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Bureau of Land Management

News Release

BLM California Desert District Office
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BLM approves SMP Gold Corporation Exploratory Drilling Project in Imperial County

EL CENTRO, Calif. - The Bureau of Land Management has approved SMP Gold Corporation to move forward with mineral exploration on public lands within the Oro Cruz Pit Area in the Cargo Muchacho Mountains in Imperial County, with requirements to take measures to avoid or mitigate conflicts with natural, cultural, and historic resources in the area.

The project area is in the Picacho [Area of Critical Environmental Concern](#), which encompasses 183,970 acres of public lands and contains important cultural resources and historic properties, including the Tumco historic gold mining district. The area also serves as a critical habitat for desert tortoise and a movement corridor for wildlife species, including bighorn sheep and mule deer.

“The plan includes important measures to protect the habitat and other essential resources surrounding the project area, such as actions to avoid or mitigate any conflicts with the Mojave desert tortoise,” said **Jennifer Whyte, Acting BLM El Centro Field Manager**. “BLM is committed to balanced use of public lands, supporting responsible development alongside conservation and resource protection.”

The decision allows the company to drill up to 65 holes and temporarily disturb about 20 acres of BLM lands until the project’s completion, which is expected within about five years of its commencement. As part of the project, the company will construct new temporary access roads, improve existing roads, create helicopter landing pads, install drill pads and create a staging area.

Most of the proposed drilling locations lie within areas previously disturbed by the American Girl Mining Joint Venture mining project, which concluded in 1996. The project will include reclamation and monitoring at each drill site — it will not create any new permanent drill sites.

The Decision Record, environmental assessment and associated documents will be available for public review by Friday, Sept 1, online at the [BLM NEPA Register](#), or by stopping at the El Centro Field Office located at 1661 South 4th Street in El Centro, California.

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