

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Environmental Assessment EA # DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2011-0008**

**Four Rivers Field Office  
Almaden Area Competitive Mineral Material Sale  
Environmental Assessment**

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# **Almaden Area Competitive Mineral Material Sale Environmental Assessment # DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2011-0008-EA**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The increased demand for building and landscape rock in the greater Boise metropolitan area, extending from the southern Idaho/Oregon border and to the Emmett and Boise valleys to the east, has been established from numerous requests from the public for sales and the frequent occurrences of rock theft and subsequent trespass cases filed over the past 15 years. The rock type, highly silicified sandstone, is regionally scarce, but available in the proposed project area and Almaden Community Sale Area (Almaden Community Pit - IDI-3444) to the northwest. The increased commercial demand for this material cannot be met by selling permits from the existing Almaden Community Pit, since it is intended for short-term sales to the general public, and limited to five tons per year per person.

## **1.1 Need for and Purpose of Action**

The project's need is established by BLM's responsibility under 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 3601.3, Material Act of July 31, 1947, as amended, which provides authority for the Secretary of the Interior, in his discretion, to dispose of mineral materials not subject to mineral leasing or location on public lands when the benefits to be derived exceed aggregate damage values to public land (43 CFR 3601.6). A competitive mineral material sale, on 160 acres of land adjacent to the Almaden Community Pit and southwest of the patented Almaden Mine, would fill the commercial need and demand.

## **1.2 Summary of Proposed Action**

Conduct a competitive mineral material sale to dispose of 4,000 tons of high-quality, silicified sandstone. The proposed sale would be held using sealed bids, and grant the highest bidder an exclusive five-year contract. The proposed minimum bid would be \$20.00 per ton.

Stone would be removed only from the surface – no excavation or blasting would be allowed. The stone would be removed using rubber tired equipment via overland travel, existing access roads, and two-tracks.

## **1.3 Location and Setting**

The project area is located approximately 16 miles east of Weiser, Idaho, in Washington County, south of the patented Almaden mine and southeast of the Almaden Community Pit in Section 5, T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, SE ¼ (Map 1).

## **1.4 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan**

This action is in conformance with the Cascade Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP-FEIS) that was signed in August 1987 and the Record of Decision (RMP-ROD) that was signed in July 1988. Mineral material disposal is specifically provided for in the following RMP-FEIS and RMP-ROD management direction and guidelines:

RMP-FEIS:

Page 17- “Minerals Management, Saleable: Sands, gravels and other saleable minerals would be made available from three material sites and 16 free use sites. Rationale: The plan recognizes a continuing demand for mineral materials and the policy to make these materials available where consistent with protection of other resource values. The procedure for saleables allows for protection of resource values through the sale agreement and for adequate site rehabilitation after the materials have been removed.”

Page 56- “BLM will manage geological, energy, and minerals resources on the public lands. Geological resources will be managed so that significant scientific, recreational, ecological and educational values will be maintained or enhanced. Generally, the public lands are available for mineral exploration and development, subject to applicable regulations and Federal and State laws.”

“Mineral material sales are discretionary actions. All mineral disposals will be made in accordance with 43 CFR 3600. The general policy shall be to promote the use of existing sites. New sites may be set up if it is determined that an existing site will not meet the applicant’s needs and site impacts can be sufficiently mitigated.” The proposed action would be to set up a new site to meet the needs of applicants that cannot be met through existing sites.

“Exploration for new sites will be the responsibility of the applicant. Exploration will be allowed where appropriate under a letter of authorization from the Area Manager. Sale approval will be subject to environmental analysis and may include stipulations to protect other resources.”

Page 63- “Consistency with Other Plans, Minerals (Energy and Nonenergy): The local land use plan supports the development of mineral resources in a manner compatible with environmental goals (protects streams and minimizes unfavorable visual impacts).”

Page 65- “Implementation, Minerals (Energy and Nonenergy): Procedures outlined in current laws and regulations (federal and state) will be applied to all applications. Mineral reports and environmental assessments will be prepared and appropriate clearances obtained. Standard and special stipulations will be followed.”

## **1.5 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Requirements**

### Migratory Birds

Executive Order 13186 expressly requires that Federal agencies evaluate the effects of proposed actions on migratory birds (including eagles) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) “or other established environmental review process;” restore and enhance the habitat of migratory birds, as practicable; identify where unintentional take reasonably attributable to agency actions is having, or is likely to have, a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations; and, with respect to those actions so identified, the agency shall develop and use principles, standards, and practices that will lessen the amount of unintentional take, developing any such conservation efforts in cooperation with the Service.

### Cultural Resource Laws and Executive Orders

The BLM is required to consult with Native American tribes to “help assure (1) that federally recognized tribal governments and Native American individuals, whose traditional uses of public land might be affected by a proposed action, will have sufficient opportunity to contribute to the decision, and (2) that the decision maker will give tribal concerns proper consideration” (U.S. Department of the Interior, BLM Manual Handbook H-8120-1). Tribal coordination and consultation responsibilities are implemented under laws and executive orders that are specific to cultural resources which are referred to as “cultural resource authorities,” and under regulations that are not specific which are termed “general authorities.” Cultural resource authorities include the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA); Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA); and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, as amended (NAGPRA). General authorities include the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1979 (AIRFA); NEPA; Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA); and Executive Order 13007-Indian Sacred Sites. The proposed action is in compliance with the aforementioned authorities.

Southwest Idaho is the homeland of two culturally and linguistically related tribes: the Northern Shoshone and the Northern Paiute. In the latter half of the 19th century, a reservation was established at Duck Valley on the Nevada/Idaho border west of the Bruneau River. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes residing on the Duck Valley Reservation today actively practice their culture and retain aboriginal rights and/or interests in this area. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes assert aboriginal rights to their traditional homelands as their treaties with the United States, the Boise Valley Treaty of 1864 and the Bruneau Valley Treaty of 1866, which would have extinguished aboriginal title to the lands now federally administered, were never ratified.

Other tribes that have ties to southwest Idaho include the Bannock Tribe and the Nez Perce Tribe. Southeast Idaho is the homeland of the Northern Shoshone Tribe and the Bannock Tribe. In 1867 a reservation was established at Fort Hall in southeastern Idaho. The Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 applies to BLM’s relationship with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. The northern part of the BLM’s Boise District was also inhabited by the Nez Perce Tribe. The Nez Perce signed treaties in 1855, 1863 and 1868. The BLM considers off-reservation treaty-reserved fishing, hunting, gathering, and similar rights of access and resource use on the public lands it administers for all tribes that may be affected by a proposed action.

## **1.6 Scoping and Development of Issues**

### Internal Scoping:

The initial 2004 request for a sale encompassed the entire south half of Section 5 (Map 1). Resource clearances for the area were requested from the Four Rivers Field Office resource specialists in fall 2004. Full range, wildlife, and botany clearances were provided in early 2005. The project was put on hold, by the Four Rivers Field Manager, in February 2007 due to staff and budget shortages. The project was re-introduced, by the proponent requesting the sale, in February 2010. In November 2010, a request for clearance updates, as necessary, was presented to staff.

