UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Vale District, Malheur Field Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, OR 97918

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

for McDermitt Exploration Project Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-ORWA-V000-2023-0045-EA

INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Malheur Field Office (MFO) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for HiTech Minerals, Inc. (HiTech), a wholly owned subsidiary of Jindalee Lithium Limited, to conduct phased mineral exploration activities. The McDermitt Exploration Project (Project) is located approximately 20 miles west of McDermitt, Nevada, in Malheur County, Oregon. This is a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and applies to Alternative B, the proposed action (EA Section 1.1).

The Project Area is comprised of 7,200 acres of mining claims (claims) on public lands administered by the BLM MFO. HiTech would construct up to 168 drill sites with sumps, 21.5 miles of temporary access roads, and one laydown area, for a total of approximately 69 acres of proposed disturbance over five years within the Project Area (EA Section 2.2). Reclamation of disturbed areas will not result in incremental increases to the total proposed disturbance acreage of 73 acres. The proposed action also includes an upgraded 10-meter Meteorological (MET) station, and maintenance of 44 miles of existing roads (EA Section 2.2). The Proposed Action combines the existing Notice-level of work (4.1 acres) and phased the work of the Exploration Plan of Operations (EPO) (69 acres) for a total of approximately 73 acres (EA Section 2.2).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based on my review of the attached McDermitt Exploration Project EA and supporting documents, I have determined that Alternative B, the Proposed Action, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required. This finding is based on the degree of the effects described in the EA and in the following sections.

Potentially Affected Environment

The project area is 7,200 acres and the project footprint (168 drill sites and sumps, 22 miles of temporary access routes) is 73 acres. The upland vegetation within the McDermitt Exploration Project area is primarily composed of sagebrush shrub-steppe, dominated by big sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata). Vegetation surveys conducted in 2022 and 2023 identified a mix of habitat conditions, with approximately 49% of the area classified as intermediate condition shrubland (Ecostate A–C), 41% as good condition shrubland (Ecostate A), and the remaining 10% as a mix of poor condition shrubland, grasslands, and areas with low tree cover. The project area also includes small patches of non-native grasslands dominated by cheatgrass and crested wheatgrass, as well as limited riparian vegetation along intermittent streams.

Six Oregon BLM sensitive plant species were documented: king's rattleweed (*Astragalus calycosus*), broad-keeled milkvetch (*Astragalus platytropis*), Ibapah wavewing (*Cymopterus ibapensis*), Pueblo Mountains buckwheat (*Eriogonum crosbyae* var. *mystrium*), Cooper's goldflower (*Hymenoxys cooperi* var. *canescens*), and Tufted Townsend daisy (*Townsendia scapigera*). No federally listed threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the Project Area (McGinley, 2022a; UES, 2023) (EA 3.2.1).

The area is dominated by sagebrush steppe, which supports a variety of terrestrial wildlife including mule deer, pronghorn, pygmy rabbits, bats, small mammals, reptiles, and numerous bird species. The entire project area lies within the ODFW Whitehorse Big Game Management Unit and the Trout Creek Mule Deer Herd Range, with portions designated as mule deer winter range and pronghorn essential habitat. Wildlife connectivity corridors also intersect the project area, particularly along Payne and McDermitt Creeks.

Sage-grouse habitat (Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) and General Habitat Management Area (GHMA) was updated by Oregon Division of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and adopted by BLM in 2025 as part of the Oregon Sage-grouse plan revision. In this revision, a subset of PHMA known as Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) were removed. In Oregon, PHMA mostly coincides with Priority Areas for Conservation (PAC) identified by USDI FWS (2013) as areas needed for maintaining Sage-grouse populations, diversity, and distribution across the landscape and the species' range. (EA 3.3.1)

Soils within the McDermitt Exploration Project area are primarily volcanic in origin, with five main soil associations identified: Wieland silt loam, Loveboldt-Sheepsprings complex, Igert gravelly loam, Chug-Sheepsprings-Hackwood complex, and Kingsriver loam. The dominant soil type, Wieland silt loam, covers nearly 90% of the project area and is characterized by moderate to high susceptibility to water erosion and low resistance to compaction. The remaining soils vary in texture and slope but generally share similar characteristics of volcanic ash-derived materials with varying erosion potentials.

