

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN DISTRICT/MOUNT LEWIS FIELD OFFICE**

**DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2016-0026-EA
File Number: NVN-066621 (16-1A)**

SEP 9 2016

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2016-0026-EA dated July 2016. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, (and incorporated herein), I have determined that the Proposed Action with the Project design features identified in the EA 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 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1508.27. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required per section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2016-0026-EA has been reviewed through the interdisciplinary team process, and has been sent to the Nevada State Clearinghouse and the public for a 30-day comment period.

After consideration of the environmental effects of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) preferred alternative (Proposed Action) described in the EA and the supporting baseline documentation, it has been determined that the Proposed Action identified in the EA is not a major Federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

It has been determined that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan and its amendments, and is consistent with the plans and policies of neighboring local, county, state, tribal, and federal agencies and governments.

The Project is in conformance with the Shoshone-Eureka Land Use Management Plan and the Approved Greater Sage-Grouse Resource Management Plan Amendment. The Project will not disturb any Greater Sage-Grouse habitat within the Project boundary as it is within an area classified as non-habitat.

Context

The BLM has evaluated the Amendment to the Plan of Operations (APO) titled, *Amendment to the Horse Canyon/Cortez Unified Exploration Project Plan of Operations (NVN-066621 [16-1A]) and Reclamation Permit No. 0159 – Twin Declines for Underground Exploration* and has prepared an EA, DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2016-0026-EA that analyzes the affected environment, environmental impacts, and identifies environmental protection measures (EPMs) associated

with the twin declines portion of the Barrick Gold Exploration, Inc. (Barrick) HC/CUEP (Project).

The final APO was submitted on September 8, 2016, in accordance with the BLM Surface Management Regulations 43 CFR 3809, as amended. It has been assigned BLM case file number NVN-066621 (16-1A). The APO will result in a total of 12 acres of new surface disturbance and is the continuation of use of currently authorized disturbance.

The HC/CUEP Plan boundary includes approximately 22,307 acres total. As of March 2016, there were approximately 420 acres of surface exploration disturbance within the HC/CUEP Plan area. Under the Proposed Action, of the remaining 129 acres of authorized disturbance, 12 acres would be re-allocated from surface exploration to support underground exploration, under the APO.

The Proposed Action would include the following:

- A 12-acre portal pad and infrastructure, two portals, and construction of twin declines
- A 1.7-mile power line within the Horse Canyon Haul Road
- A 1.7-mile water supply line within the Horse Canyon Haul Road
- Use of the Horse Canyon Haul Road to access the portal pad and transport waste rock.

The proposed modifications will be located on BLM-administered land in the following location: Section 8, Township 26 North, Range 48 East, Mount Diablo Base & Meridian, Nevada. The power line and water supply line (along the existing disturbance associated with the Horse Canyon Haul Road) would be in Sections 6, 7 and 8, T. 26 N., R. 48 E., Mount Diablo Base & Meridian, Nevada.

For a complete description of the Proposed Action, please refer to the EA, Section 2.1, Proposed Action – Plan of Operations Amendment.

Pursuant to NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations on implementing NEPA, the EA identifies, describes, and evaluates resource protection measures that would mitigate the possible impacts of the preferred alternative. The short- and long-term impacts as disclosed in the EA are not considered to be significant to the human environment. The short-term impacts from implementation of the Proposed Action are local; they are not regional or national in nature. The long-term impacts resulting from the Proposed Action would be mitigated by concurrent reclamation during the life of the Project and meeting all reclamation requirements prior to closure of the Project.

Intensity

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Proposed Action would reallocate 12 acres of the authorized 549 acres of surface disturbance to support underground exploration activities. Under the Proposed Action, a portal pad and infrastructure, and two underground declines would be constructed. The

power line and water supply line would be placed within the existing Horse Canyon Haul Road.