The field office archaeologist and geologist made a site visit on January 6, 2011; no historic properties were found. On January 11, 2011, the geologist met with the proponent onsite; it was agreed that the competitive sale, if authorized, would be limited to only the SE ¼ of Section 5, where there is a more than adequate amount of the specified sandstone. It was also agreed that limiting the sale to the SE ¼ would avoid impacts to the highly-erosive, slope soils in the SW ¼ of Section 5.

External Scoping:

The project area, 320 acres as initially proposed (south ½ of Section 5), included 20 unpatented mining claims held by Canu Resources. A letter (Appendix A) was sent to Kristina Walcott (Freegold Ventures, Ltd.) in November 2005 informing them of the requested sale, and outlining standard and special stipulations that would protect their mining claim rights.

The letter stated that “should BLM receive a complete and acceptable Mining Plan from Freegold, their representative, licensee, or assignee, and said Mining Plan indicates a conflict of activities between the mining operations and competitive sale, all subsequent sales will be terminated. Your mining claims hold a senior priority to the use of the lands and any resulting conflict will be resolved to the satisfaction of your seniority”.

In the revised, proposed sale (only the SE ¼ of Section 5), 15 of the 20 unpatented mining claims, previously held by Canu Resources, are currently held by Western Standard Metals, USA, Inc. (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Terraco Gold Corporation). On April 26, 2010, a letter (Appendix B) was sent to Charles Sulfrian, Vice President of Exploration, acknowledging BLM’s receipt of a signed and notarized Mineral Materials Waiver (Appendix C) that listed all 15 active unpatented mining claims held by Western Standard Metals, USA, Inc. The letter also reiterates the seniority rights held by the current mining claimants.

On January 31, 2011, an Archaeological and Historic Inventory Record report was signed by Dean Shaw, Archaeologist, and Terry Humphrey, Four Rivers Field Manager. The report was sent to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The BLM, on February 9, 2011, received concurrence from SHPO of BLM’s finding that no historic properties were found in the project area.

On February 8, 2011, Valerie Lenhartz, Boise District Geologist, met with Charles Sulfrian of Terraco Gold Corporation and Bill Houston, an independent land consultant for the company. Terraco Gold’s subsidiary, Western Standard Metals USA, Inc., holds the patented Almaden Mine’s development rights and un-patented mining claims held previously by Canu Resources. Sulfrian and Houston were interested in submitting a Mining Notice, initially, for unpatented mining claims on BLM land in T. 11 N., R. 3 W., Section 32, but stated they would eventually be submitting a drilling program (Mining Notice) for unpatented claims in the proposed project area. The BLM reminded them of their senior rights and assured, if a conflict arose subsequent to their filing of a Mining Notice or Plan, that the conflict would be resolved to their satisfaction.

The proposed project was presented to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes at a March 17, 2011, Boise District Wings and Roots Native American Campfire consultation. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes,

at that time, suggested a visit to the proposed site. Continuing, but unsuccessful, efforts have been made to schedule it. No other comments were made by the Tribes.

The project was posted in the online NEPA register on November 18, 2011. No comments were made by the public.

## **2.0 Description of the Alternatives**

### **2.1 Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail**

#### **2.1.1 Opening a Different Building Stone Site**

This alternative would involve locating and opening an adequate and appropriate competitive bid site at a different location to meet public needs. This alternative was not analyzed in detail due to the scarcity of the rock being sought for landscaping and building materials. Highly silicified sandstone is regionally scarce, but available in the proposed project area and established Almaden Community Sale Area (Almaden Community Pit - IDI-3444) to the northwest. Additionally, the proposed area has access, through the community pit, from an existing County road, whereas other sites within the immediate area may require road building for initial access.

#### **2.1.2 Reject the Proposed Competitive Sale**

This alternative would involve rejecting a competitive sale and opening several non-competitive mineral material sites. This was not analyzed in detail because the proposed sale area is not a pit, but instead a surface resource that lacks a finite location for the stone being sought. The desired stone is randomly scattered across the surface with few well-defined existing trails or roads and the stone removal is random. The surface impacts from multiple sales/contractors in the same area would be greater.

## **2.2 Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives**

### **2.2.1 Alternative A - No Action/Continue Present Management**

No mineral material sale would be authorized for the area. Present management practices and programs (e.g. livestock grazing, dispersed recreation, hunting) on public land would continue to occur.

### **2.2.2 Alternative B - Proposed Action**

A competitive mineral material sale would be authorized in the Boise Meridian, Township 10 North, Range 3 West, Section 5, Southeast 1/4, Washington County, Idaho (Map 1). This action would be in accordance with mineral material regulations, contract terms, the proponent's mining and reclamation plan, and standard and special stipulations. The highest bidder could collect 4,000 tons (approximately 1,646 cubic yards) of surface, highly silicified sandstone within a 160-acre area over five years. Although rock size collected would not be limited, the majority would be between one cubic foot and one cubic yard.

The contract holder would be allowed to drive wheeled trucks capable of picking up large stone cross-country to collect surface stone. Construction of new roads would not be allowed.

Access would be weather dependent; no access would be allowed if the ground is saturated preventing vehicles from getting stuck or causing unnecessary rutting.

Reclamation would include contouring areas, where stone is removed, and planting, to a successful germination, with a BLM-approved seed mixture. Further, any tracks left in the ground by cross country travel would be treated in a like manner, requiring scarification of the tracks to prevent compaction, and seeding with an approved mix.

The contract holder would be required to post a reclamation bond, of sufficient amount to allow BLM to hire a third party contractor, if necessary, to reclaim any disturbance caused by the contractee. This bond would be held until reclamation is completed to the satisfaction of the Authorized Officer.

Compliance inspections by BLM personnel would be performed, at a minimum, annually to ensure compliance with the following standard stipulations and any other requirements.

1. All materials removed would be extracted in accordance with approved conservation practices so as to preserve, to the maximum extent feasible, all scenic, recreational, watershed, and other values of the land and resources.
2. The contractee would ensure vehicles are clean and free of vegetative material and mud/soil before entering the project area. Annual noxious weed inventories would be done by BLM staff and could result in limited overland travel exclusion zones. This means no rock collection or overland travel will be allowed within these exclusion zones. These zones would be brought to the contract holder's attention prior to each year's collection season.
3. Overland access within the sale area would not be allowed between November 15 and April 30, or when soils are saturated, to prevent excessive resource damage, or when vegetation is dry and wildfire potential exists.
4. When antiquities or other objects of historic or scientific interest, including, but not limited to, historic or prehistoric ruins, vertebrate fossils, or artifacts, are discovered in the performance of this contract, the item(s) or condition(s) would be left intact and immediately brought to the attention of the District Manager or his/her Authorized Officer. The contract holder, or anyone working on the contract holder's behalf, would suspend all operations, in the immediate area of such discovery, until written authorization to proceed is issued by the Authorized Officer. An evaluation of the discovery would be made by the Authorized Officer to determine appropriate values. The contract holder would be responsible for the cost of the evaluation. Any decision as to proper mitigation measures would be made by the Authorized Officer after consultation with the contract holder.
5. The contract holder would maintain the area free of trash and refuse during operations and through termination of the sales contract.
6. The contract holder would be responsible for suppression cost of any fires resulting from actions under this contract.