The project area is located entirely in the Hydrological Unit Code (HUC) 10 McDermitt Creek Watershed (1604020102). The project area spans across three sub-watersheds (HUC-12): Upper McDermitt Creek (160402010204), Payne Creek (160402010202), and Mine Creek (160402010205). Hydrological baseline surveys for the Project were conducted in 2022 as summarized in the *Hydrological Baseline Report* (McGinley, 2022b). Surface water sources within the area generally consist of seeps and springs, and perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams (McGinley, 2022b). As part of baseline surveys, a Seep, Spring, and Stream Survey was conducted (McGinley, 2022b; Attachment B). McDermitt Creek is the only perennial stream in the area, while field reconnaissance indicated that Turner Creek, Payne Creek, and Mine Creek (also known as Hot Creek) are intermittent streams (McGinley, 2022b).

The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for archaeological and paleontological resources, as determined by the BLM, is 4,370 acres, identified in the SWCA Cultural Resource Report (Daily et al., 2024) within the 7,200-acre Project Area. The Project Area lies at the northern end of the McDermitt Caldera (Greene, 1976). There are three creeks within the Project Area, Payne Creek, Cherokee Creek, and Mine Creek, which are tributaries to McDermitt Creek (EA 3.1.1). Based

on an ethnobotanical report, the Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone tribes have occupied the McDermitt Caldera for at least the last 10,000 years (Daily et al, 2023, as cited in Paradise et al, 2024: 3), (EA 3.1.1).

Degree of Effects

The following have been considered in my evaluation of the selected Alternative B, Proposed Action.

Short- and Long-term, Beneficial and Adverse Effects

Air Quality (Appendix D.2 & Appendix E. AQ. 1-20)

The McDermitt Exploration Project is anticipated to generate approximately 921 metric tons of CO_2-equivalent annually from vehicle and equipment use during construction, drilling, and roadwork. This amount is well below regulatory thresholds—representing about 3.7% of the EPA's 25,000 metric ton CO_2e/year reporting threshold for stationary sources, 0.0015% of Oregon's 2021 statewide emissions, and 0.000014% of total U.S. 2022 emissions—indicating that project-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are de minimis and not significant.
To minimize air quality impacts, the project includes a Dust Control Plan (Appendix C of the Exploration Plan of Operations), which outlines best management practices such as watering roads and pads, enforcing speed limits (15–25 mph), applying gravel or mulch, and using non-toxic, BLM-approved road binders on the first 8 miles of Disaster Peak Road (with BLM approval). Petroleum-based suppressants are prohibited, and additional restrictions apply near water bodies. Daily monitoring will be conducted by the Site Supervisor and ESG Manager, with adaptive management triggered by visible dust.

With these measures in place and compliance with Oregon DEQ and Clean Air Act standards, air quality impacts are expected to be negligible, localized, and short-term. The project would not cause or contribute to a violation of air quality standards or significantly affect Class I air quality values. Therefore, there is no potential for a significant effect.

Archaeological (cultural) resources (Section 3.1 & Appendix E.3. 55-59)

The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the McDermitt Exploration Project encompasses 4,370 acres within the 7,200-acre project area. This region includes known archaeological sites and holds historical and cultural significance for the Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone tribes, who have occupied the McDermitt Caldera for over 10,000 years. Cultural resources in the area include archaeological sites, traditional cultural properties, and culturally important plants (CIPs).

Up to 73 acres of surface disturbance could affect archaeological sites through ground-disturbing activities such as road and drill pad construction, sump excavation, and reclamation. Approximately 24 acres of identified cultural sites may be impacted, representing about 33% of the proposed surface disturbance. Potential impacts include the loss of archaeological context, displacement of artifacts, and increased risk of illegal artifact collection due to improved access.

Short-term is defined as immediate to ground disturbance (>24 hours). Long-term is defined as anything post disturbance (<24 hours). To mitigate these impacts, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) has been executed between the BLM, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the project proponent. The PA identifies avoidance as the preferred mitigation strategy. If avoidance is not feasible, data recovery methods such as Phase II or III excavations may be implemented. Annual work plans will define avoidance buffers and be reviewed by BLM and consulting parties. Tribal consultation is ongoing, and tribal monitors may participate in fieldwork and compliance inspections. An Inadvertent Discovery Plan (IDP) is also in place to address unexpected finds during operations.

Surveys identified 33 CIP species within the project area. Approximately 12.6% of CIP occurrences within the APE may be affected. The BLM applied a 20% disturbance threshold, based on the Seeds of Success protocol, to ensure plant populations remain viable. Since the project would disturb less than the disturbance threshold, impacts on CIPs are not considered significant.