Potential impacts to the environment as identified in Chapter 3 of the EA include the following:

- **Geology:** Construction of the twin declines would affect geologic resources by removing approximately 1.75 million tons of waste rock, which would alter components of the current geologic structure. The declines would begin at approximately 6,625 feet in elevation and extend approximately 17,430 feet to a final elevation of 5,940 feet. Waste rock removed from the twin declines would be transferred to the existing Cortez Hills Canyon Waste Rock Facility. The change would be localized, permanent, and minor, in that it represents a relatively small portion of the waste rock in that waste rock facility.
- **Paleontological Resources:** Reallocating 12 acres of previously authorized surface disturbance to support underground exploration activities is not likely to affect significant paleontological resources. The Tertiary-age alluvial gravel and sand deposits and Quaternary deposits of valley alluvium, alluvial fans flanking the mountains, playa, talus, and landslide deposits are considered unlikely to produce vertebrate or invertebrate fossils. Adverse effects may occur if unanticipated fossils are encountered during excavation activities. However, due to the low probability of encountering fossils in the geologic strata disturbed by underground exploration and with implementation of the paleontological applicant-committed EPM, effects on paleontological resources would be localized, and negligible to minor. Any effects would be permanent.
- **Surface Water Features:** Precipitation inputs and water flow from seeps and springs is relatively low in the HC/CUEP area, which reduces the energy available to carry sediment downstream. Seeps/springs and other wetland areas would be avoided through continued adherence to the applicant-committed EPMs. Under the Proposed Action, adverse effects to surface water features or water quality caused by increased sedimentation would be localized, short-term, and negligible to minor. Contact water from the lined ore/potentially acid generating (PAG) transfer pad would be collected and trucked to the lined Mill #1 water storage reservoirs at the Cortez Gold Mines which is off-site and then conveyed to the Pipeline Mill, as needed for make-up water. With the proposed design features, and implementation of applicant-committed EPMs and Best Management Practices (BMPs), adverse effects on water quality associated with proposed activities at the portal pad would be localized, short-term, and negligible to minor.
- **Groundwater:** For the Proposed Action, there would be passive inflow to the declines and exploration drifts. The inflow water would be managed by sump collection systems within the declines and used underground for dust suppression and drilling make-up water. Dewatering measures would not be required. Effects of underground exploration activities on groundwater would be localized within the affected bedrock unit, long-

term as the passive inflow fills the void created by the declines and exploration drifts, and negligible to minor.

- **Vegetation Resources:** The surface disturbance associated with the Proposed Action would remove 12 acres of Pinyon-Juniper Woodland vegetation type. This equates to 0.2 percent of the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland type within the HC/CUEP Plan boundary. This change in the natural vegetation community is localized, long-term, and minor. The change in natural vegetation would not affect the biological values of the plant community at the landscape level.

The HC/CUEP Noxious Weed Management Plan (Appendix A of the EA) outlines proper herbicide application and handling techniques, worker safety, and describes how to handle spills. Applicant-committed EPMs related to weed control are also incorporated into the Proposed Action.

Reclamation would be completed in accordance with BLM and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) regulations and requirements to minimize effects over the long-term.

- **Forestry and Woodland Resources:** Surface disturbance under the Proposed Action would occur within the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland vegetation type. Direct effects to forestry and woodland resources would occur, as 12 acres of the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland vegetation type would be removed. Indirect effects on product users would be mitigated by providing harvested wood products to local communities. Barrick would continue to implement the forestry and woodland resources applicant-committed EPM. The HC/CUEP area would not be restricted from permissible uses such as firewood collection and pine nut collection. Effects would be localized, long-term, and minor.
- **Soils:** Erosion prevention BMPs and general exploration BMPs are outlined in the APO and included as part of the Proposed Action. Effects on soils from the Proposed Action would be localized, long-term, and minor. Effects would be minimized with implementation of the applicant-committed EPMs, BMPs, and reclamation practices. Long-term effects would be rectified once exploration is complete, growth medium is returned and seeded, and vegetation is reestablished.
- **General Wildlife:** The reallocation of 12 acres represents a small incremental habitat loss, 0.05 percent of land cover in the HC/CUEP Plan boundary. Wildlife may also be affected by human presence and associated traffic and noise, resulting in short or long-term avoidance of localized areas where activities are proposed. Traffic and increased human presence would be limited to the existing Horse Canyon Haul Road and at the portal pad for the 5 years during underground exploration and the additional 2 years for reclamation. These adverse effects would be localized, long-term, and minor.
- **Special Status Species:** There are no endangered species within the boundaries of the Proposed Action. BLM sensitive and state-listed species that occur or may occur in the

