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ITEM 137



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Humboldt-Tolyabe
National
Forests

Ely Ranger District
P.O. Box 539
Ely, Nevada 89301 (702) 289-3031

137

File Code: 2810

Date: May 14, 1996

Dear Interested Party:

Please find enclosed the Scoping Document for the proposed Griffon Exploration Project submitted by Alta Gold Company. If you have any questions regarding this project, do not hesitate to call David Valenzuela, Project Coordinator, or myself at the address or telephone number listed above.

Sincerely,

JERRY L. GREEN
District Ranger

Enclosure



SCOPING DOCUMENT

Alta Gold Company
Griffon Project
POO #03-04-96

USDA Forest Service
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests
Ely Ranger District
White Pine County, Nevada

I. INTRODUCTION

On January 16, 1996, the Ely Ranger District received a Plan of Operations, POO#03-04-96, from Alta Gold Company (Alta) to mine a gold deposit they have identified on lands administered by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests. These lands are located in the middle of the White Pine Range, sections 24 and 25, T.14 N., R.58 E., White Pine County, Nevada (see attached Vicinity Map [taken from State Farm Road Map-1990]). The Ely Ranger District is asking you to respond to this proposal with issues or concerns you may have about the project. Your response to this Scoping Document will help *focus the environmental analysis* on important issues, which in turn will *help us to make an informed decision about how the project should be implemented*.

This document contains a description of the project as proposed by Alta. It also contains preliminary issues and alternatives that were identified by an interdisciplinary team of Forest Service specialists during a review of the proposal (issues/alternatives are not all inclusive at this point). And finally, this document describes opportunities for you, the public, to comment on the project as it evolves during the environmental analysis process.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

A. Project Description. The Griffon Project would be an open pit, heap leach gold mining operation. The mine, mill, and leaching facilities would be located in sections 24 and 25, T.14 N., R.58 E., White Pine County, Nevada. This area is located approximately 28 air miles southwest of Ely, Nevada. (see attached Vicinity Map).

The Plan of Operations calls for mining about 1.88 million tons of ore and 1.63 million tons of waste for a total of 3.51 million tons to be mined. Mining and crushing would be completed in approximately 16 months. Leaching would start about one month after crushing begins and continue until it is uneconomic - approximately 6 month beyond the end of crushing. The work force would consist of 60 to 65 employees.

The attached Project Area Map (taken from the USGS, Indian Garden Mt. & Willow Grove Quadrangles, 7.5 Minute Series) shows the proposed location and layout of the operation. The table below shows the estimated acres of disturbance for the various facilities:

	<u>Acres</u>
Pits	19.0
Waste Dumps	21.2
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The proposed road work from Highway 6 to the National Forest boundary would consist of grading the existing road surface. The proposed road work from there to the mine site would consist of widening the road, in places, from it's current 10-12 foot width to approximately 16 feet.

Road segments 1, 2, and 3, as noted on the attached Project Area Map, are where the existing road would be re-located. Maintenance along the entire length of road would consist of grading and snow removal.

Borrow pits will be needed for widening of the existing road and re-routing. Potential borrow areas are shown on the attached Project Area Map.

Alta proposes two open pits, the Discovery Ridge Pit (west pit) and the Hammer Ridge Pit (east pit). The small size of the pits dictates that both pits be mined simultaneously to maintain constant blasting and hauling operations. Haul roads from the pits to the waste dumps and to the crusher would have a running surface of 50 feet. Waste material from the pits would be hauled to one of three waste dumps and ore would be hauled to the crusher located south of the pits.

Crushed ore would be conveyed to the leach facility, located south of the crusher, where it would have a weak cyanide-leach solution (approximately 0.25 to 0.5 pounds cyanide per ton of solution) applied to it. The solution will percolate to the bottom of the heap, pulling the gold out as it does so. The solution would then be captured at a collection point and run through an onsite facility to remove the gold from solution.

The design of the leach facility would meet the design criteria set by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP). The leach facility would be a closed fluid system, meaning fluids would be recirculated using sumps, pumps, and piping to attain zero discharge. The proposed facility would be constructed with a liner system to prevent leakage of fluids and equipped with a leak detection system.

A silt source is needed for construction of the leach pad. Alta has identified 2 sites, totaling about 5 acres, within the project area that may meet state specifications for this use. Reference the attached Project Area Map for the possible silt source locations.

The Griffon Project also needs a water source. The required yearly average, water-flow rate would be approximately 70 to 80 gallons per minute with a peak flow rate of 120 to 150 gallons per minute during the summer months. Water would come from one of six potential well sites in the vicinity of the access road to the south. Their locations are shown on the attached Project Area Map.

Once a well is established, water would be pumped through a 6 to 8 inch diameter pipeline (buried or constructed to lie on top of the ground along the access road) to a water reservoir located west of the crushing and leaching facility.

In terms of reclamation, all buildings and related structures would be removed from the site and areas disturbed from construction of haul roads and processing facilities would be reclaimed by recontouring, topsoiling, and seeding.

The two open pits would be left in their final mining configuration. The pits would not penetrate the water table, so standing water in the pit bottoms is not anticipated. Any run-off from precipitation would evaporate in the arid mountain climate.

The waste dumps would be constructed as angle of repose dumps during operations. Once mining operations are completed, the dump faces would be pushed to a 3:1 slope. Available growth medium would be spread over the dump surface. Trees, which were stockpiled during clearing, would be scattered on the dump surfaces. The surface would be left irregular and hummocky to intercept run-off and to provide a good seed bed. The surface would be conditioned with a blanket harrow during seeding to provide seed bedding.