In conclusion, there are no short-term beneficial effects from this project to archeological resources. Short and long-term adverse effects are the same and consist of the potential of the immediate loss of site context and material for the archaeological sites. However, the project is not expected to result in significant adverse effects to cultural resources due to the implementation of the PA, avoidance buffers, tribal consultation, and the IDP The project complies with Section 106 of the NHPA and does not result in unnecessary or undue degradation (UUD) to cultural values.

Recreation (Appendix D.8)

The McDermitt Exploration Project is located within an Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA) that offers dispersed recreational opportunities such as rockhounding, hunting, camping, hiking, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. While there are no developed recreation sites within the project area, a rockhounding kiosk is present and will remain in place throughout the project.

Short-term impacts to recreation may include temporary disturbances from noise, vehicle traffic, and visual intrusions caused by drill rigs and equipment during the 5-month annual operational window (July 1–November 30). These disturbances may reduce the quality of backcountry experiences for some users. However, public access will not be restricted. Temporary fencing and signage will be used to ensure safety around active work areas.

In the long term, no adverse effects to recreation are anticipated. All disturbed areas will be reclaimed to pre-exploration conditions through recontouring and revegetation. Natural barriers such as berms or rocks may be used post-reclamation to protect revegetated areas, but these will not limit public access or recreational use.

There may be some potential benefits to recreation. Temporary roads constructed for exploration could improve access to certain areas for recreational users, including rockhounds and hunters.

Additionally, the geological knowledge gained from exploration may enhance future rockhounding opportunities.

In conclusion, the project would not result in unnecessary or undue degradation (UUD) of recreation resources. Effects are localized, temporary, and mitigated through thoughtful design features and reclamation. Recreational access and opportunities will be maintained throughout the life of the project.

Soils (Appendix D.10 and Appendix E. 65-99)

Short-term impacts (0–5 months/year) include soil compaction from heavy equipment use, with 94% of soils in the project area having low resistance to compaction. There is increased erosion potential, particularly from water, as 90% of soils are moderately to highly susceptible to water erosion. Fugitive dust may be generated from vehicle traffic and exposed soils, and biological soil crusts (BSCs), which cover about 1.4% of the ground, may be damaged or lost. Mitigation measures include 300-foot stream buffers, erosion control best management practices (BMPs) such as straw wattles and silt fencing, a Dust Control Plan with water application and speed limits, and topsoil salvage and storage for reclamation. Mid-term impacts (6 months–5 years) may involve continued erosion in areas where vegetation has not reestablished. Reclamation activities include recontouring, topsoil replacement, seeding with native species, and continued use of erosion control structures. Monitoring ensures reclamation standards are met before site release. Soil recovery potential is moderate for 93% of the project area. Long-term impacts (5+ years) include stabilization of soils by vegetation, though some erosion may persist due to slow sagebrush recovery. BSCs may begin to reestablish naturally, especially around mature shrubs. Reclamation standards require no evidence of active erosion or instability before a site is considered successfully reclaimed. Overall, soil impacts are localized, temporary, and effectively mitigated, with no UUD or the potential of significant adverse effects anticipated.

BLM Sensitive Plant Species and Upland Vegetation (Section 3.2, Appendix D. 11, Appendix E 21-54, 100-144)

BLM Sensitive Plant Species
The Proposed Action would not result in significant effects to BLM sensitive plant species (EA Section 3.2). Short-term effects (0 to 5 months/year) include vegetation removal and soil compaction from overland travel and equipment use, which may damage or contribute to the loss of sensitive plants. Surface scraping and excavation would disturb approximately 66.5 acres (0.91% of the project area). Mid-term impacts (5 months to 5 years) include potential resprouting or seed regeneration by sensitive plant species, though success may be limited where growth media is removed. Long-term impacts (5+ years) include possible loss of individuals that do not recover and increased competition from invasive plant species. However, ongoing weed control and reseeding reduce this risk.

The percentage of BLM's sensitive plant species acres adversely impacted by project activities averages 2.01% which would not trend species toward listing under the ESA. Tufted Townsend's daisy has the maximum impact compared to the other known sensitive plant species in the area with 4.63% of the total plant occurrence acres potentially disturbed, however, this is still non-

significant because close to 95% of occurrences within the project area would remain undisturbed and the species' range continues outside of the project boundaries. Impacts to the six sensitive plant occurrences remain low even if sensitive plant occurrences cannot be avoided. The impacts to the sensitive plant species known within the project boundary would not trend the species towards listing under the ESA resulting in no potential for a significant impact. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in significant effects to BLM sensitive plant species (EA Section 3.2).