HC/CUEP area along with their seasonal use, and associated Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) key habitats that occur within the HC/CUEP area, are shown in Table 3-8 of the EA. Surveys for Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*), raptors, burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*), and bat species have been completed. Natural history information for the remaining BLM sensitive and state-listed species is described in the Wildlife Report (Tetra Tech 2015). The Proposed Action would not affect suitable pygmy rabbit habitat, pale kangaroo mouse (*Microdipodops pallidus*) or dark kangaroo mouse habitat (*Microdipodops megacephalus*). The Proposed Action is indicated as occurring within Non-habitat for Greater sage-grouse, and there are no leks located within 4 miles of the Proposed Action. There are no plant species federally listed or proposed for listing for Eureka and Lander counties. There is one special status plant species occurrence in the HC/CUEP area: Beatley buckwheat (*Eriogonum beatleyae*). This is a BLM sensitive species for the Battle Mountain District (BMD) (BLM 2011c) and has been documented in upper Horse Canyon. No threatened or endangered species occur in the HC/CUEP area; therefore, there would be no effects to these species.

- **Migratory Birds:** To minimize disturbance effects to breeding birds, Barrick has committed to conducting pre-disturbance migratory bird nest surveys in the spring and establishing exclusion zones around active nests as part of the applicant-committed EPMs. Based on the localized and incremental nature of the Proposed Action, the ability of birds to move to other areas of HC/CUEP, the overall availability of suitable nesting and foraging habitat in other portions of the Cortez Mountains, and implementation of applicant-committed EPMs, the habitat reductions, noise, or human presence resulting from the Proposed Action would have a localized, long-term, and minor effect on migratory bird populations in the area.
- **Grazing Management:** The 12 acres of disturbance as a result of the Proposed Action would reduce capacity by less than one (animal unit months) AUM and would not require issuance of waivers or require changes to current grazing management practices or livestock improvements. Reclamation would return disturbed areas to the pre-development land uses, which include livestock grazing. The Proposed Action would result in negligible, localized, long-term effects. Following reclamation, resource conditions would be restored to pre-project conditions and no effects should persist.
- **Cultural Resources:** The location of the portal pad was selected to avoid potentially eligible cultural sites and ineligible cultural sites without concurrence. The reallocation of 12 acres to support underground exploration activities would not result in direct or indirect effects to cultural resources. The Proposed Action would be conducted under adherence to the previously approved applicant-committed EPMs¹. By incorporating these measures, there would be no historic properties affected. The Proposed Action would not occur within either of the Properties of Cultural or Religious Importance (PCRIs) identified within the HC/CUEP Plan boundary.

¹ Environmental Assessment Barrick Gold Exploration, Inc. Horse Canyon/Cortez Unified Exploration Project Plan of Operations (NVN-066621- [13-1A]) and Reclamation Permit No. 0159 Plan Modification, Addendum, and Amendment (DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2015-0005-EA)

- **Native American Traditional Cultural Resources:** BLM has been engaged in Native American coordination regarding exploration activities in the HC/CUEP area since the initial HC/CUEP Plan was proposed in 2000. Letters were sent to the following tribal groups: Battle Mountain Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone, Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, Elko Band and South Fork Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone, Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone, and Yomba Shoshone Tribe. The coordination for this EA is ongoing.