The leach pad would be detoxified by flushing it with fresh fluids until leachates meet state standards. Upon approval by the Forest Service and the State of Nevada, the fluids used to detoxify the leach pad would be treated according to state requirements then suctioned from the ponds and disposed of by applying it to adjacent lands. The leach pad would then be recontoured, topsoiled and seeded. The ponds used to hold the leaching solutions/flushing fluids would have its liner folded in and buried on site. Material would be placed over the folded liner, topsoiled, and seeded.

B. Management Direction. Management direction is guided by the **Mining Law of 1872**, which established the rights of citizens to explore, claim, and mine certain minerals, categorically known as locatable minerals, wherever they are found on lands open to mineral entry. The Griffon Project is located on lands open to mineral entry within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, and as such, falls under the management direction of the U.S. Forest Service. Direction for managing mining activities on these lands can be found in the **Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan - 1986)** including subsequent amendments thereto and 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 228, Subpart A.

Forest Plan direction pertaining to mineral activities includes forest-wide standards and guidelines and management prescriptions specific to each of the 16 Management Areas on the Forest. These standards and guidelines and prescriptions are designed to integrate mining activities with the use and protection of other resource values.

The Griffon Project lies within the White Pine Management Area. The Forest Plan acknowledges this area has a high potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, molybdenum, and tungsten and therefore would receive a large amount of mining activity. The minerals prescription for this MA is "Mineral proposals [in this area] will be handled expeditiously and operations will be carried out in an environmentally sound manner." (Forest Plan, page IV-180). This is accomplished by meeting the objectives of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended and the objectives of 36 CFR 228, Subpart A, minimizing adverse environmental impacts on surface resources.

III. IDENTIFYING LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

During a preliminary review of the proposed project, Forest Service specialists listed questions and concerns for the resources listed below. The list is not all inclusive, but is a starting point for discussions. We are asking you to help us identify other resource concerns or questions to further refine the issues and concerns relevant to the proposed project.

EFFECTS TO GROUND WATER

- What is the short/long term potential for ground water contamination from leaching operations?
- What is the potential for acid rock drainage (ARD) from the pits and waste rock?
- To what degree will the water well affect ground water?

EFFECTS TO SURFACE WATER

- What is the short/long term potential for surface water contamination from leaching operations?
- Will the water well have an impact on surface water quantity?
- Will road reconstruction/maintenance and dust from vehicular traffic along the Ellison Creek Road affect water quality and therefore aquatic habitat in Ellison Creek?
- What erosion control measures are needed to minimize sedimentation in Ellison Creek?
- Hazardous materials would be transported along Ellison Creek Road. What measures/precautions are needed to prevent/contain accidental spills?

EFFECTS TO AIR QUALITY

- How will dust from vehicular traffic be controlled on the access road between Highway 6 and the mine site?

EFFECTS ON PERMITTED LIVESTOCK GRAZING

- Will there be a conflict between mine generated vehicular traffic and trailing of cattle that occurs on the Ellison Creek Road?
- How will the loss of forage at the mine site affect grazing?
- What is the potential for consolidating the waste dumps from 3 to 2 or 1, in an effort to reduce the impact on suitable range and/or valuable wildlife habitat?

EFFECTS TO PLANT AND WILDLIFE SPECIES AND THEIR HABITAT

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicates there are no threatened or endangered plant/animal species within the project area. What, if any, effect will there be to sensitive plants and other species of concern that may inhabit the area?
- The cottonwood gallery(ies) along Ellison Creek is unique in this area and provides valuable habitat for the goshawk(a sensitive species) and other species. How will it be affected by road reconstruction and increased traffic?
- Along the access road, will fugitive dust accumulate on riparian vegetation, affecting quality of habitat for wildlife?
- There will be a loss of vegetative habitat and forage during mining operations; How will wildlife, such as deer and elk, be affected?

- Will timing of vegetative clearing affect wildlife breeding?

EFFECTS TO RECREATION

- How will recreational opportunities (hunting, camping, fishing, driving for pleasure) during and after mining operations be affected?
- Will there be long term visual and short term noise effects on the Currant Wilderness?

EFFECTS TO CULTURAL RESOURCES

- How will cultural sites be affected by the proposed project?
- What, if any, Native American concerns might there be?

EFFECT ON SAFETY

- The access road to the mine site would have a few blind corners, which could be a safety problem. What measures are needed to ensure safe travel of mine and public traffic?

EFFECT TO MINE ECONOMICS

- What effect will the various alternatives and associated mitigation and monitoring have on the economics of the project?

RECLAMATION

- Is there enough topsoil or growth medium to accomplish revegetative goals?
- In salvaging the topsoil for final reclamation, trees would be removed and stockpiled, some of which would be spread over recountoured areas to create microsites for seed to take hold. Is there an opportunity to utilize trees not needed in reclamation for public use?
- The proposed silt source locations are located in or adjacent to local drainages that flow during precipitation events. How would these sites be reclaimed to restore the physical stability and function of the channel?

IV. PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES TO BE ANALYZED

NO ACTION: Under this alternative, the proposal by Alta would not be implemented. As stated earlier, the law establishes Alta's right to conduct mining on these lands and the Forest Service's obligation to permit such activities in an environmentally sound manner. Therefore, this is not a viable alternative, but it does establish a baseline by which the other alternatives can be compared.

PROPOSED ACTION: This alternative would allow the Griffon Project to be implemented as described by Alta in their Plan of Operations.

PROPOSED ACTION WITH MITIGATION/MONITORING: Under this alternative, mitigation measures and monitoring developed by Forest Service specialists in consideration of site-specific resources and conditions would be incorporated into the proposal submitted by Alta.