7. Any deviations from the approved reclamation plan and these stipulations would be subject to approval, by the BLM Authorized Officer, prior to such actions.
8. The Authorized Officer may cancel the contract if the holder fails to observe the contract terms and conditions or if the contract has been issued erroneously.
9. The contract holder would indemnify and save harmless the United States of America against any liability for damages to life, person or property arising from the use of the lands under this contract.
10. Proper mufflers and spark arresters would be maintained on equipment used in this project to reduce noise levels and limit fire potential.
11. This contract would not grant the holder exclusive use of the public land identified herein.
12. The competitive sale would not authorize collection of mineral materials from any private lands.
13. Access to the proposed sale area would be through the existing roads within the Almaden Community Pit.
14. All rock would be removed from the surface, leaving only a few divots in the soil where the rock has lain. Absolutely no blasting or quarrying would be permitted.
15. Disturbed areas, including those caused by overland travel, would undergo interim reclamation, to the extent practicable, in the fall at the end of every sale year. Final reclamation would take place at the end of the contract period.
16. A reclamation bond would be required by the contract holder, upon award of the sales contract and prior to the onset of rock extraction.
17. The mining claimants for the approximately 15 unpatented mining claims in the sale area would not be held liable for any environmental infractions in the sale area, unless said infractions are the direct result of actions by the mining claimant, their representatives, licensees, or assignees.
18. If the BLM receives a complete and acceptable Mining Notice or Mining Plan of Operations from a mining claimant, their representative, licensee, or assignee, and said Notice or Plan of Operations indicates a conflict of activities between the mining operations and rock extraction in the sale area, the sales contract would be terminated. The unpatented mining claims hold a senior priority to the use of the lands and any resulting conflict would be resolved to the satisfaction of the mining claimants, their representatives, licensees, or assignees.

### **3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**

#### **General Setting**

The proposed competitive mineral material sale is located on BLM-administered lands (all surface and mineral rights reserved) with active unpatented mining claims. The sale would be located north of Cove Creek and within the area previously known as the Crane Creek

Geothermal Area. Hot springs, associated with the historic Crane Creek Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA), are located six miles north of this proposed sale. Access to the project area is gained either across private land on the south or public land to the north. Direct access is available through the existing community pit which is located directly northwest of the proposed sale area.

Much of the land adjacent to the proposed site has been disturbed and degraded, at one time or another, by fire and extensive mining by the Almaden Mercury Mine. The proposed sale area lies within the Holland Gulch Allotment. The grazing permittee has an annual authorization for 65 cows, from October 1 to December 6, and 143 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). Some off-highway vehicle (OHV) use has also been noted in the area.

The subject lands range in elevation from below 3,000 feet, in the parcel's southern portion, to approximately 3,300 feet in the northeastern corner of the proposed site. All waters from the area's perennial and ephemeral streams and springs have a general westward drainage into the Weiser River, a tributary of the Snake River.

### **3.1 Soils/Mineral Material Resources**

#### **3.1.1 Affected Environment – Soils/Mineral Material Resources**

##### Soils

The area contains one soil type (Deshler-Agerdelly Complex), which is classified as extremely stony soil found on summits and side hills of foothills and lacustrine and dissected lacustrine terraces. Erosion hazards increase with the soil's slope percentages; slopes from 2 to 30 percent have slight to severe hazards while slopes from 30 to 60 percent have very severe erosion hazards. The slopes in the proposed sale area range from 5% in the west central portion to approximately 16% in the southeast.

##### Mineral Material Resources

The predominant mineral material resource is the silicified sandstone, sought for landscape and building materials (Figure 1). The same resource is sold in the Almaden Community Pit to the northwest of the proposed sale area.



Figure 1. Rocks and vegetation characteristic of the proposed Almaden area competitive mineral material sale, Washington County, Idaho

### **3.1.2 Environmental Consequences – Soils/Mineral Material Resources**

#### **3.1.2.1 Alternative A**

##### Soils

Although the soils in the sale area are extremely stony, some minor wind and water erosion could occur with traffic on the existing roads and two-tracks, cross-country recreationists, and continued grazing use.

##### Mineral Material Resources

Occasional rock theft may continue in the sale area, either intentionally or unintentionally, from community pit permit holders unsure of the pit's boundaries. Physical erosion of the rock would occur as a result of wind, precipitation, and freeze-thaw cycles.

#### **3.1.2.2 Alternative B**

##### Soils

Because of its rocky nature, long-term, but negligible, soil impacts could result from increased traffic on existing two tracks and cross-country travel, due to compaction, as vehicles travel to

and from the rock extraction sites. Cross-country travel could disturb or remove vegetation. Over the five-year contract term, a total of one acre of soil would be exposed as rock is removed. There would be a short-term loss of soil on exposed sites until seedings are established. The character of the soils in the project area are very stony and the contractee would only be removing rock on up to 16% slopes so the actual erosion hazard would be slight.

### Mineral Material Resources

Direct impacts to the mineral material resources would be the permanent removal of 4,000 tons that would not be replaced (approximately 1 acre-foot of rock). The proposed site, for the sake of analysis, would still contain 159 acres of rock, although a particular size range would be depleted to some degree throughout the 160 acre sales area.

## **3.2 Upland Vegetation/Noxious and Invasive Species/Special Status Plants**

### **3.2.1 Affected Environment – Upland Vegetation/Noxious and Invasive Species/Special Status Plants**

#### Upland Vegetation/Noxious and Invasive Species

The proposed sale area occurs on predominantly south facing slopes ranging from 3,000 to 3,300 feet in elevation. The entire 160 acres burned in either 2001 (74%) or 2005 (75%), with approximately 50% burning twice. Prior to the fires, the primary vegetation communities included bunchgrass, Wyoming big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, stiff sage, and annual grass communities (Figure 1). Post-fire communities are dominated by exotic species, including medusahead, cheatgrass, and storksbill, and reduced levels of native perennial grasses (bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, squirreltail) and forbs (Gray's biscuitroot, annual sunflower).

Noxious weeds, including perennial pepperweed, rush skeletonweed, scotch thistle, field bindweed, leafy spurge, and yellow starthistle have been documented in the area. The only known yellow starthistle infestation on BLM within Washington County is immediately adjacent to and encroaching into the proposed sale area (Map 1).