The Proposed Action does not propose surface disturbing activities within the Mount Tenabo/White Cliffs PCRI or the Horse Canyon PCRI. The proposed additional activities and features would change the current landscape, but the change in appearance would be limited once the portal pad is reclaimed. The applicant-committed EPMs would remain in effect under the Proposed Action. Access to these PCRI areas for Native American cultural purposes would not be restricted. Effects of the Proposed Action would be localized, long-term, and negligible.

- **Air Quality Resources:** For regulatory and planning purposes, HC/CUEP is considered to be in an attainment/unclassified area, meaning it meets air quality standards. Barrick currently operates the authorized HC/CUEP Plan activities under a Class II Air Quality Operating Permit. Barrick would submit an application to revise the Class II air permit to include components of the Proposed Action.

Barrick has instituted fugitive dust control measures as per the HC/CUEP fugitive dust control plan. BMPs to prevent particulate matter (PM) from becoming airborne include: speed limits posted and vehicle speeds reduced in areas of disturbance to minimize the potential for fugitive dust emissions, protect wildlife and livestock, and maintain operational safety; speed limits enforced; access and drill roads maintained and watered; and wet drilling methods are used.

If any ore-grade material is encountered during underground exploration, it would be placed on the lined PAG/ore transfer pad for transportation to an ore-processing facility. Hauling ore of up to 1.2 million tons per year (MTPY) was analyzed under the EA² for the Barrick Cortez Inc. (NVN-067575 [14-1A]) Amendment 3 to Plan of Operations and Reclamation Permit Application (BLM 2015e), and authorized under the September 2015 decision, which are incorporated by reference. The Proposed Action does not include an increase in the level of ore hauling and would not result in an increase in the currently authorized ore-haul truck traffic to and from the Cortez Hills Mine.

- **Waste:** The Proposed Action would not generate hazardous waste. Solid, non-hazardous waste, including garbage and human waste, would be transported to off-site authorized disposal facilities. The potential for spills to occur would be minimized

² Environmental Assessment Barrick Cortez Inc. (NVN-067575 [14-1A]) Amendment 3 to Plan of Operations and Reclamation Permit Application (DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2015-0055-EA)

through prevention measures outlined in the HC/CUEP spill contingency plan. Effects from waste would be localized, short-term, and negligible.

- **Visual Resources:** The visual effects of mining and exploration activities in this area are consistent with the Visual Resource Management (VRM) class objectives. Visual resources have been and would continue to be affected by exploration activities. Reclamation would reduce effects to line and color over time. To minimize effects from lighting, Barrick would utilize hooded stationary lights and light plants. Barrick would utilize lighting designed to reduce the effects to night skies. The Proposed Action would be consistent with VRM class objectives. Infrastructure would be removed and disturbed areas reclaimed following completion of underground exploration activities. Evidence of the reclaimed portal pad would remain for the long-term. Effects on visual resources from the Proposed Action would be localized, long-term, and minor.
- **Recreational Resources:** The Proposed Action would not change existing access to public lands within the HC/CUEP Plan boundary for recreational uses. The area is not known as a popular destination for public use and no annual commercial or competitive permitted events occur in the area. Under the Proposed Action, recreationists would notice the proposed activities for an estimated 5 to 7 years. The effects to recreational resources would be localized, long-term, and negligible.
- **Social and Economic Values:** The Proposed Action would require an increase in the HC/CUEP workforce for a 5-year period. The development of the twin declines and exploration drifts would require a workforce for 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. An estimated 124 workers would be required for years 1 through 4. The number of workers would increase up to 188 in Year 5. The currently authorized surface exploration activities at HC/CUEP have used the local workforces of Elko, Eureka, and Lander counties, and have supported the local economy, resulting in a beneficial economic effect. Anticipated effects on social and economic resources under the Proposed Action would be regional, short-term, and negligible.