Upland Vegetation
In the short term (0–5 months/year), vegetation impacts will result primarily from the removal of native plant cover due to drill pad and road construction, overland travel, and sump excavation. This disturbance increases the risk of invasive species establishment. No beneficial effects to vegetation are expected during this operational phase.

Mid-term impacts (6 months–5 years) will be addressed through reclamation activities, including reseeding with native species, implementing erosion control measures, and conducting monitoring to assess recovery. While vegetation recovery will begin during this period, full reestablishment—particularly of sagebrush—may take longer. Invasive species control will be implemented through the Noxious Weed Management and Monitoring Plan and the Integrated Invasive Plant Management (IIPM) Environmental Assessment.

In the long term (5+ years), vegetation is expected to stabilize and return to pre-disturbance conditions. However, sagebrush recovery may take more than a decade. Reclamation success will be measured against reference sites and will include criteria for species composition, vegetative cover, and erosion control. Although no long-term beneficial effects are anticipated, adverse effects are minimized through design features and adaptive management.

Design features and mitigation measures include the use of BLM-approved, certified weed-free seed mixes, temporary fencing to protect reclamation areas, and ongoing monitoring and adaptive management to ensure revegetation success. Sensitive plant species and habitats will be avoided where feasible.

In conclusion, the project would result in localized and temporary impacts on vegetation. No significant adverse effects are anticipated with the implementation of reclamation and weed management plans. The project does not contribute to unnecessary or undue degradation (UUD) under 43 CFR 3809 (EA, Section 3.2, Appendix D.5 & 11).

Visual Resources (Appendix D.12, Appendix E 209-211)

The McDermitt Exploration Project is located in a remote, undeveloped portion of Malheur County, Oregon, characterized by open sagebrush steppe, rugged terrain, and expansive views. The area does not have designated Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes, and there are no developed recreation sites within the project boundary.

The proposed action would disturb up to 73 acres within the 7,200-acre project area. Visual impacts will result from the presence of drill rigs, temporary roads, a laydown yard, and other

exploration infrastructure. These features will be visible during the 5-month operational window (July 1–November 30) each year for up to five years. Short-term visual intrusions will occur due to active drilling, vehicle traffic, and equipment staging. However, these impacts are expected to be localized and temporary, as operations are phased and limited in duration at each site. Public access will not be restricted, but temporary fencing and signage will be used to ensure safety around active work areas.

Following exploration, all disturbed areas will be reclaimed. Reclamation activities include recontouring, reseeding with native vegetation, and implementing erosion control measures. Natural barriers such as berms or rocks may be used post-reclamation to protect revegetated areas, but these features will not significantly alter the visual character of the landscape.

In conclusion, the project will not result in significant long-term impacts on visual resources. Effects are temporary, reversible, and limited in scale. The project does not contribute to unnecessary or undue degradation (UUD) of visual quality and is consistent with the multiple-use objectives of the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan.

Water Resources (Section 3.4, Appendix E. 165-172)

The McDermitt Exploration Project includes several design features and mitigation measures for water resources. Each drill site will have a sump approximately 10 feet wide, 20 feet long, and 6 feet deep, with a capacity of about 7,500 gallons. These sumps are excavated adjacent to drill pads and connected to boreholes by shallow ditches to collect drilling fluids and groundwater returns. Drilling fluids are bentonite-based and meet NSF/ANSI Standard 60, ensuring safety near drinking water sources. Fluids and cuttings are contained within sumps or mud tanks and are not discharged to the ground surface. If necessary, Portland cement or excavated material may be added to absorb residual fluids before backfilling. Sumps are backfilled within 30 days of drilling completion using side-cast material and salvaged soil, and the surface is left roughened to promote revegetation. Temporary fencing is removed after backfilling.

To protect surface water, all disturbances are kept at least 300 feet from streams or riparian areas. Stream crossings, such as those at Cherokee Creek, will use existing fords or culverts and occur only during low or no flow periods. Erosion control BMPs, including straw wattles and silt fencing, are implemented, and seasonal timing avoids high-flow periods. Groundwater protection is ensured through the use of compliant drilling fluids, casing and abandonment of boreholes per Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 632-033-0025, and construction of monitoring wells in accordance with OAR 690-240. Up to 40 boreholes may be converted into groundwater monitoring wells. The water supply well is located at least 0.25 miles from surface water and targets a deep aquifer geologically separated from shallow groundwater and surface water by low-permeability tuff layers.