#### Special Status Plants

No listed plant species are known to occur in the project area. The project area was surveyed by a BLM botanist on April 5, 2005; no special status plants or habitats were found. Much of the area has been highly disturbed by fire. A population of Snake River goldenweed (*Pyrocoma radiata*), a BLM Type 3 special status species (Regional/ State Imperiled Species), is located 0.6 miles northeast of the area on a steep, east facing slope. The proposed sale area does not have similar habitat as it is mostly gradual slopes that are south to southwest facing. Therefore, impacts to special status plants will not be discussed.

### **3.2.2 Environmental Consequences – Upland Vegetation/Noxious and Invasive Species/Special Status Plants**

#### **3.2.2.1 Alternative A**

#### Upland Vegetation/Noxious and Invasive Species

Exotic annual species would dominate over the short- (less than 5 years) and long-terms (5-20 years). Medusahead and cheatgrass generally out-compete native species for water and nutrients. With the exception of Sandberg bluegrass, exotic annuals green-up and cure sooner than perennial grasses. Because they grow at greater densities than perennial grasses, exotic annual stands are characterized by continuous fuels. Fire frequency in annual dominated stands would be greater (e.g. shorter return interval between fires) over the long term. Exotic annuals are better adapted to more frequent fires than perennial grasses and forbs; therefore, increased fire frequency would result in the long-term decline of perennial grasses and forbs over the majority of the area. Some reestablishment of shrub species, from adjacent seed sources, could occur; however, this could happen only in areas where there was no fire over the long term, and exotic annual grasses were not the dominant species.

The size and number of noxious weed populations would remain static or increase slowly over the long term. Populations that are consistently treated could be controlled or eliminated. However, because the area is in a degraded condition (dominated by annuals), it would remain susceptible to new infestations where seeds are introduced by outside sources (e.g. livestock, off-highway vehicles, wildlife).

### **3.2.2.2 Alternative B**

#### Upland Vegetation/Noxious and Invasive Species

The condition and trend of upland vegetation would be similar to that described in Alternative A; however, perennial species would likely decline faster than in Alternative A in areas disturbed by repeated overland travel. Vegetation would be affected by overland travel, changes in vegetation composition caused by operator activities, and exposure of new areas to noxious weeds. The impacts described below related to plant damage and introduction and spread of noxious and invasive species would be increased where overland travel by the contractee encourages overland travel by recreationists.

Overland travel could damage or kill native perennial plants. The extent and severity of impacts would depend on the timing, type of plant, and degree of disturbance (number of vehicle passes, area covered). Grasses and forbs would be most susceptible when travel occurred during the active growing period (generally April-June). Repeated passes by a vehicle would increase the likelihood of damage or mortality regardless of the season. Root-sprouting shrubs (e.g. rabbitbrush) could survive some degree of disturbance (1-4 passes); whereas non-sprouting shrubs (e.g. sagebrush, bitterbrush) could be killed by one vehicle pass. Exotic annuals would not be adversely affected by overland travel, and would likely benefit from reduced competition by perennials and assisted seed dispersal over the short and long term.

Disturbed areas (e.g. where overland travel damaged or killed perennial species, bare soil exposed by rock removal) would be more susceptible to the establishment of noxious and invasive species. The degree of shift from perennial species to noxious and invasive species in disturbed areas would depend on the success of implementing stipulations designed to reduce impacts from overland travel.

The requirement to wash vehicles prior to bringing them into the area would help reduce the risk of introducing new species of noxious weeds; however, overland travel would help spread

existing species. Adherence to the overland access stipulations will also help reduce the effects of noxious weed spread, in particular, yellow starthistle.

The requirement to seed disturbed areas with desirable species in the fall would have minimal benefits over the long term. Establishment of seedlings increases when perennial species are seeded at relatively high rates (e.g. >10 pounds/acre for grasses). However, the competitive advantage and abundant seed production of exotic annuals, lack of exotic annual control, fire disturbances, and unpredictable growing conditions (e.g. adequate moisture until seedlings are established) would likely result in a low (<30%) level of success over the long term. Because of the lack of natural seed sources, annual rehabilitation seeding could result in the establishment of desirable species where they would not likely become established in Alternative A. Long-term habitat loss could occur where activities associated with rock removal result in increased and expanded OHV use.

### **3.3 Wildlife/Special Status Animals**

#### **3.3.1 Affected Environment – Wildlife/Special Status Animals**

##### Wildlife

*Mammals* – The proposed sale area occurs in crucial elk winter range, characterized by generally south-facing slopes dominated by grasses, and which remain relatively snow-free. Loss of perennial grasses and human disturbance or encroachment are the primary threats to elk winter range. Medusahead and cheatgrass provide less desirable winter forage than native perennial bunchgrasses. Grasslands also provide year-round habitat for a variety of small mammals and the predators that feed on them (e.g. coyotes).

*Birds* – The area supports a variety of grassland, rock outcrop, and disturbance-adapted species, including chukar, horned lark, rock wren, and western meadowlark. These species are year-round residents, nest on the ground (primarily April-mid June), and forage on seeds, insects, and green vegetation.

*Reptiles and Amphibians* – The area likely supports a variety of lizards (western fence, sagebrush, side-blotched, western whiptail, and desert horned), snakes (gopher, racer, and western rattlesnake), and toads (spadefoot, western, and Woodhouse). Rocky outcrops and adjacent uplands provide foraging, breeding, and hibernacula habitat for reptiles. Toads utilize intact upland habitats adjacent to wetland areas. Because the area is almost a mile from the nearest water source, use of the area by toads would be minimal.

##### Special Status Animals

No federally listed species are known to occur in the proposed sale area. However, the area falls within the range of the southern Idaho ground squirrel (SIDGS) and greater sage-grouse (both candidate species under the Endangered Species Act).

*Southern Idaho Ground Squirrel* – No known SIDGS populations occur at or adjacent to the proposed site, but do occur to the south and northwest. The area was surveyed on the ground and by helicopter in 2005. Due to the thin rocky nature of the soil and the predominance of medusahead, the area does not provide suitable squirrel habitat. They require deep, loamy soils

for burrows, and cannot digest medusahead, which has a high silicon content. Therefore, impacts to SIDGS will not be discussed.

*Greater Sage-grouse* – The proposed sale area is classified as Type II habitat (Annual Grassland) for sage-grouse. The nearest lek is approximately three miles to the northeast. Because most of the area burned in 2001 and 2005, it does not currently provide adequate habitat for nesting (e.g. big sagebrush, deep-rooted perennial grasses), brood-rearing (e.g. native perennial forbs), or wintering (e.g. low or big sagebrush) sage-grouse.

The following BLM Type 3 special status species could occur in the area: prairie falcon, loggerhead shrike, Brewer's sparrow, and sage sparrow. All are migratory and use the area from late winter through summer. Prairie falcons forage on small mammals (especially ground squirrels), lizards, and insects, and nest in rocky outcrops and cliffs. Shrikes and sparrows are sagebrush-dependent species, nesting in sagebrush and foraging on insects and small vertebrates (shrikes) or seeds and insects (sparrows).