Many of these impacts would be minimized by the applicant-committed EPMs outlined in the 2015 exploration APO³ as well as by other measures described in the Proposed Action.

Barrick would continue to commit to the practices described in the approved 2015 APO to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation during the life of the Project. No changes to these committed practices are proposed in this mining Plan.

Impacts that would be avoided or minimized by operation and reclamation measures committed to by Barrick are presented in Chapter 2 of the EA. None of the environmental affects disclosed above and discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA are considered significant.

³ Environmental Assessment Barrick Gold Exploration, Inc. Horse Canyon/Cortez Unified Exploration Project Plan of Operations (NVN-066621- [13-1A]) and Reclamation Permit No. 0159 Plan Modification, Addendum, and Amendment (DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2015-0005-EA)

Reclamation would be completed using the following policies, rules, standards, and BMPs:

- The performance standards described in 43 CFR 3809.420;
- United States Department of the Interior Solid Minerals Reclamation Handbook #H-3042-1;
- Surface Management of Mining Operations Handbook H-3809-1;

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

The effects of the Proposed Action on both public health and safety would not have significant adverse impacts as Barrick would be required to follow U.S. Department of Labor Mine Safety and Health Administration regulations along with maintaining all equipment and facilities in a safe and orderly manner.

Through adherence to applicant-committed EPMs, and BMPs, the Proposed Action would not result in potentially substantial or adverse impacts to public health and safety. Public safety would be maintained throughout the life of the Project. All requirements of the March and June 2015 DRs (BLM 2015c, BLM 2015a) including applicant-committed EPMs, as the Conditions of Approval, would remain in place. The applicant-committed EPMs, as they were written in the Conditions of Approval, are included in Appendix A of the EA. They are summarized below:

Air Quality

- Barrick would implement the HC/CUEP fugitive dust control plan to minimize dust emissions. The Horse Canyon Haul Road and the portal pad would be watered, graveled, or chemically treated to reduce fugitive dust emissions, based upon weather and road conditions.
- Speed limits would be posted and vehicle speeds reduced on the Horse Canyon Haul Road to minimize the potential for fugitive dust emissions. Speed limits would be enforced.
- Project vehicles would be maintained regularly to ensure they are operating in a manner to minimize vehicle emissions.

Water Quality

- Barrick would adhere to the HC/CUEP Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), included in the APO as Appendix B.
- Stormwater BMPs (NDEP et al. 1994, NDEP et al. 2008) would be used to minimize erosion.
- Barrick would follow the spill contingency plan, as included in the APO SWPPP (Appendix B).
- Erosion and runoff control measures would be implemented.
- BMPs would be utilized to control erosion and sedimentation.
- After underground exploration is completed, the portal pad would be recontoured, growth medium would be placed, and the area reseeded with a BLM-approved seed mixture to establish ground cover and minimize erosion.

Water and Riparian Resources

- There are no riparian or wetland areas within the 12 acres of proposed surface disturbance for the portal pad. Diversion would be placed above the portal pad to route the surface flow around the portal pad.
- Culverts would be used to route diverted surface flow underneath the Horse Canyon Haul Road. The culvert outlet elevation(s) would be designed at or near the existing ground elevations to minimize the hydraulic jump and reduce the potential for erosion as the stormwater flows from the culvert(s) onto natural ground.
- Temporary straw bales would be utilized to protect drainages during construction.

Solid and Hazardous Waste

- Diesel, gasoline, oil, and lubricants would be transported on the Horse Canyon Haul Road for use at the portal pad, underground declines and exploration drifts. There would be no bulk storage of diesel or gasoline at the portal pad. If regulated materials (petroleum products) are spilled, measures would be taken under Barrick spill response guidelines to control the extent of the spill, and the appropriate agencies would be notified in accordance with the applicable federal and state regulations.
- Solid waste would be collected at the portal pad and transported offsite periodically for disposal at an approved solid waste facility.