ACCESS ALTERNATIVE A (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, but some roads accessing the mine site would be different): Under this alternative, access to the mine site from Highway 6 would be on County Road 10 to the Willow Grove Ranch as in Alta's proposed alternative. But instead of continuing west-northwest along Ellison Creek, the access road would turn north for about 4.5 miles to the junction of Forest Road 640. Access would continue in a westerly direction on Forest Roads 640 and 639, north of Bald Mountain to the main north-south road. Access would then be south toward the Ellison Guard Station and from there take the same roads as proposed in Alta's

alternative to the mine site (reference the Alternate Access Map). All mine related traffic would use these roads to access the mine site.

ACCESS ALTERNATIVE B (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, but some roads accessing the mine site would be different): Access to the mine site would be from Highway 50 to the north (see attached Alternate Access Map). Access from Highway 50 would involve traveling south through Jakes Valley to Circle Wash, to Stove Spring, then south toward the Ellison Guard Station. From the Guard Station, access would continue along the same roads as proposed in Alta's proposed action. All mine related traffic would use these roads to access the mine site.

WASTE DUMP ALTERNATIVE A (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, except fewer waste dumps would be constructed): This alternative would involve the construction of a single waste dump located south of the east pit (Hammer Ridge Pit): It is labeled "dump 3" on the attached Project Area Map (Note: A single waste dump at this location would require a larger area than is shown to accommodate waste that would otherwise be at dumps 1 and 2).

WASTE DUMP ALTERNATIVE B (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, except fewer waste dumps would be constructed): Under this alternative, 2 waste dumps would be constructed. One would be located at the same location as in Waste Dump Alternative A and another located south of the intersection of the haul roads leading to both pits, labeled "dump 2" on the attached Project Area Map (Note: Waste dumps at these locations would take up slightly more area than is shown to accommodate waste that would otherwise be at waste dump 1).

REDUCED DISTURBANCE ALTERNATIVE (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, except as noted below): Alta has proposed in their Plan of Operations that both pits be mined simultaneously. This limits the ability to backfill one of the pits. Under the Reduced Disturbance Alternative, only one pit would be mined at a time. Mining one pit at a time would allow backfilling of the first pit with waste from the second and reduce the amount of ground disturbance needed for waste dumps.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is important during the scoping process. As part of the scoping process, the Forest Service will be seeking information and comments from Federal, State, County and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed actions. This input will be used in the preparation of the draft/final environmental documents.

The Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team has identified preliminary issues and alternatives for the project. To assist us in this environmental analysis, we would like to hear what additional issues and/or alternatives you believe should be considered. To be most helpful, all comments should be received by this office no later than May 31, 1996. Written comments are preferred. If you wish to not comment at this time but would like to receive the draft/final Environmental Impact Statement and/or final decision document, so note on the attached comment request form and send to this office. Note there will be at least a 45 day comment period when you will have an opportunity to comment on the draft Environmental Impact Statement prior to the final decision.

Pursuant to 7 CFR, Part 1, Subpart B, Section 1.27, all written submissions in response to this notice will be made available for public inspection including the submitter's name, unless the submitter specifically requests confidentiality. Anonymous comments will not be accepted. All written submissions from business entities and organizations, submitted on official letterhead, in response to this notice will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

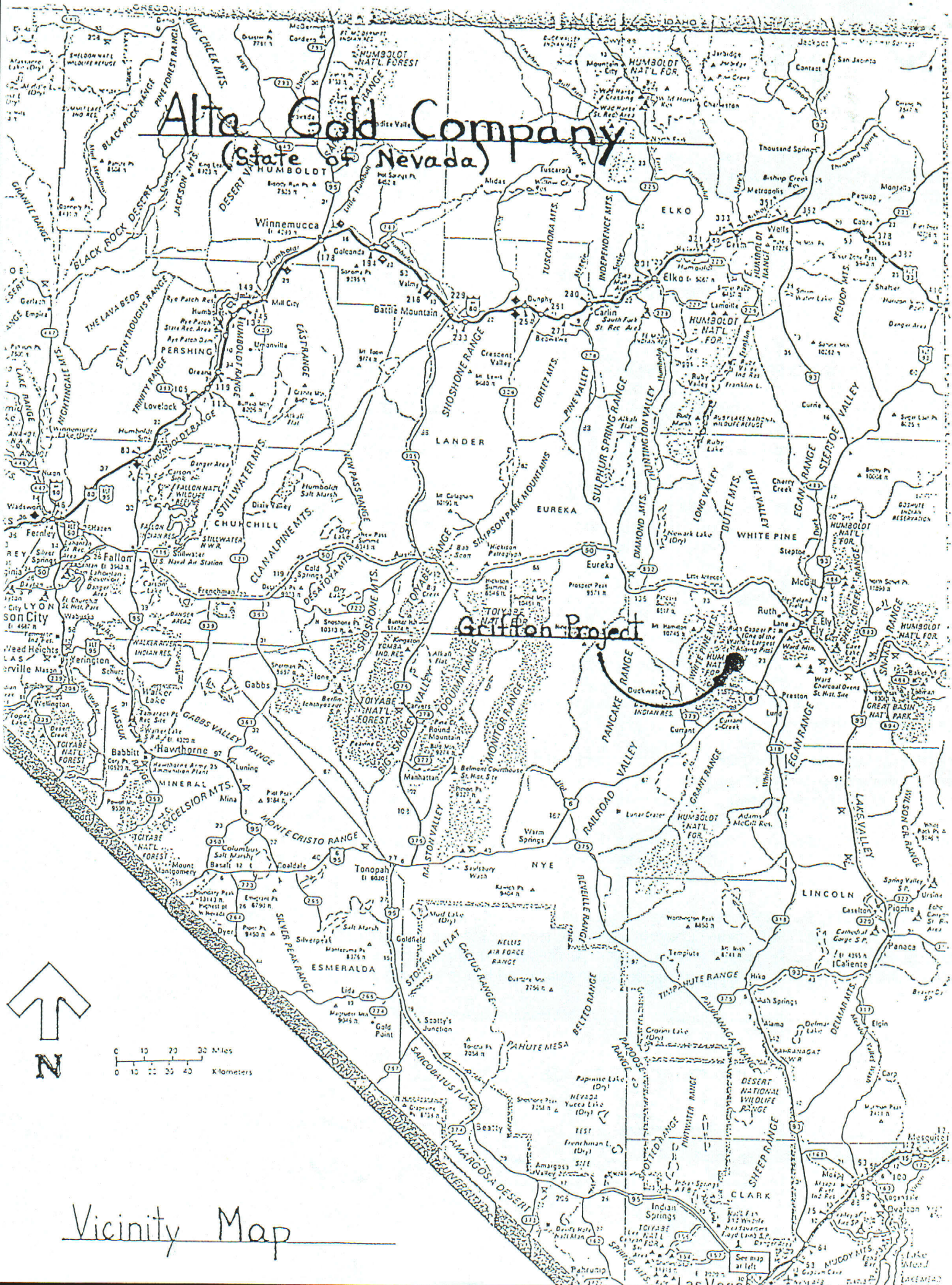
ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Monica J. Schwalbach, Assistant Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, PO Box 539, Ely, Nevada 89301.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Direct questions about the proposed project and preparation of the EIS to David Valenzuela, Project Team Leader, at the same address, Telephone: 702-289-3031.