Due to the lack of sagebrush, it is unlikely that sagebrush-dependent species utilize the area for nesting or brood rearing. However, intact sagebrush communities occur within 0.6 miles; therefore, the area may provide transitional range or foraging areas for some species.

### **3.3.2 Environmental Consequences – Wildlife/Special Status Animals**

General impacts to wildlife from human activities could include mortality, disruption of normal behaviors, and alteration or destruction of habitat.

**Mortality** – Cross-country travel could cause mortality where animals are unable to escape due to limited mobility (e.g. nesting birds, unprotected eggs, mammals and reptiles in shallow burrows, hibernating reptiles).

**Disruption of behavior** – Human activity could result in short-term behavior disruptions associated with the presence of humans (generally less than two hours). Wildlife responses to human disruptions could include interruption of feeding and breeding activities and short-term avoidance of areas. Longer term adverse effects to animal fitness could occur where disruptions occur over an extended period of time (e.g. winter).

**Habitat alteration or loss** – Human activity could alter vegetation composition through changes in noxious weed levels, either reductions through control activities or increases through introduction and spread, or increases in desirable (planting) or undesirable (introduction and spread or fire) species. Where habitat quality is degraded, through increases in noxious weed and undesirable plant cover, wildlife fitness and reproductive success would decline. Where habitat quality is improved, by decreases in noxious weeds and/or increases in desirable plants, wildlife fitness and reproductive success could increase.

#### **3.3.2.1 Alternative A**

##### Wildlife

Areas dominated by exotic annual grasses would provide poor quality winter habitat for elk, over the long term. Areas dominated by native perennial grasses and where shrubs are re-established would provide fair to good quality winter range, but would be expected to make up a minority of the area. Small infestations of noxious weeds would degrade wildlife habitat, in localized areas, over the long term.

Grassland and disturbance-associated species (e.g. chukar, horned lark, and western meadowlark) would dominate over the long term. Shrub cover would not increase enough to support sagebrush-obligate species. Human-caused disturbance factors and mortality would generally be limited, and have minimal effects on birds. The amount of surface rock would limit cross-country travel during breeding, nesting, and brood rearing. Hunting activity would be expected to remain similar to current levels over the long term.

Surface and sub-surface rock would provide good quality escape cover and hibernacula over the long term. Foraging habitat, primarily for insects, would be fair to poor, over the long term, from the lack of vegetation structure and species diversity.

#### Special Status Animals

The area would provide marginal habitat for sagebrush-obligate species (e.g. sage-grouse, loggerhead shrike, Brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow) over the long term. Periodic fires and limited shrub recruitment would result in low levels of sagebrush cover (less than 5%).

Sagebrush-obligate species generally require large contiguous blocks of shrubs characterized by 15%-25% shrub cover. The area would not provide nesting, brood-rearing or winter habitat for sage-grouse over the long term.

### **3.3.2.2 Alternative B**

#### Wildlife

The quality of elk winter range would be similar to Alternative A, over the long term. While rock removal would not occur during the winter, elk could be adversely affected where disturbed areas encourage increased OHV activity. However, substantial amounts of residual surface rock would be expected to limit OHV activity and consequently adverse impacts to elk. Changes in the amount of desirable plants and noxious weeds caused by the proposed action (either slight increases or decreases depending on success of seedings and treatments) would have negligible effect on winter range because they would occur over a small area (a portion of the 160 acres), and habitat conditions are already degraded over a much larger area, from being burned one or more times since 1957.

Rock removal activities could cause adverse impacts to resident mammals. Cross-country travel could collapse shallow burrows causing mortality. Animals in deeper burrows or in burrows protected by rocks would be minimally affected. Human activity would cause short-term avoidance of areas during the late spring and fall.

Rock removal activities would coincide with late nesting and brood rearing periods; therefore, some mortality from cross-country travel would be expected. Mortality would be low because nest density is limited in poor quality habitat (1-2 nests/5 acres), and the actual area impacted by vehicle activity would be limited in a given year (less than five acres). Any changes in habitat

quality (either improvement or degradation) caused by the proposed action, over the long term, would happen over small areas and result in negligible habitat impacts. The exception would be where removal activity results in large scale increases in noxious weeds, and a concurrent loss of more desirable plant species.

Removal of medium and large rocks would have adverse impacts to reptiles over the short and long terms. Larger rocks provide important escape cover and hibernacula. While a relatively small amount of material would be removed from the area (approximately one acre foot), the selection of medium and large rocks could disproportionately affect reptiles. However, the area's relative abundance of rock material could limit the impact as adequate cover would remain.

#### Special Status Animals

Impacts to special status animals would be similar to Alternative A. While the rocks generally do not provide habitat, disturbance and habitat alterations could cause low-level impacts. Disturbance would occur primarily during nesting and brood-rearing periods; however, impacts would be negligible as little or no nesting habitat (sagebrush) occurs in the area. Special status animals that use the area for foraging could readily avoid human activity. Increases or decreases in desirable habitat would occur over relatively small areas and have little effect.

### **3.4 Cultural Resources**

#### **3.4.1 Affected Environment – Cultural Resources**

Three previous inventories were conducted; two within the area of potential effect (APE) and one adjacent to it. No historic properties within the APE were identified. A Class III Cultural Resource Survey was conducted on 22 acres (two miles) along the perimeter of the APE in January 2011. No historic properties were identified then.

#### **3.4.2 Environmental Consequences – Cultural Resources**

##### **3.4.2.1 Alternative A**

The integrity of any area historic properties would be maintained over the long term. Any integrity loss would be the result of changes in vegetative conditions or increases in recreational activity. Direct loss, due to fires, has likely already occurred; however, some loss from erosion after fires could occur. Because of the amount of rock cover, erosion, and recreational OHV use, degradation would be minimal.

##### **3.4.2.2 Alternative B**

Some changes in integrity of historic properties could happen where properties occur in disturbance areas (e.g. cross-country travel, rock removal); however, the standard stipulations would protect any historical properties that may be discovered during the removal of surface rocks within the APE. Other impacts to historical properties would be as described in Alternative A; however, potential increased recreational use could result in more degradation than in Alternative A.

## **3.5 Visual Resource Management/Recreation**

### **3.5.1 Affected Environment – Visual Resource Management/Recreation**

The area is rated as Class III for visual resource management (VRM). The evidence of human activity is limited, (e.g. linear features such as fencing, livestock grazing); however, substantial human activity is visible from the site (e.g. Almaden Mine and Almaden community rock pit to the north). The management objectives for Class III are:

- To partially retain the existing character of the landscape
- The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate
- Management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer
- Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape

Off-road vehicle travel is limited to existing or designated roads and trails (RMP-FEIS, Map 5). There are two-track roads and maintained gravel roads in the vicinity; however, due to the substantial amounts of surface rock, there are only 0.25 miles of lightly used, two-track roads in the 160-acre area's northeastern portion. Hunting, hiking, rock collecting, and horseback riding are the area's primary recreational uses.