Wildlife, Sensitive, and Special Status Species

- If construction of the portal pad occurs during the migratory bird nesting season, defined by the BLM as March 1 through July 31, Barrick would conduct pre-disturbance migratory bird nest surveys and establish exclusion zones around any active nests found. Clearance surveys would be conducted following BLM Wildlife Protocols (BLM 2014). If active nests are located, or if other evidence of nesting is observed (e.g., mating pairs, territorial defense, carrying nesting material, transporting food) at the portal pad, Barrick's biologist would recommend to the BLM an avoidance buffer around the nest which the BLM, in coordination with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), will review and approve prior to surface disturbance. Barrick's biologist would inform Barrick when the birds have left the nest. Barrick would not conduct any surface disturbing activities within the exclusion zone until the biologist determines that the birds are no longer nesting.
- Barrick would not construct the portal pad within a 0.5-mile radius of any active raptor nests during the nesting season (March 1 to July 31). Upon identifying an active raptor nest, Barrick would immediately notify the BLM.
- Speed limits of 35 mph would be posted on the Horse Canyon Haul Road. Speed limits would be enforced.
- The Proposed Action has been designed in compliance with the ARMPA⁴ and the Barrick Nevada Sage-Grouse Bank Enabling Agreement (BEA). The components of the Proposed Action (the portal pad, the power line, and water supply line) are within the area covered by the BEA. Barrick has complied with the ARMPA and the BEA by

⁴ Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Management Plan Amendment, September 2015.

designing the Project to be within non-habitat for the greater sage-grouse and more than 4 miles from the nearest lek.

- Barrick would not construct the portal pad within 50 feet of existing adits, shaft openings, or caves to prevent any impacts to bat species potentially residing in or near these structures. If a BLM-qualified biologist surveys the site and determines that bats are not residing in or near the structure, the aforementioned exclusion zone would not apply.
- The portal pad has been designed to not be located in habitat identified as suitable to support pygmy rabbit.
- The portal pad has been designed to not be located in habitat identified as suitable to support the pale or dark kangaroo mouse.
- No other special status plant or wildlife species or habitat have been identified within the area proposed for the portal pad.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

- The components of the Proposed Action (the portal pad, the power line, and water supply line) have been designed to avoid cultural and paleontological resources.
- If Barrick discovers previously unknown cultural resources while constructing the Proposed Action, Barrick would immediately cease any surface disturbing activity within 100 meters/330 feet of the discovery and notify the BLM. If the BLM determines, in consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), that the site is or may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), a BLM archaeologist would determine an exclusion zone adequate to protect the resource. Barrick would not conduct any surface disturbing activities within this exclusion zone without further authorization from the BLM, which may require further environmental and/or cultural analyses. If the site is determined not to be eligible, Barrick may resume surface disturbing activities upon notification by the BLM.
- Barrick's employees and contractors would receive training on the potential for cultural resources and the procedures required by Barrick to avoid disturbing, altering, or destroying any remains or any historical or archaeological site, structure, building or object on federal land. If construction activities uncover human remains, Barrick would immediately cease all earth disturbing activities within 100 meters/330 feet of the discovery and notify the BLM and county law enforcement so that the BLM and/or law enforcement can ensure compliance with all applicable laws regarding such discovery.
- If Barrick discovers a vertebrate fossil deposit during construction activities, Barrick would immediately cease further activities that may affect the deposit and notify the BLM so that the BLM may evaluate the discovery and establish an exclusion zone. Barrick would not undertake any further surface disturbance within the exclusion zone.
- The components of the Proposed Action (the portal pad, the power line, and water supply line) have been designed to avoid PCRI's.