Alta Gold Company

(State of Nevada)

Griffin Project



Vicinity Map

ALTA GOLD CO.

Griffon Project

Alternate Access Map

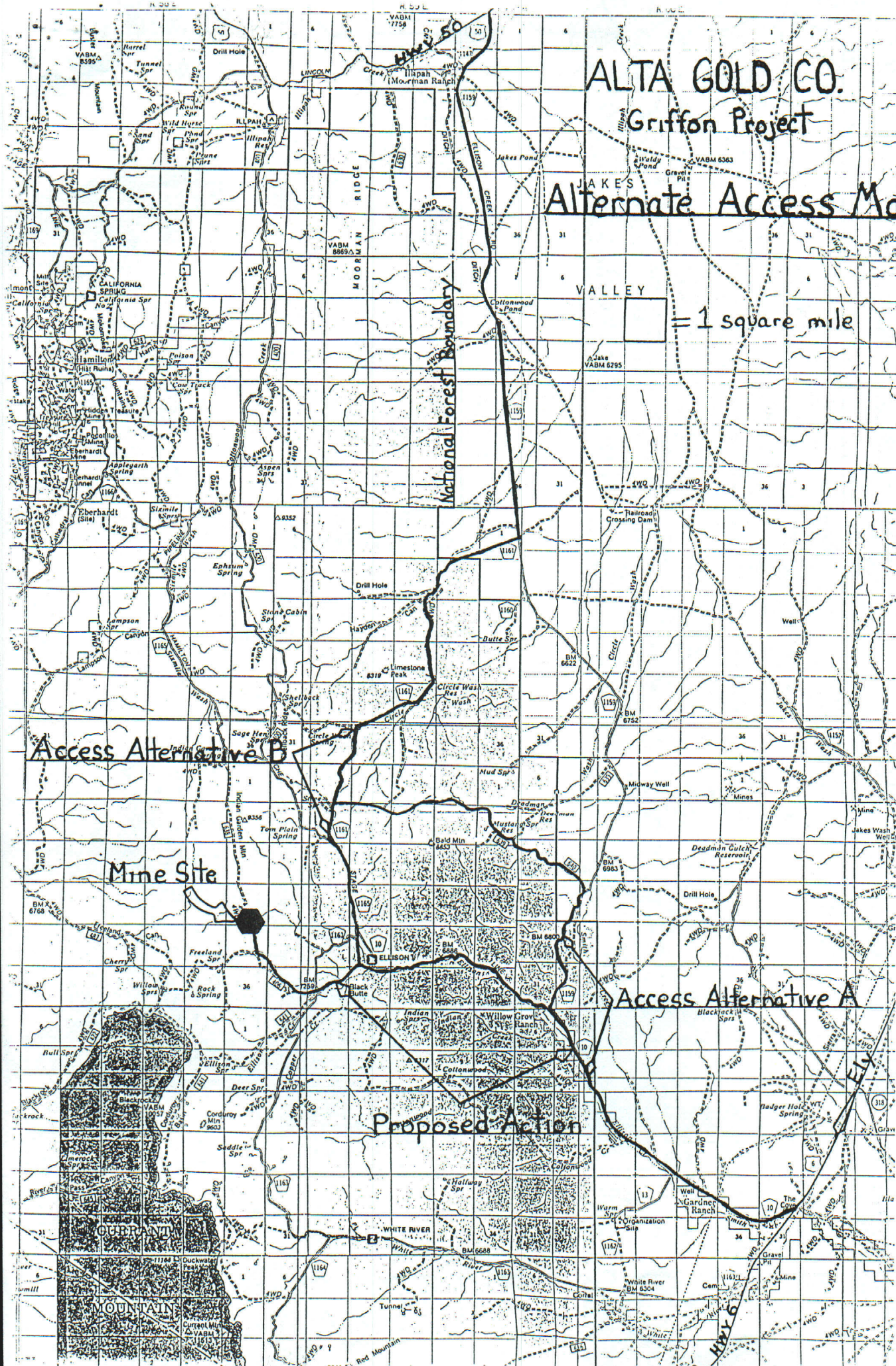
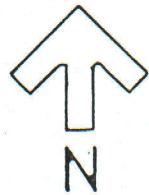
= 1 square mile