### **3.5.2 Environmental Consequences – Visual Resource Management/Recreation**

#### **3.5.2.1 Alternative A**

The Class III VRM rating would be maintained over the long term. The amount of roads and physical changes caused by humans would not be expected to change.

#### **3.5.2.2 Alternative B**

Rock removal would result in a minimal change in the characteristic landscape. Vegetation loss from disturbed areas would essentially be unnoticeable within a few years as seeded or exotic species re-vegetate bare ground. Cross-country travel by the contractee could encourage increased casual recreational use resulting in more two-track roads over the long term; however, the potential for increase would be low due to the rocky terrain.

## **3.6 Cumulative Impacts**

### **3.6.1 Scope of Analysis**

The 24,500 acre Lower Crane Creek watershed was used for the analysis area for soil/mineral material, vegetation, and wildlife resources (Map 2). The majority of the area is in private ownership (approximately 80%), and the remainder are public (17%) or State of Idaho endowment lands (3%). Elevations range from 2,000 feet on the west to 4,000 feet on the east.

### **3.6.2 Current Conditions**

Soils in the northern and eastern half of the watershed are dominated by surface rock, with very low erosion potential. Soils in the southwestern portion have a lower surface rock component, with a low to moderate erosion potential. Approximately 50% of the area has burned at least once since 1959, and about 20% has burned twice. Unburned areas are dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush or stiff sagebrush with perennial and annual grass understories. Some shrub cover has reestablished in areas burned prior to 2000; however, exotic annual grasses (medusahead, cheatgrass) dominate recently burned and previously burned areas with little or no shrub cover. Cultivated agriculture occurs on approximately 1% of land; the remainder is managed as rangeland. The majority of the watershed is crucial winter range for elk and winter range for mule deer.

The primary area activities include livestock grazing, mining, and recreation.

- The watershed includes portions of eight allotments in the Weiser River Management Area (Barker Individual, Cove Springs, Crane Creek, Holland Gulch, M. Brent Individual, Paddock Valley, Pleasant View, and Weiser Cove). Rangeland health assessments have not been conducted on the Barker Individual, Cove Springs, and Pleasant View allotments; but have been conducted on Crane Creek (July 2005), Holland Gulch (October 2005), M. Brent Individual (August 2010), Paddock Valley (June/July 2005, June/July 2006), and Weiser Cove (September 2005) allotments. The allotments are used in the spring (Barker Individual, Holland Gulch, Paddock Valley, Pleasant View), spring-fall (Crane Creek) or spring and fall (Cove Springs, Weiser Cove) primarily by cattle, with sheep use also in the Crane Creek and Paddock Valley allotments.
- There is a patented mining claim for the 340-acre Almaden Mine on private land (T. 11 N., R. 03 W., Sections 32 and 33; T. 10 N., R. 03 W., Sections 4 and 5). Gold and mercury were mined from the claim, which is not currently active. The majority of the claim is disturbed, with limited reclaimed areas.
- The BLM maintains a 240-acre community pit for landscape rock in T. 11 N., R. 03 W., Section 32 and T. 10 N., R. 03 W., Section 5 (Map 1). Since 2004, an average of 72 tons/year has been removed. Cross-country travel and heavy equipment use are allowed. The pit is closed during the winter and wet periods. Fees are included in permit sales for reclamation, which is conducted on an as-needed basis. Some landscape rock has been removed from private land to the north of the community pit.
- Dispersed recreational uses include hunting (primarily fall) and OHV use (primarily spring and fall, with some winter use at lower elevations). The watershed is part of Idaho Department of Fish and Game's management unit 32. The majority of public lands are designated as limited to existing or designated roads and trails for OHVs and the remaining 30% are designated as open. There are approximately 45 miles of improved (gravel, paved) roads and 80 miles of unimproved roads and trails throughout the watershed. OHV use occurs primarily on existing roads and trails because of access limitations caused by ownership and substantial amounts of surface rock. Fruitland, Payette, New Plymouth, Ontario (Oregon), and Weiser are within 15 miles of the watershed.

### **3.6.3 Environmental Consequences –Soils/Mineral Material Resources**

Spring livestock and recreational use occurs when soils are moist and susceptible to damage. Livestock use is widespread; however, the greatest potential for damage occurs in concentrated use areas (e.g. watering, salting, and gently sloped areas). Impacts from OHVs occur primarily on established roads and trails. The proposed action would represent a negligible increase in soil impacts in the watershed because of the small area affected (less than one percent over a five year period) and short duration (generally until vegetation is reestablished).

An average of 800 tons/year could be removed by the proposed action, a ten-fold increase over the current removal rate at the community pit. However, the total removal of one acre-foot of mineral material would be a negligible amount relative to what is present in the watershed.

### **3.6.4 Environmental Consequences –Upland Vegetation/Noxious and Invasive Species/Special Status Plants**

Livestock use has the greatest potential to adversely affect perennial grasses when it occurs during the active growing period (i.e., spring). These adverse effects can be reduced by light stocking rates and  $\leq 30\%$  utilization levels. The eight allotments are moderately stocked at 4-7 acres/AUM. Livestock trampling can damage or kill plants when soils are saturated or in concentrated use areas. Cross-country OHV use can damage or kill plants throughout the year, whereas travel on existing roads and trails would have negligible vegetative impacts. Fires have given a competitive advantage to exotic annual species. Frequency of perennials would be expected to decrease where new areas burn or areas reburn. The proposed action would have a negligible effect on loss of perennials, exotic annual increases, or damage to plants because it would affect small areas, annually, relative to the widespread areas affected by livestock and fires.

Activities that disturb soils create opportunities for noxious weed establishment or spread. Livestock and OHVs can bring weed seeds from outside the area or move them within the area. The potential for increased weeds from the proposed project would be negligible because roads, OHVs, and livestock use are widespread in the watershed.

### **3.6.5 Environmental Consequences – Wildlife/Special Status Animals**

OHV activity can disrupt behavior and cause animal mortality (from direct strikes or where cross-country travel collapses burrows or crushes nests). These impacts increase with the level of use or speed. High OHV use levels in the spring correspond with breeding, nesting, birthing, and rearing periods for many species. Livestock generally cause limited mortality (trampling of nests) and behavioral disturbance. Repeated fire occurrences and high levels of grazing and OHV use can also reduce habitat conditions over the long term. Because the proposed and current mineral material and mining activities would occur in small, previously disturbed areas (approximately 3% of the watershed), the proposed action would only slightly increase impacts to habitat quality and quantity, mortality, and animal behavior.

