disturbance is being requested because the original estimate of 25 acres was based on an incorrectly referenced drill pad size and failed to account for access trails. The location, construction method, and number of drill holes remains unchanged from the original plan.

**5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) completed a Notice of Realty Action in the Federal Register on July 11, 2014. During the public comment period for the proposed action, the BLM received comments concerning the following:

- Encroachment on the NOAA facilities.
- Revoking mining claims within the withdrawal or put mining on hold to protect the NOAA facilities.
- The impacts of future blasting on area residents.
- Keeping existing trail trails open and unblocked.
- The impacts of the BLM decision on public use of the area.
- The impacts of increased traffic on the road between Fox and the mine site (more vehicles and dirt).

Comments were addressed in the Environmental Assessment, Gilmore Land Use Application, Fairbanks Gold Mining Inc., DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2014-0005-EA, September 2014. An interagency review was conducted with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and NOAA.

The proposed action is adequately covered by previous public involvement and interagency review. The BLM received a letter from NOAA granting concurrence for the proposed amendment dated April 21, 2016.