Access Alternative B

Mine Site

Access Alternative A

Proposed Action

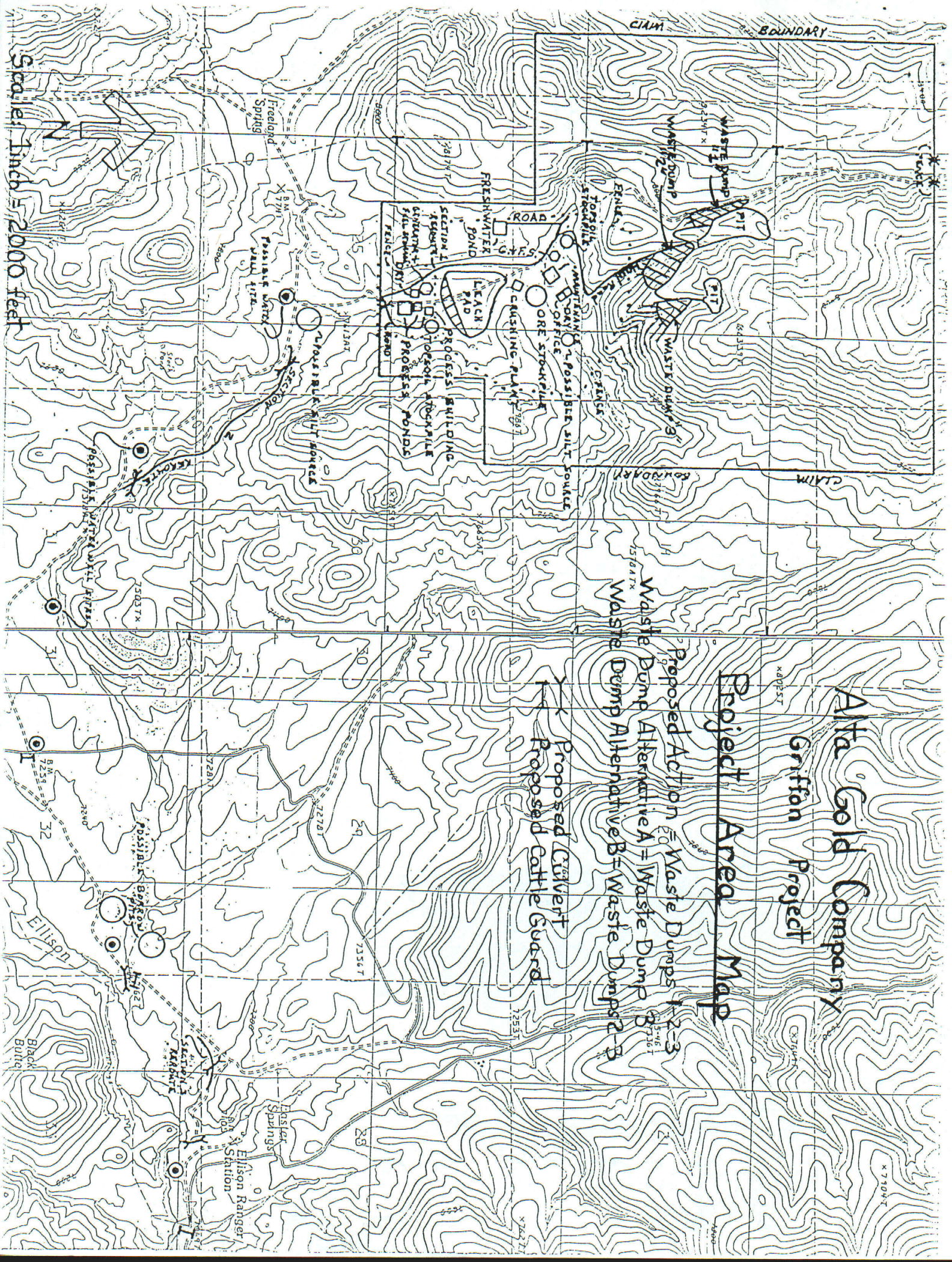


Alta Gold Company Griffon Project

Project Area Map

Proposed Action = Waste Dumps 1-2-3
 Waste Dump Alternative A = Waste Dump 1
 Waste Dump Alternative B = Waste Dump 2-3

Proposed Cattle Guard
 Proposed Cattle Guard



Scale: 1 inch = 2000 feet

We have provided this page to assist you in replying to the Griffon Project scoping document. You do NOT have to use this space for your comments. If you would like to continue receiving information on this project, please respond back to us expressing your interest. This will help us by saving the cost of mailing and publication.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Name: _____

Address: _____



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe
National
Forests

Central Nevada Ecosystem
P.O. Box 539
Ely, Nevada 89301 (702) 289-3031

File Code: 2810

Date: April 22, 1996

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is the Scoping Document for Alta Gold Company's Griffon Project. The Griffon Project is a proposed open pit, heap leach gold mining operation located approximately 28 air miles southwest of the town of Ely, in White Pine County, Nevada. The enclosed document describes the project in more detail.

The Ely Ranger District is asking for your review and comment on this proposal. If you have questions or need additional information about the proposed project, please contact David Valenzuela, Project Team Leader, at the address or telephone number listed above.

Sincerely,

MONICA J. SCHWALBACH
Assistant Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



SCOPING DOCUMENT
Alta Gold Company
Griffon Project
POO #03-04-96

USDA Forest Service
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests
Ely Ranger District
White Pine County, Nevada

I. INTRODUCTION

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EFFECTS TO PLANT AND WILDLIFE SPECIES AND THEIR HABITAT

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EFFECTS TO CULTURAL RESOURCES

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EFFECT ON SAFETY

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EFFECT TO MINE ECONOMICS

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RECLAMATION

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- In salvaging the topsoil for final reclamation, trees would be removed and stockpiled, some of which would be spread over recountoured areas to create microsites for seed to take hold. Is there an opportunity to utilize trees not needed in reclamation for public use?
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PROPOSED ACTION: This alternative would allow the Griffon Project to be implemented as described by Alta in their Plan of Operations.