## **4.0 Consultation and Coordination**

#### **4.1 List of Preparers/Reviewers**

Valerie Lenhartzen, Geologist  
Jill Holderman, Wildlife Biologist  
Lonnie Huter, Weed Management Specialist  
Dean Shaw, Archaeologist  
Mark Steiger, Botanist  
Matt McCoy, Assistant Four Rivers Field Manager  
Terry Humphrey, Four Rivers Field Manager  
Seth Flanigan, NEPA Specialist  
Jonathan Beck, Planning and Environmental Coordinator  
Barbara Albiston, District Writer-Editor

#### **4.2 List of Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals Consulted**

Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation

Kristina Walcott, Freegold Ventures, Ltd.,  
2303 West 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada  
V6M 2A3

Charles Sulfrian  
Vice President, Exploration  
Western Standard Metals USA, Inc.  
2153 Gold Camp Road  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906-5842

#### **4.3 Public Participation**

The proposed action was listed on the BLM ePlanning NEPA Register website on November 18, 2010: [https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa\\_register.do](https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do). No comments from the public have been received. The proposed project was presented for consultation with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes at a March 17, 2011, Boise District Wings and Roots Native American Campfire. The Tribes had no specific comments.

#### **5.0 Literature Cited**

USDOI BLM. 2004. Almaden Community Pit, Environmental Assessment # ID-095-2003-038

USDOI BLM. 1987. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Boise District, Cascade Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement.

USDOI BLM. 1988. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Boise District, Cascade Resource Management Plan Record of Decision.

## 6.0 Appendices

## Appendix A



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Boise District Office

3948 Development Avenue

Boise, Idaho 83705

<http://www.id.blm.gov/offices/lsrcd>



In Reply Refer To:

3600 (110)

IDI-34868

### REGISTERED MAIL

Kristina Walcott  
Freegold Ventures, Ltd.  
2303 West 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada  
V6M 2A3

Dear Ms. Walcott,

Due to the intense population growth in the Treasure Valley, there has been much interest from local contractors for decorative rock in the area surrounding the Almaden Mine. The Almaden Mine Community Pit is only open for sales to the general public and not to commercial operations. Due to the high quality of sandstone and the continuing demands from commercial operators, the BLM is proposing to hold a competitive sale for decorative rock in the following location:

T10N, R3W, Section 5, S½,

which has approximately 20 active unpatented mining claims held by CANU Resources.

Stipulations addressed in the Almaden Community Pit will also be applied to this Competitive Sale. The following issues will be adhered to:

- Freegold will not be held liable for any environmental infractions, in the proposed rock sale area, unless said infractions are the direct result of actions by Freegold, their representatives, licensee's or assignee's.
- Assuming that the attached map is correct (map that you sent to us that has been revised to show area of interest), the area defined as proposed open pits is fully outside of the area that we propose for competitive sale of surface rock and will not be affected by this sale.
- This competitive sale will not be a quarry.

- All rock will be removed from the surface only and nothing will be evident of said removal other than a few divots in the soil where the rock had lain.
- Disturbed areas will be reclaimed and reseeded upon completion of the competitive sale.
- A reclamation bond will be required by the contractor that receives the competitive sale permit.
- Mechanized equipment will be allowed and all tracks/roads will be reclaimed upon completion.
- Absolutely no blasting will be permitted.
- This competitive rock sale will be a large-scale material sale for approximately 2,000 tons of rock.
- If the BLM receives a complete and acceptable Mining Plan from Freegold, their representative, licensee, or assignee, and said Mining Plan indicates a conflict of activities between the mining operations and competitive sale, all subsequent sales will be terminated. Your mining claims hold a senior priority to the use of the lands and any resulting conflict will be resolved to the satisfaction of your seniority.

If you have questions for which we can be of assistance, please feel free to contact Clint Hughes, of my staff, at (208) 384-3395.

Sincerely,

/s/

Rosemary Thomas,  
Four Rivers Field Manager

cc: CF/RF

2 Enclosures  
Map  
Standard stipulations

## Appendix B



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Boise District Office

3948 Development Avenue

Boise, Idaho 83705

<http://www.id.blm.gov/offices/lsrcd>



In Reply Refer To:

3600 (110)

IDI-34868

April 26, 2011

CERTIFIED MAIL -- RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Charles Sulfrian  
Vice President, Exploration  
Western Standard Metals USA, Inc.  
2153 Gold Camp Road  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906-5842

Dear Mr. Sulfrian,

Due to the intense population growth in the Treasure Valley, there has been much interest from local contractors for decorative rock in the area surrounding the Almaden Mine. The Almaden Community Pit is only open for sales to the general public and not to commercial operations. Due to the high quality of sandstone and the continuing demands from commercial operators, the BLM is proposing to hold a competitive sale for decorative rock in the following location:

T10N, R3W, Section 5, SE 1/4,

The location of the proposed sale has approximately 15 active unpatented mining claims held by Western Standard Metals USA, Inc., (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Terraco Gold Corp.).

On April 20, 2011, we provided you with an electronic copy of a Mineral Materials Waiver that listed all 15 active unpatented mining claims that are either wholly within or partially within the proposed commercial sales area. On April 21, you returned a signed and notarized electronic copy of the Mineral Materials Waiver (Attachment 1).

Stipulations addressed in the Almaden Community Pit will also be applied to this Competitive Sale (Attachment 2). The following issues will be adhered to:

- Western Standard Metals USA, Inc. will not be held liable for any environmental infractions in the proposed rock sale area, unless said infractions are the direct result of actions by Western Standard Metals USA, Inc. their representatives, licensee's or assignee's.
- This competitive sale will not be a quarry.

Almaden Area Competitive Mineral Material Sale  
EA # DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2011-0008-EA

## Appendix B (continued)

- All rock will be removed from the surface only and nothing will be evident of said removal other than a few divots in the soil where the rock had lain.
- Disturbed areas will be reclaimed and reseeded to the extent practicable annually and in full upon completion of the competitive sale.
- A reclamation bond will be required by the contractor that receives the competitive sale contract.
- Mechanized equipment will be allowed and all tracks/roads will be fully reclaimed upon completion of the contract term.
- Absolutely no blasting will be permitted.
- This competitive rock sale will be a large-scale material sale for approximately 4,000 tons of surface sandstone. The non-renewable sales contract term will be for five years with a possible one year extension.
- If the BLM receives a complete and acceptable Mining Notice or Plan of Operations from Western Standard Metals USA, Inc., their representative, licensee, or assignee, and said Mining Notice or Plan of Operations indicate a conflict of activities between the mining exploration or operations and the competitive sale, all subsequent sales will be terminated. Your mining claims hold a senior priority to the use of the lands and any resulting conflict will be resolved to the satisfaction of your seniority.

If you have questions for which we can be of assistance, please feel free to contact Valerie Lenhartzen, of my staff, at (208) 384-3395.

Sincerely,

/s/

Terry A. Humphrey,  
Field Office Manager  
Four Rivers Field Office

cc: CF/RF;  
Bill Snoddy  
Project manager – Almaden Project  
TGC Holdings, Ltd.  
141 E. 2nd  
Weiser, ID 83762

**Appendix B (continued)**

2 Enclosures

Notarized Mineral Materials Waiver

Mineral Materials Competitive Sale Stipulations

### Mineral Materials Waiver

The undersigned owner(s) of the mining claim(s) and/or millsite(s) listed below hereby waive any and all rights to any mineral materials on the surface of the listed mining claim(s) defined below. The Secretary of the Interior has independent authority to dispose of these mineral materials under the Materials Act of 1947, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 601, when such disposal will not “endanger or materially interfere with prospecting, mining or processing operations or uses reasonably incident thereto.” 30 U.S.C. § 612(b). By accepting this waiver, the Bureau of Land Management does not acknowledge that the claimant has nor had any rights to any of the surface mineral materials at issue.