Short-term impacts (0–5 months/year) may include sedimentation from soil disturbance, road construction, and stream crossings. These are mitigated through buffers, BMPs, and careful timing. Groundwater quality is protected by regulatory compliance, and water use—limited to 41,250 gallons/day under a temporary OWRD permit—represents less than 0.03% of the Quinn River Valley basin yield and less than 0.4% of current commitments. One spring (SP-9) may be

hydrologically connected to the deep aquifer but contributes only ~0.3% of Mine Creek flow and lies outside the disturbance footprint.

Mid-term impacts (6 months–5 years) include continued erosion potential until vegetation is reestablished. Reclamation activities such as revegetation, erosion control, and monitoring are implemented. Groundwater pumping ceases, and residual effects diminish. Monitoring wells and stream gauges provide valuable hydrologic data. In the long term (5+ years), surface water impacts are minimal as reclamation success criteria are met and monitoring stations are removed. Groundwater levels begin to recover, and all boreholes and monitoring wells are properly abandoned per state standards.

Mitigation measures include maintaining 300-foot stream buffers, using only existing stream crossings during dry conditions, and applying erosion control BMPs. Stormwater is managed through diversion channels, water bars, and surface roughening. Only NSF/ANSI-compliant drilling fluids are used, and sumps are promptly backfilled. Groundwater protection is ensured through proper casing and abandonment of boreholes and monitoring wells. Water use is limited and geologically isolated from surface water. Monitoring includes stream stations and groundwater wells, with daily and weekly inspections if erosion or sedimentation is observed.

In conclusion, no significant impacts to water resources are anticipated. The project incorporates robust design features, regulatory compliance, and monitoring to avoid unnecessary or undue degradation (UUD). Impacts are localized, temporary, and effectively mitigated (Section 3.4 of the EA).

Wilderness Characteristics (Appendix D.12 & 13, Appendix E. 209-211)

The McDermitt Exploration Project does not occur within any designated Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), or lands identified as having wilderness characteristics under the 2002 Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan (SEORMP) or its 2024 amendment. One wilderness characteristics unit identified in the SEORMPA was excluded from the project area during project development. The Environmental Assessment (EA, Appendix D.13) concludes that the proposed 73 acres of surface disturbance—approximately 1% of the 7,200-acre project area—would not significantly alter the broader landscape's visual or natural character. These disturbances are temporary, phased, and subject to reclamation, which includes recontouring, revegetation, and erosion control. As such, the project is not expected to impact wilderness characteristics in the area or result in any unnecessary or undue degradation of these resources.

Wildlife including Sage Grouse and Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (Section 3.3, Appendix D. 14,15,16 & Appendix E. 145-164)

The McDermitt Exploration Project area supports a variety of wildlife species typical of sagebrush steppe ecosystems, including mule deer, pronghorn, small mammals, reptiles, and birds. Up to 73 acres of surface disturbance will result in temporary habitat loss and fragmentation. Wildlife may be displaced due to noise, human activity, and increased vehicle traffic during the operational window (July 1–November 30). However, design features such as

phased disturbance, reduced vehicle speeds, and seasonal restrictions are in place to minimize these impacts.

The entire project area lies within a Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) and the Trout Creek Priority Area for Conservation (PAC) for Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG). There are four occupied leks within the project area and 25 leks within 3.1 miles. Impacts to GRSG include habitat loss and fragmentation (73 acres, or 0.1% of the analysis area), as well as potential disruption to lekking and brood-rearing behavior due to the MET station, noise and activity. Temporary fencing around drill pads may also increase collision risk. Mitigation measures include seasonal shutdowns from December 1 to June 30 to avoid the breeding season, fence marking, anti-perch devices on the meteorological station, reclamation with native seed mixes, weed control, and coordination with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for compensatory mitigation.

Although Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) are not present within the project area, they are known to occur downstream in McDermitt Creek. Intermittent streams within the project area, such as Mine Creek and Payne Creek, are tributaries to McDermitt Creek. Potential indirect effects to LCT habitat include increased sedimentation and elevated water temperatures due to vegetation removal. Mitigation measures include maintaining 300-foot buffers from perennial and intermittent streams, using existing culverts and low-water crossings only during dry conditions, implementing erosion control BMPs, and ensuring no discharge of drilling fluids to surface waters. These measures are expected to prevent degradation of downstream aquatic habitat and avoid impacts to LCT populations.