PROPOSED ACTION WITH MITIGATION/MONITORING: Under this alternative, mitigation measures and monitoring developed by Forest Service specialists in consideration of site-specific resources and conditions would be incorporated into the proposal submitted by Alta.

ACCESS ALTERNATIVE A (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, but some roads accessing the mine site would be different): Under this alternative, access to the mine site from Highway 6 would be on County Road 10 to the Willow Grove Ranch as in Alta's proposed alternative. But instead of continuing west-northwest along Ellison Creek, the access road would turn north for about 4.5 miles to the junction of Forest Road 640. Access would continue in a westerly direction on Forest Roads 640 and 639, north of Bald Mountain to the main north-south road. Access would then be south toward the Ellison Guard Station and from there take the same roads as proposed in Alta's

alternative to the mine site (reference the Alternate Access Map). All mine related traffic would use these roads to access the mine site.

ACCESS ALTERNATIVE B (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, but some roads accessing the mine site would be different): Access to the mine site would be from Highway 50 to the north (see attached Alternate Access Map). Access from Highway 50 would involve traveling south through Jakes Valley to Circle Wash, to Stove Spring, then south toward the Ellison Guard Station. From the Guard Station, access would continue along the same roads as proposed in Alta's proposed action. All mine related traffic would use these roads to access the mine site.

WASTE DUMP ALTERNATIVE A (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, except fewer waste dumps would be constructed): This alternative would involve the construction of a single waste dump located south of the east pit (Hammer Ridge Pit): It is labeled "dump 3" on the attached Project Area Map (Note: A single waste dump at this location would require a larger area than is shown to accommodate waste that would otherwise be at dumps 1 and 2).

WASTE DUMP ALTERNATIVE B (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, except fewer waste dumps would be constructed): Under this alternative, 2 waste dumps would be constructed. One would be located at the same location as in Waste Dump Alternative A and another located south of the intersection of the haul roads leading to both pits, labeled "dump 2" on the attached Project Area Map (Note: Waste dumps at these locations would take up slightly more area than is shown to accommodate waste that would otherwise be at waste dump 1).

REDUCED DISTURBANCE ALTERNATIVE (same as Proposed Action with Mitigation/Monitoring Alternative, except as noted below): Alta has proposed in their Plan of Operations that both pits be mined simultaneously. This limits the ability to backfill one of the pits. Under the Reduced Disturbance Alternative, only one pit would be mined at a time. Mining one pit at a time would allow backfilling of the first pit with waste from the second and reduce the amount of ground disturbance needed for waste dumps.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is important during the scoping process. As part of the scoping process, the Forest Service will be seeking information and comments from Federal, State, County and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed actions. This input will be used in the preparation of the draft/final environmental documents.

The Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team has identified preliminary issues and alternatives for the project. To assist us in this environmental analysis, we would like to hear what additional issues and/or alternatives you believe should be considered. To be most helpful, all comments should be received by this office no later than May 31, 1996. Written comments are preferred. If you wish to not comment at this time but would like to receive the draft/final Environmental Impact Statement and/or final decision document, so note on the attached comment request form and send to this office. Note there will be at least a 45 day comment period when you will have an opportunity to comment on the draft Environmental Impact Statement prior to the final decision.

Pursuant to 7 CFR, Part 1, Subpart B, Section 1.27, all written submissions in response to this notice will be made available for public inspection including the submitter's name, unless the submitter specifically requests confidentiality. Anonymous comments will not be accepted. All written submissions from business entities and organizations, submitted on official letterhead, in response to this notice will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to: Monica J. Schwalbach, Assistant Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, PO Box 539, Ely, Nevada 89301.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Direct questions about the proposed project and preparation of the EIS to David Valenzuela, Project Team Leader, at the same address, Telephone: 702-289-3031.

