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COUNTY	Lander
TITLE	Battle Mountain Gold Company Recon Project, Finding of No Significant Impact
AUTHOR	US. Bureau of Land Management; King W
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NOTES	Finding of No Significant Impact  7p.

Keep docs at about 250 pages if no oversized maps attached  
(for every 1 oversized page (>11x17) with text reduce  
the amount of pages by ~25)

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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT****BATTLE MOUNTAIN GOLD COMPANY REONA PROJECT**

**EA # N64-EA3-61  
PLAN OF OPERATIONS # N64-93-008P**

**U.S.D.I. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
BATTLE MOUNTAIN DISTRICT OFFICE  
SHOSHONE-EUREKA RESOURCE AREA  
LANDER COUNTY, NEVADA**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area of the Battle Mountain District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responding to Battle Mountain Gold Company's Plan of Operation for the Reona Project. The BLM is required by the National Environmental Policy Act to review the impacts of Battle Mountain Gold Company's proposal through the preparation of an environmental document, in this case, an environmental assessment (EA).

The EA is available for public review at the Bureau of Land Management, Battle Mountain District Office, Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area, Battle Mountain, Nevada (Mailing address; Bureau of Land Management Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area, P.O. Box 1420, Battle Mountain, NV 89820). This document was prepared under the guidance of a Bureau interdisciplinary team under a third party contract by JBR Consultants Group, Reno, Nevada. The EA describes the potential impacts of a mine proposal, submitted by Battle Mountain Gold Company (BMG), at Copper Canyon, located approximately 15 miles southwest of the community of Battle Mountain, Nevada, in Lander County. The proposed Reona Project would be located near the Fortitude Mine which has been a major source of gold ore production since 1982.

**PROPOSED ACTION**

BMG has identified a minable reserve and proposes to develop three open pits. Mined ore would be processed at a proposed heap leach facility just north of the present tailings disposal area. BMG calls this reserve of ore their Reona Project. Development would encompass 520 acres of public and private lands.



The proposal includes the following:

- \* five waste dumps (155 acres)
- \* three open pit gold mines (119 acres)
- \* leach pad ( 99 acres)
- \* haul roads and access roads ( 65 acres)
- \* backfilling of two existing pits with waste rock ( 29 acres)
- \* growth medium stockpiles ( 20 acres)
- \* borrow pit ( 11 acres)
- \* low grade ore stockpile ( 7 acres)
- \* carbon absorption recovery plant ( 7 acres)
- \* crushing plant and conveyor ( 6 acres)
- \* office building ( 2 acres)

Reclamation will be conducted concurrent with operations and upon termination of mining, with the exception of the three open pits (119 acres).

A detailed plan of operations (i.e. the proposed action) is available at the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area office for your review.

#### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

A public scoping process for the proposed project was conducted. A public notice pertaining to the proposed project was published in the Reno Gazette Journal and the Battle Mountain Bugle. Notification, briefly outlining the Reona Project and soliciting public input, was mailed to affected grazing permittees as well as persons or groups who have requested to be contacted with regard to mining approvals or other land management issues affecting the Public Lands managed by the BLM, Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area.

The preliminary environmental analysis has been sent to the State of Nevada Clearinghouse for comment. Other Federal, State, and local agencies and interested publics that may have oversight or an interest were sent copies of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and the environmental assessment (120 copies

mailed).

#### ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The environmental assessment analyzes the proposed action's impacts to all aspects of the environment in detail. BMG has worked closely with the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area Office to address environmental concerns that may result from the project. This process limits the amount of mitigation necessitated to reduce impacts from the project. Several examples of mitigation built into the proposal are listed below:

- Some of the waste rock from two of the proposed pits will be backfilled into two existing pits. Waste rock from these two proposed pits will also be placed on land that has been previously disturbed by dredging and copper tailings.
- Fugitive dust emissions from the roads will be suppressed through the spraying of water and or a chemical roadway dust suppressant, approved through BLM and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP). Sand and gravel would be used as necessary to reduce impacts during wet or icy weather.
- Three steel solution tanks will be used in conjunction with the leach pad, rather than ponds.
- A remediation plan for an existing groundwater contamination plume from the tailings impoundment has been developed. This chloride contaminated groundwater would be pumped to the surface and utilized to control dust on the tailings impoundment and for make-up water for the Reona Project.
- Waste dumps will be constructed with intermittent benches, slightly sloped for drainage to the back of the benches and then to the outer margin of the dump area, where the drainage could run down along the toe of the dump on the natural ground surface. This would control storm water and facilitate reclamation. None of the proposed waste dump slopes would exceed an overall 2.5h:1v slope.

An alternative considered and not analyzed was a mining scenario that would allow backfilling of mined pits with waste rock from adjacent pits.

This was rejected due to the determination that:

- a) future additional mining of the pits could occur under a more favorable pricing climate based on reserve estimates,
- b) the logical mining development of the pits is from the upper to lower elevations of the project area and the cost of hauling waste rock upgrade to backfill would be cost



prohibitive and,

- c) the majority of waste dumps are sited to cover existing disturbance created by the Natomas dredging operations and the Minnie and Tomboy Pits.

