



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Challis Field Office
1151 Blue Mountain Road
Challis, Idaho 83226



In Reply Refer To:
2200/3809/IDI-33145/IDI-35728 (IDI030)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan Amendment (DEIS/DRMPA) for the Proposed Modification to the Thompson Creek Mine Plan of Operations, Section 404 Clean Water Act Permit Application, and Public Land Disposal, Custer and Bannock Counties, Idaho*. There was a 30 day public scoping period for the project pursuant to a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement published in the *Federal Register* on August 3, 2010 (75 FR 45652). The resulting DEIS/DRMPA is available for a 90 day public comment period beginning on the date the US Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability of the DEIS/DRMPA in the *Federal Register*. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will also publish a more detailed notice of availability in the *Federal Register*. The BLM will announce future public meetings for the project and any other public involvement activities at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media releases, and/or mailings. You may submit comments or request your name be added to the mailing list for the project by any of these methods:

- Email: BLM_ID_TCM_EIS@blm.gov;
- Fax: 208-879-6219 (please reference “TCM EIS”); or
- Mail: TCM EIS, Bureau of Land Management, Challis Field Office, 1151 Blue Mountain Road, Challis, ID 83226.

Please be aware that your entire comment – including any personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, email address, etc. – may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask the BLM to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Copies of the DEIS/DRMPA are available in the BLM Challis Field Office at the address listed above from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Copies are also available at http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/TCM-exlx_EIS.html.

The DEIS/DRMPA is not a decision document. However, to be eligible to request administrative review of subsequent proposed decisions or decisions you must submit timely, specific written comments regarding the project during a designated public comment period (please see the Executive Summary for more details).

The DEIS/DRMPA was prepared in response to a modified mining plan of operations (MMPO) and land exchange proposed by Thompson Creek Mining Company. The Thompson Creek Molybdenum Mine is 7 miles northwest of Clayton and 21 miles southwest of Challis in Custer County, Idaho. The mine has been in operation since 1981 and is authorized for approximately 3,300 acres of surface disturbance, of

which approximately 2,300 acres are on private land, approximately 750 acres are on BLM-administered land, and approximately 250 acres are on National Forest System land. The current surface disturbance at the mine is approximately 2,800 acres. The MMPO would allow an approximate 10 year extension of the mine life with the necessary expansion of the waste rock and tailings storage facilities, re-alignment of a power line, and revised long-term water management. These activities would require additional authorized surface disturbance on approximately 200 acres of BLM-administered land, 150 acres of National Forest System land, and 80 acres of private land.

The land exchange proposal is an offer to exchange approximately 900 acres of private lands owned by Thompson Creek Mining Company in Custer and Bannock counties for approximately 5,100 acres of selected, BLM-administered land involving the mine in Custer County. The offered lands are the Broken Wing Ranch (813 acres) in Custer County and the Garden Creek property (80 acres) in Bannock County. The current Challis Resource Management Plan does not identify the selected land as available for disposal. Therefore, in addition to evaluating the land exchange proposal, the DEIS also evaluates amending the resource management plan to identify the selected land as suitable for disposal pursuant to the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976, as amended.

The DEIS presents a set of three MMPO alternatives, and an independent set of five land disposal alternatives. That is, the MMPO alternatives would not be affected by any of the land disposal alternatives; the mine would not operate differently depending on Federal or private ownership of the selected land. The alternatives were developed and analyzed based on issues/concerns identified during the internal and public scoping process. The DEIS will be the basis for decisions by the BLM, US Forest Service, and US Army Corps of Engineers. For the MMPO alternatives, each agency will issue a decision for the portion of the mining operations under the agencies' respective authorities. The major components of the operations subject to these authorities are the following:

- BLM – storage of waste rock south of the open pit and long-term water management;
- US Forest Service – storage of waste rock north of the open pit, expansion of the tailings storage facility, re-alignment of a section of power line; and
- US Army Corps of Engineers – 404 permit for waters of the US that would be filled as part of mining operations.

The BLM will also issue a decision for the land disposal alternatives (exchange, sale, no action). If a land disposal action alternative is selected, the BLM will amend the Challis Resource Management Plan to allow the land disposal to occur. We appreciate your interest in the project. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ken Gardner, project manager, at the BLM Challis Field Office, telephone: (208) 879-6210; email: ksgardner@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/ Todd Kuck
Todd Kuck
Field Manager