Alta Gold Company

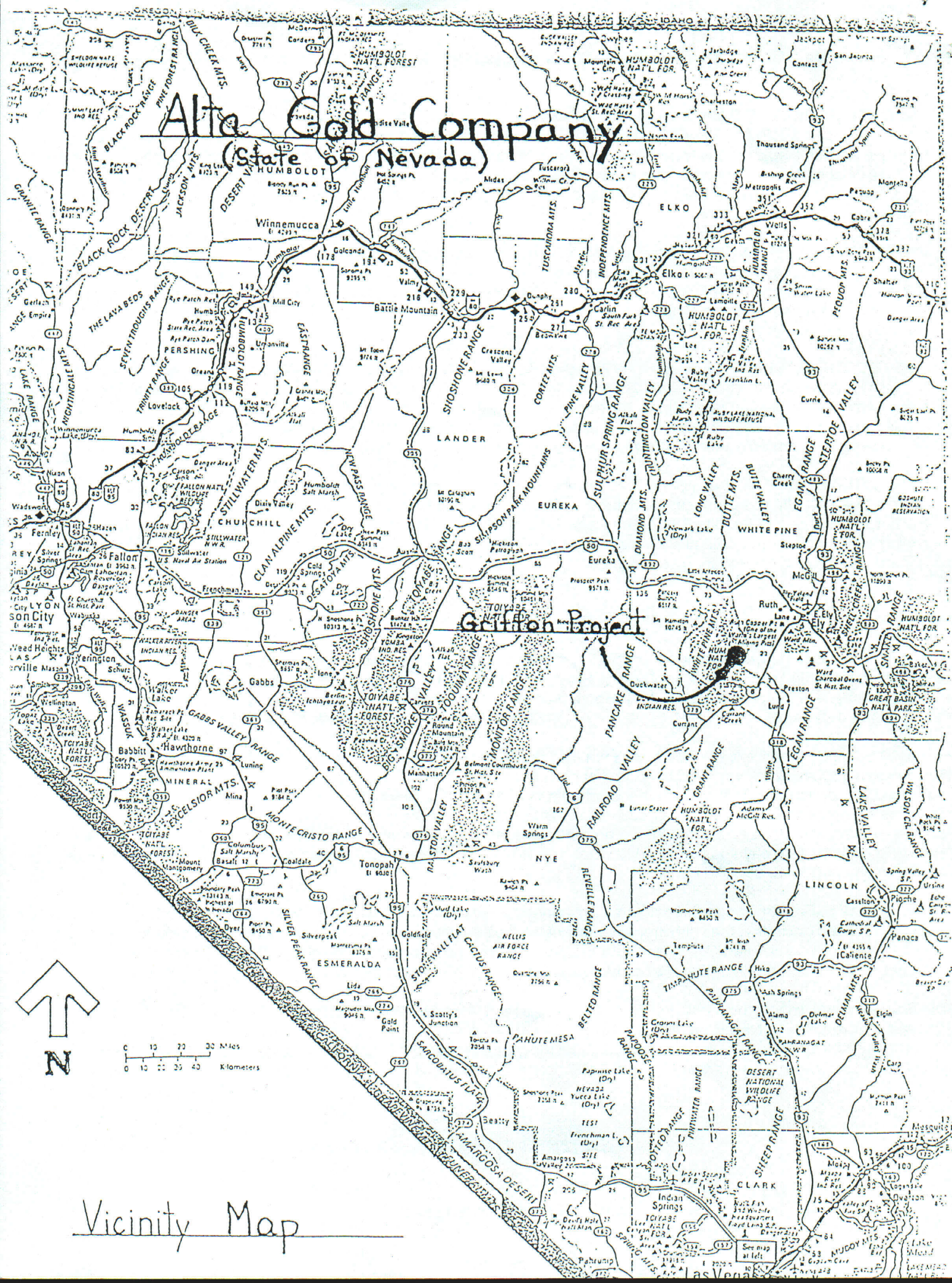
(State of Nevada)

Griffin Project



0 10 20 30 Miles
0 10 20 30 Kilometers

Vicinity Map



ALTA GOLD CO. Griffon Project

Alternate Access Map

= 1 square mile

National Forest Boundary

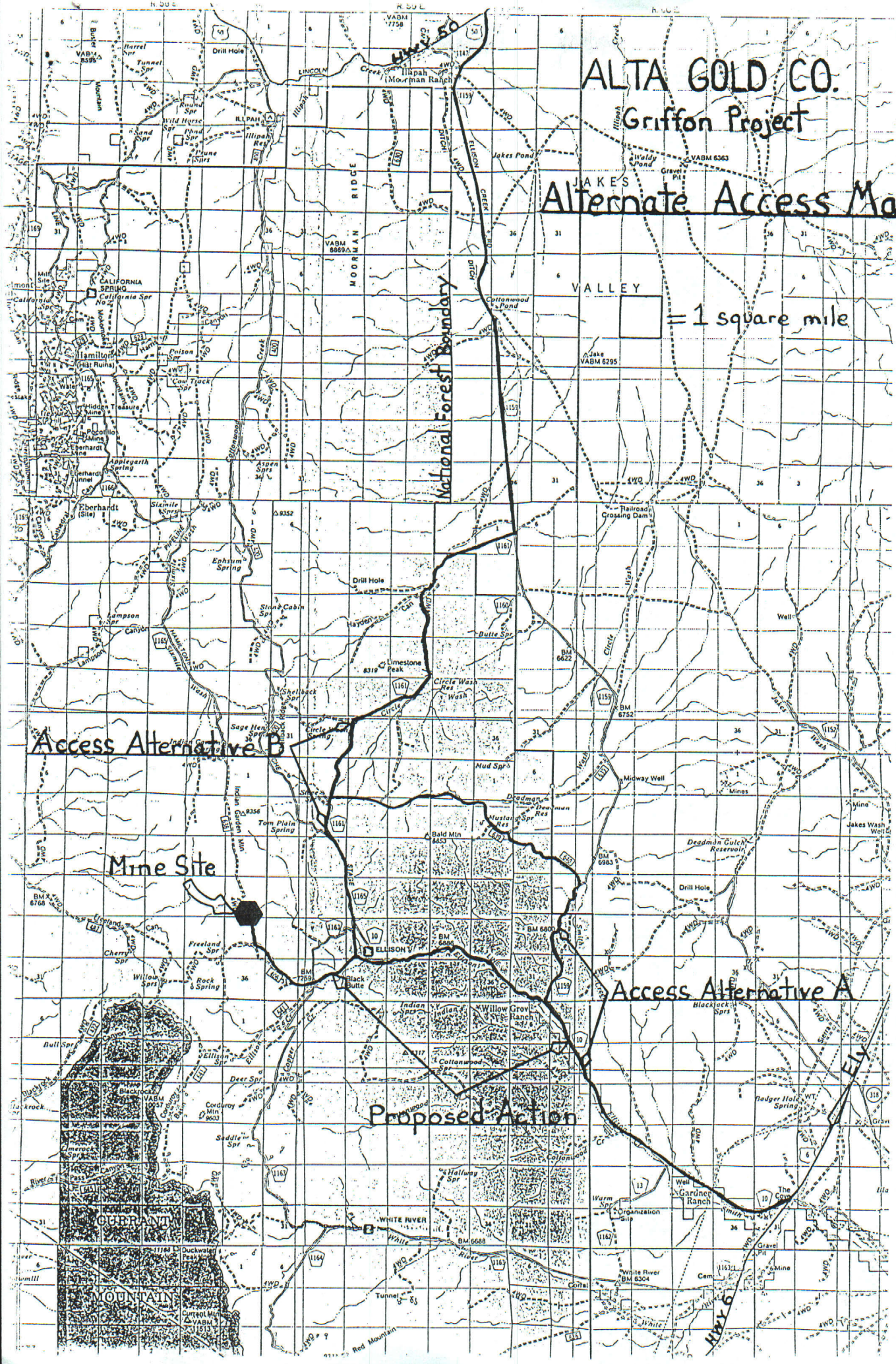
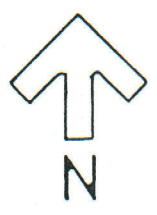
VALLEY