Pit location is dictated by the location of the ore reserves. Ancillary facility location must consider: 1) environmental impacts; 2) economic impacts to the project; and 3) geotechnical engineering requirements.

The No Action alternative, i.e. not approving the project, was considered. The Bureau is required to analyze the No Action alternative under the Council of Environmental regulations. Under the 1872 Mining Law and the Surface Management Regulations, the BLM may only reject a Plan of Operation if it would violate some state, federal, or local law, regulation or standard(s), or cause "undue and unnecessary degradation" of the environment. If this occurs, steps must be taken to bring the application into compliance with the applicable law, regulation or standard, or prevent the undue/unnecessary degradation and the permit approved.

### ISSUES

The identification of issues that the EA would address were developed by the Bureau using two methods: 1) internal scoping by staff specialists based on experience from previous projects in the area, review of the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan/Land Use Plan, and those issues mandated by law or Executive Order, i.e. the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, or Native American Religious Concerns for example; and by 2) public input.

Bureau scoping resulted in a number of issues that needed to be addressed in the EA. In no particular order of importance these issues were:

- ... cumulative impacts to various resources resulting from mining activities in the area. Specific resources include: soil, vegetation, visual quality, watersheds, grazing, and wildlife

- ... socio-economic impacts to Lander County and Town of Battle Mountain if the project were not approved

- ... impacts to cultural resources

- ... impacts to wildlife

- ... impacts to soil and vegetation, both during the construction phase as well as post-mining land uses

... impacts to watersheds, water quality and any impacts to groundwater quantity/quality.

... impacts to grazing

... impacts to existing land use authorizations

... impacts to air quality

... existing ground water contamination

The primary public concerns and interests as presented during the public scoping process were about the existing groundwater contamination from the tailings facility south of the proposed Reona project, cumulative impacts, air quality, socioeconomics, future recovery of lower grade materials, and revegetation release criteria.

### MITIGATION

#### CULTURAL RESOURCES

A mitigation plan for direct and indirect impacts has been developed by the BLM and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for concurrence. The mitigation recommended for each site that would be impacted (both direct and indirect impacts) is in the EA. The mitigation plan includes recordation, barrier fences, buffer zones, catch benches, photography monitoring programs and data recovery.

In the event that previously undocumented cultural resources are encountered during construction of the proposed Reona Project, all such activities must cease and the Battle Mountain BLM District Manager must be notified immediately.

### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the Reona Project Environmental Assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action and any alternatives analyzed (except the "No Action" alternative) are in conformance with the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan dated March, 1986.

It is my decision, based on the Environmental Assessment (N64-EA3-61), that this is not a major Federal Action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on the rationale that significance criteria, as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.27) are not being met, or if met will be mitigated to a



level that will not be significant. The following rationale was used to determine that significant impacts were not present for each criteria mentioned in 40 CFR 1508.27:

#### **RATIONALE FOR DECISION**

... The short and long term impacts as disclosed in the Environmental Assessment are not considered to be significant upon the human environment. The short term impacts from implementation of the proposed action are local, not national or regional in nature. The long term impacts, with the exception of the 119 acres of open pits, resulting from the proposed action will be mitigated upon completion of the final reclamation;

... Specific management direction, constraints and mitigation measures will limit the physical and biological effects to the area;

... Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed action. Any potential effect on public health or safety is limited in geographic distribution. All aspects to protect public health and safety are properly addressed through the licensing by appropriate Nevada State agencies.

... There will be no significant irreversible resource commitments or irretrievable loss to historic or cultural resources, prime or unique farmlands, wetlands or floodplains, wild and scenic rivers, or areas of critical environmental concern. The open pits will remain upon final mine closure. Public safety around the open pit will be assured through proper closure techniques; but the forage production, watershed contributions, etc. will remain impacted; an area of approximately 119 acres.

... With the exception of the Sierra Club, which stated an EIS was needed, public participation indicated the effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be controversial. The five public comment letters received during the initial public scoping period are available at the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area office.

... There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks;

... The actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objective of the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan.

... There are short term cumulative impacts from disturbances associated with implementing the proposed action. However, the requirement that final reclamation

commence upon cessation of mining activities will mitigate these short term impacts. Assuming final reclamation following completion of mining activities, there will be no long term significant cumulative impacts from disturbances associated with the proposed action.

... As a result of concurrence between the SHPO and the BLM concerning Register eligible properties, and proposed mitigation, there will be no adverse effect on any properties eligible for the Register of Historic Places.

... There are no Threatened and Endangered plants or animals located in the project area.

... This action does not violate Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

If you would like further information or wish to discuss concerns or issues relating to this decision, please contact Lynn Pettit or Dave Davis at (702) 635-4000 or write to :

Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area Manager  
Bureau Of Land Management  
P.O. Box 1420  
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

**AUTHORIZED OFFICER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Wayne King  
Area Manager  
Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area