No federally listed threatened or endangered species are known to occur in the project area. However, BLM-sensitive species such as pygmy rabbit and burrowing owl may be present. Impacts to these species include temporary habitat loss and displacement, which are mitigated through avoidance and reclamation.

In conclusion, the project will not result in significant impact to wildlife —including those to LCT and sage-grouse. Impacts are localized, temporary, and mitigated through design features, seasonal restrictions, and reclamation. The project complies with BLM wildlife protection standards under 43 CFR 3809 and does not result in unnecessary or undue degradation (UUD) to any wildlife resources (Section 3.3, 3.5 of the EA [LCT], Appendix D of the EA.13, 14, & 15).

Wildland Fire (Appendix D. 17, Appendix E. 60-64)

This project does not include any proposed fuel treatments. A detailed wildfire risk analysis was not conducted due to the presence of an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and the requirement for HiTech to obtain an annual Wildfire Waiver. These waivers are mandatory whenever the authorized officer imposes public use restrictions on public lands. The waiver may be revoked at any time, at which point all operations must cease.

The ERP, including Fire Prevention Table 1 of the EPO, Appendix I, outlines specific actions that operators must take to minimize, reduce, or avoid wildfire risk during project activities. This applies to all operational components such as access roads, drilling equipment, water systems,

processing facilities, and other infrastructure identified in the Plan of Operations and Consolidated Permit Application. The ERP also designates the BLM Vale Dispatch Center as the emergency point of contact for wildfire reporting and response coordination.

The Annual Wildfire Waiver Request will detail site-specific, seasonally sensitive measures to mitigate fire ignition risk. Additionally, PDFs related to fire prevention are included in Appendix E and apply throughout the life of the project.

Together, the ERP, Wildfire Waiver, and PDFs will effectively minimize, reduce, or avoid potential wildfire impacts.

Effects on socioeconomics, public health and safety, and the quality of life of the American people (Appendix D.9, Sub Appendix D.1, Appendix I)

The McDermitt Exploration Project is expected to generate minor, short-term economic benefits. It will create temporary employment for up to 15 contracted workers, with a preference for hiring locally where feasible. However, most specialized labor is anticipated to come from the mining workforce in Humboldt County, Nevada. Support roles such as seed collection and road maintenance may offer opportunities for local residents. Despite this, no significant increase in local or state tax revenue is expected, as many workers are likely to reside in Nevada, which does not impose a personal income tax.

The project may result in a temporary loss of up to 9 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) per year, totaling 90 AUMs over the 10-year operational and reclamation period. This reduction is considered negligible in terms of economic impact to the affected grazing permittee. Recreational users, including rockhounds and hunters, may experience temporary disruptions due to increased noise, traffic, and visual impacts. However, public access will generally remain open, and no long-term effects on recreation are anticipated.

In terms of public health and safety, the project incorporates a range of protective measures. A comprehensive Emergency Response Plan (ERP) outlines protocols for communication, fire prevention, spill response, and coordination with local emergency services. Fire safety measures include the use of spark arrestors, fire suppression tools, and seasonal restrictions in coordination with the BLM. Spill prevention protocols and hazardous materials handling are designed to minimize environmental and human health risks, with compliance ensured through regular inspections and adherence to the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Traffic management strategies, temporary fencing, and signage will help protect both workers and the public in active work areas. Sanitation and waste management practices, including portable latrines and wildlife-proof trash containers, further support health and safety on-site.

Some short-term impacts on quality of life may occur due to increased industrial activity in this remote and traditionally quiet area. These may be noticeable to nearby residents and visitors who value solitude and the natural landscape. Nonetheless, the scale and duration of the project are too limited to meaningfully affect poverty rates, public services, or overall economic well-being in either Malheur County, Oregon, or neighboring Humboldt County, Nevada.

In conclusion, the project would result in minor, localized disruptions and modest short-term economic benefits. With the implementation of robust safety protocols and environmental safeguards, no significant adverse effects to socioeconomics, public health and safety, or quality of life are anticipated. The project does not contribute to unnecessary or undue degradation (UUD) of socioeconomic or public health resources.

Shane DeForest Digitally signed by Shane DeForest
Date: 2025.12.08 10:47:18 -07'00'

[Shane DeForest Vale District Manager] Date