Access Alternative B

Mine Site

Access Alternative A

Proposed Action

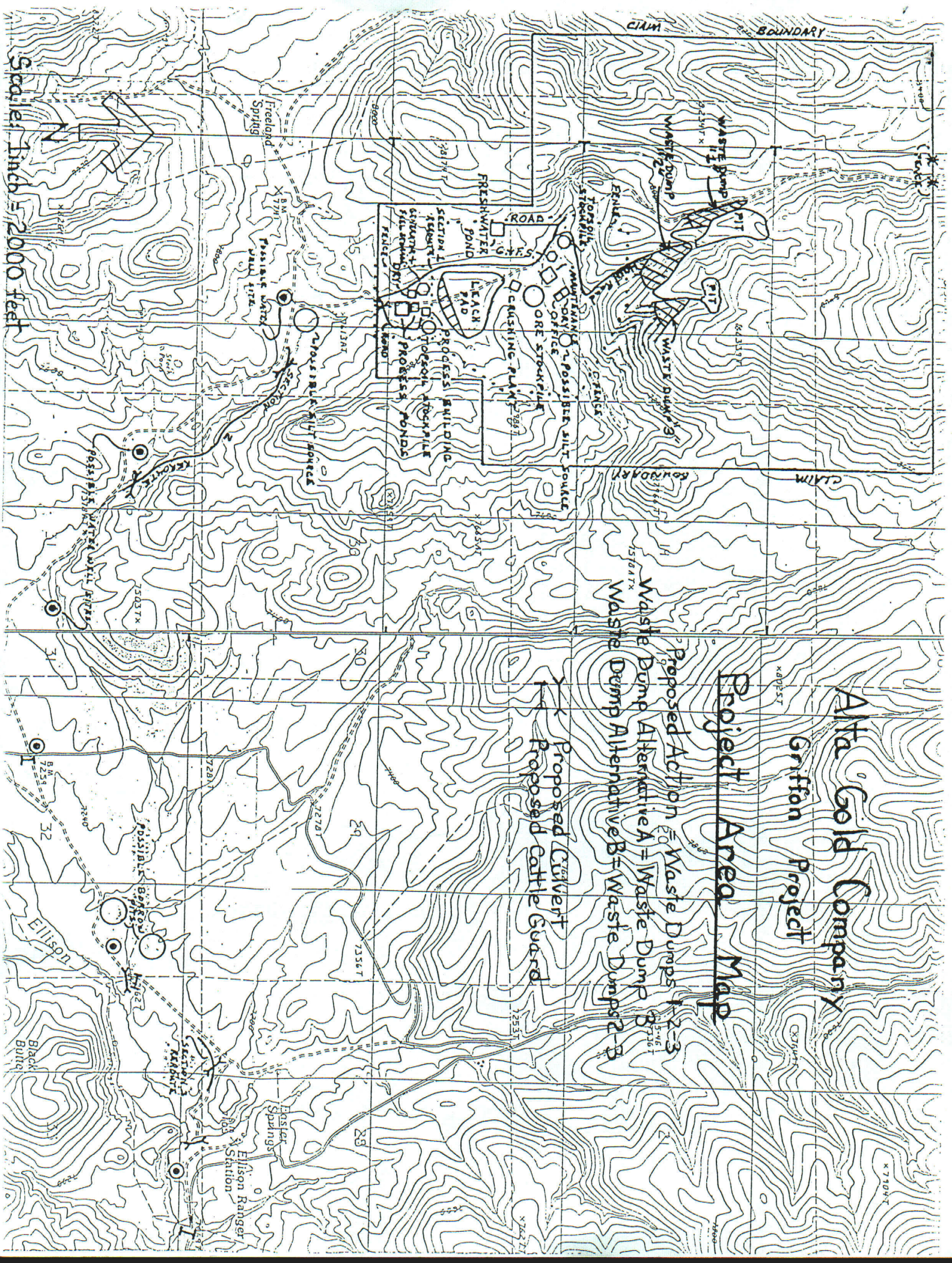


Alta Gold Company Griffon Project

Project Area Map

Proposed Action = Waste Dumps 1-2-3
 Waste Dump Alternative A = Waste Dump 1
 Waste Dump Alternative B = Waste Dumps 2-3

Proposed Culvert
 Proposed Cattle Guard



Scale: 1 inch = 2000 feet

We have provided this page to assist you in replying to the Griffon Project scoping document. You do NOT have to use this space for your comments. If you would like to continue receiving information on this project, please respond back to us expressing your interest. This will help us by saving the cost of mailing and publication.

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Name: _____

Address: _____

Age Group	Percentage
18-24	~10%
25-34	~35%
35-44	~25%
45-54	~20%
55-64	~15%
65-74	~10%
75-84	~5%
85+	~2%