Survey Monuments

- Survey monuments, witness corners, and/or reference monuments would be protected to the extent economically and technically feasible. Should moving such a feature be required, Barrick would ensure that a licensed Professional Land Surveyor oversee and

execute the relocation in a manner consistent with applicable laws. The BLM would be notified in writing prior to the moving of any such survey monument.

Fire Prevention and Control

- Barrick would comply with all applicable federal and state fire laws and regulations, and would take all reasonable measures to prevent and suppress fires in the area of the Proposed Action. Barrick and contractors are required to carry fire extinguishers in their vehicles to suppress small fires.
- Water would be available at the portal pad to suppress fires.

Invasive Non-Native Species

- Barrick would be responsible for controlling all noxious weeds at the portal pad until the reclamation activities have been determined to be successful and released by the BLM authorized officer.
- Barrick would implement the Noxious Weed Management Plan.

Vegetation/Forestry and Woodland Resources

- Reseeding would be consistent with all BLM recommendations for seed mix constituents, application rate, and seeding methods.
- Pinyon pine and juniper that has been removed from the area of the portal pad would be made available to the public.

Public Safety and Access

- Public safety would be maintained throughout the life of the Proposed Action. All equipment and other facilities would be maintained in a safe and orderly manner.
- Speed limits would be posted on the Horse Canyon Haul Road to maintain operational safety. Speed limits would continue to be enforced.

Wildland Fire Protection

- All applicable state and federal fire laws and regulations would be complied with and all reasonable measures would be taken to prevent and suppress fires in the area of the Proposed Action.
- In the event the proposed activities start or cause a wildfire, Barrick would be responsible for all the costs associated with the suppression.
- Barrick would comply with all applicable state and federal fire laws and regulations and all reasonable measures (i.e. extinguisher, water supply at the portal pad, welding controls) would be taken to prevent and suppress fires in the area of the Proposed Action.
- Vehicles would carry fire extinguishers.
- Adequate fire-fighting equipment would be kept at the portal pad.
- Vehicle catalytic converters would be inspected often and cleaned of all brush and grass debris.
- Wildland fires would immediately be reported to the BLM Central Nevada Interagency Dispatch Center at (775) 623-3444. Information reported would include the location (latitude and longitude if possible), fuels involved, time started, who or what is near the fire, and the direction of fire spread.

Livestock and Range Allotments

- Speed limits would be posted on the Horse Canyon Haul Road to protect livestock. Speed limits would be enforced.

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

There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers in the vicinity of the Proposed Action.

There are known cultural resources located within the Project area, however, no surface-disturbing activities are proposed within areas known to contain cultural resources.

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 have effects on the quality of the human environment such that they are highly controversial. The parameters of the Project activities, along with associated reclamation are well established. The Project area is isolated from human habitations. Except for mineral mining, grazing, exploration, and some recreation uses, the Project area is typically uninhabited.

Reclamation measures should return the land to its pre-mining/exploration uses of livestock grazing, mineral exploration, dispersed recreation, and wildlife habitat.

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

There are no known effects of the Proposed Action identified in the EA that are considered highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Project activities similar to what has been included in the Proposed Action have been conducted numerous times over many years on BLM-administered land and the effects are well understood. This is demonstrated through the effects analysis in Chapter 3 of the EA.

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 will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision about a future consideration. Completion of the EA does not establish a precedent for other assessments or authorization of other development projects including additional actions in the Project area. Any future projects within the area or in

surrounding areas will be analyzed on their own merits, independent of the actions currently selected.

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

Direct and indirect impacts of the Proposed Action were analyzed in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) of the EA. None of the environmental impacts disclosed under item 1 above and discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA are considered significant. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions as identified in Chapter 2 of the EA have been considered in the cumulative impacts analysis within Chapter 3 of the EA. The cumulative impacts analysis examined all of the affected resources and all other appropriate actions within the Cumulative Effects Study Areas and determined that the Proposed Action would not incrementally contribute to any significant impacts. In addition, for any actions that might be proposed in the future, further site-specific environmental analysis, including assessment of cumulative impacts, would be required.