List below all mining claims and/or millsites to which this waiver applies.

<u>Claim Name</u>	<u>BLM Recordation Serial No.</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Instrument Number /Recordation Book</u>	<u>Page</u>
IA #46	IMC 14645	Washington	117331;21	658
IA #47	IMC 14646	Washington	117332;21	659
IA #48	IMC 14647	Washington	117333;21	660
IA #49	IMC 14648	Washington	117334;21	661
IA #50	IMC 14649	Washington	117335;21	662
IA #51	IMC 14650	Washington	117336;21	663
IA #52	IMC 14651	Washington	117337;21	664
IA #53	IMC 14652	Washington	117338;21	665
IA #20	IMC 14619	Washington	117305;21	632
IA #21	IMC 14620	Washington	117306;21	633
IA #22	IMC 14621	Washington	117307;21	634
IA #23	IMC 14622	Washington	117308;21	635
IA #79	IMC 14678	Washington	117364;21	691
IA #80	IMC 14679	Washington	117365;21	692
IA #81	IMC 14680	Washington	117366;21	693

**Appendix C (continued)**

If there are any claims listed above to which this waiver is to apply only in part, list those claims below and describe the portion of the claim to which the waiver applies.

<u>Claim Name</u>	<u>Description of land portion</u>
IA #20	BM., T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, SE1/4
IA #21	BM., T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, SE1/4
IA #22	BM., T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, SE1/4
IA #23	BM., T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, NE1/4 SE1/4
IA #79	BM., T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, SE1/4
IA #80	BM., T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, SE1/4
IA #81	BM., T. 10 N., R. 3 W., Section 5, SW1/4 SE1/4

List below the owner(s) listed in the official record of the Bureau of Land Management for the above mining claim(s) and/or millsite(s).

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Zip</u>
Western Standard Metals, USA	2153 Gold Camp Road, Colorado Springs	CO	80906-5842

This waiver is filed by the above listed owner(s) in the State of Idaho.

For: Western Standard Minerals, USA

Subscribed and sworn to before me this

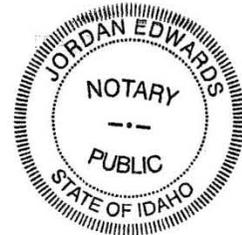
21<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2011.

CHARLES SUTRAN  
 (Owner's Name - Please Print)  
 Vice President, Exploration

Jordan Edwards  
 (Notary Public)

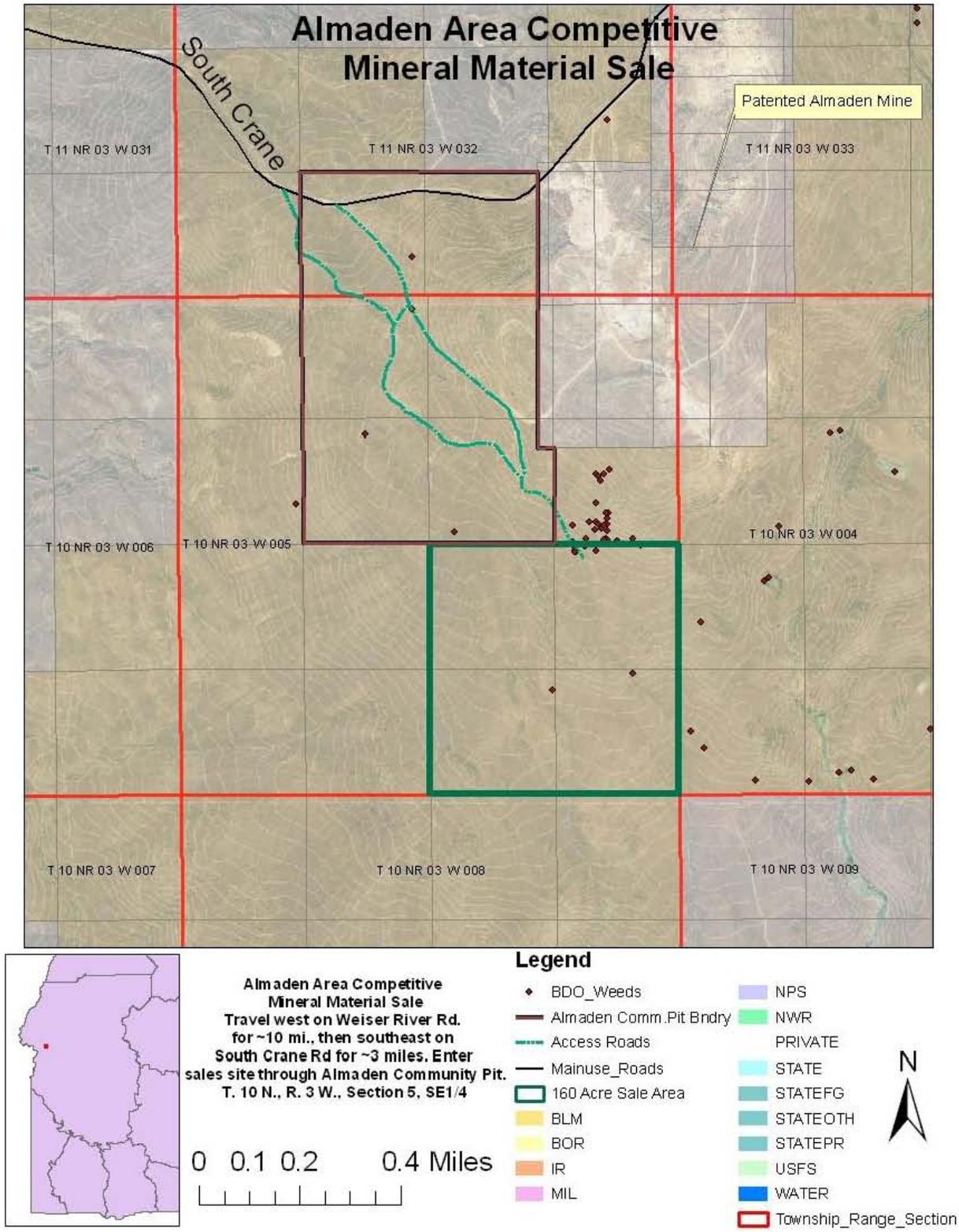
[Signature]  
 (Owner's Signature)

3/26/11  
 (Date Commission Expires)



## 7.0 Maps

**Map 1. Proposed Almaden Area Competitive Mineral Material Sale Site and Existing Community Pit, Washington County, Idaho**



**Map 2. Proposed Almaden Area Competitive Mineral Material Sale Site and Cumulative Effects Analysis Area**