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

Eighty four percent of the HC/CUEP Plan boundary has been surveyed and inventoried. These inventories have documented 439 cultural resources, of which 144 resources are eligible, pending eligible, or unevaluated for NRHP. Applicant-committed EPMs including pre-disturbance cultural inventories are implemented with HC/CUEP exploration activities to protect significant cultural resources.

All of the activities in the Proposed Action are located within areas that have been surveyed.

The location of the portal pad was selected to avoid potentially eligible cultural sites and ineligible cultural sites without concurrence. The reallocation of 12 acres to support underground exploration activities would not result in direct or indirect effects to cultural resources. The Proposed Action would be conducted under adherence to the previously approved applicant-committed EPMs detailed in Appendix A. By incorporating these measures, there would be no historic properties affected.

The Proposed Action would not occur within either of the PCRIIs identified within the HC/CUEP Plan boundary.

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 of 1973.***

The USFWS, the Nevada Natural Heritage Program (NNHP), and NDOW were contacted to obtain a list of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species that have the potential to occur within the Project area. In addition, the BLM Sensitive Species List and Special Status Species lists were evaluated.

The Project area does not have any federally-listed threatened or endangered species. The following special status species are known to be within the HC/CUEP region, however, they do not occur within the boundary of the Proposed Action and will not be adversely affected.

Greater Sage-Grouse

There are no greater sage-grouse leks located within 4 miles of the Proposed Action. Greater sage-grouse lek activity surveys were conducted in the spring of 2014 in order to document a baseline status of known leks within 4 miles of the HC/CUEP Plan boundary. Detail on the survey methodology is included in the Wildlife Report⁵. Within 4 miles of the HC/CUEP Plan boundary, five known leks were identified in the 2014 NDOW database, including one inactive lek (Horse Creek 02), two active leks (Horse Creek 01 and New Brock Canyon), and two leks where the status was unknown (Cortez-Grass Valley and Fye Canyon).

Pygmy Rabbit

The existing 420 acres of surface disturbance have not impacted pygmy rabbits. The Proposed Action would not affect suitable pygmy rabbit habitat. There would be no effect on pygmy rabbits as a result of the Proposed Action.

Pale and Dark Kangaroo Mouse

The Proposed Action would not occur in suitable habitat for the pale or dark kangaroo mouse. The 12 acres of surface disturbance for the Proposed Action would occur in Pinyon-Juniper Woodland land cover type, which is not kangaroo mouse habitat. The soil pit near the location of the 12 acres indicated that the soil is well drained, fine loamy alluvium, with a duripan and mollic epipedon, which are soil characteristics not preferred for the pale or dark kangaroo mouse. The Proposed Action would not affect the pale or dark kangaroo mouse.

Burrowing Owl

The Proposed Action would not occur in suitable burrowing owl nesting habitat. This species was not detected during baseline surveys for the 2015 HC/CUEP EA. The Proposed Action would not affect burrowing owls.

⁵Horse Canyon/Cortez Unified Exploration Project, Wildlife Baseline Report. Prepared for Bureau of Land Management, Battle Mountain District Office, Mount Lewis Field Office. July 2014.

Special Status Plant Species

Of the Nevada listed and BLM sensitive species, Beatley buckwheat has been found in HC/CUEP. It is reported as occurring in several locations, including native and reclaimed areas. The Proposed Action would not disturb known occurrences or suitable habitat for the Beatley buckwheat (rocky areas of shrubland and chaparral habitats). Given its seeming tolerance of disturbance and apparent affinity for low competition sites associated with disturbance (including reclamation), the Proposed Action is not anticipated to result in a negative impact on the Beatley buckwheat. The Proposed Action would have no effect on special status plants.

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

The Proposed Action will not violate or threaten to violate any federal, state, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.



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Date