

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

HUMBOLDT NATIONAL FOREST
TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST
MOUNTAIN CITY DISTRICT
P.O. Box 276
Mountain City, NV 89831

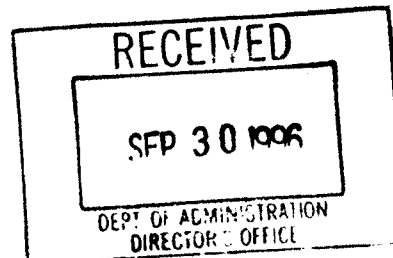
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ITEM 20

1690 0019

Reply To: 1950 / 2810

Date: September 27, 1996

Nevada State Clearinghouse
Department of Administration
Planning Division
Blasdel Building, Room 204
Carson City, NV 89710



Dear Sir/Madam:

I have decided to approve the Riddle Mine Exploration project Supplement #1 to POO #91643-94. I have selected Alternative C, from the finalized Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for this proposal. Alternative C allows for development of the proposal with additional environmental protection measures.

My rationale for the approval of the proposal is documented in a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI). The DN/FONSI is enclosed. The finalized EA is available upon request, or can be viewed, at the Mountain City Forest Service Office.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.7. Any written appeal must be postmarked or received by November 14, 1996. The Notice of Appeal should be sent to: USDA-Forest Service, Intermountain Region, Attn: Appeal Deciding Officer, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401.

Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. For further information on this project contact Katrina Leavitt, Project Leader at (702) 763-6691.

If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five business days following the end of the appeal period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of the appeal disposition.

Sincerely,

for SCOTT W. BELL
District Ranger

Enclosure

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Riddle Mine Exploration
Supplement #1 to Plan of Operations (POO) #91643-94**

**USDA Forest Service
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests
Mountain City Ranger District
ELKO COUNTY, Nevada**

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is available at the Mountain City Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, in Mountain City, Nevada. This document was prepared by an interdisciplinary team and analyzes the effects of the proposed supplement #1 to POO #91643-94 as well as alternatives to the proposed action. The Supplement is for the construction of 0.95 miles of road, 0.76 miles of overland travel, gating of the new road, the excavation of approximately 0.30 miles of trench, refurbishment and gating of the Riddle Mine tunnels, and installation of air pipes to the mine. The combined overland travel, road mileage and trench construction is equivalent to approximately 5 acres of surface disturbance.

This proposal is located on National Forest System Lands located 11 miles South West of Mountain City, Elko County, Nevada. The legal location for the project is:

**Sections 27, 28, and 33, T.44N, R.52E.
Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian.**

Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment and public participation, it is my decision to implement Alternative C. However, implementation of the project can not proceed without approval of the Plan of Operations (POO). The decision to implement alternative C will allow for the approval of Supplement #1 to POO # 91643-94, as modified with the additional resource protection measures identified in the Environmental Assessment, but is not an approval of the POO. The additional resource protection measures are:

- 1) All unevaluated and significant heritage resource sites on forest system lands will be avoided. Avoidance of the unevaluated sites will continue until such a time that those sites have been evaluated by the USFS and a determination made in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office as to the further need to protect the sites.
- 2) The Forest Service will work with the operator to ensure that the gate for the Riddle Mine tunnels will allow bat access.
- 3) All standard operating practices as listed in Appendix A of the EA.

Alternative C was selected in consideration of the following rationale:

highly controversial;

Due to the amount of exploratory drilling occurring in similar areas on the Forest in recent years, these activities are not considered highly uncertain; nor do they represent unique or unknown risks;

This decision does not necessarily set a precedent for future decisions. Any future decisions will need to consider all relevant scientific and site-specific information available at that time. Specifically, the decision to allow and/or facilitate mineral exploration does not imply approval to develop mineral materials if found;

Based on the analysis for the Environmental Assessment, the cumulative impacts from implementation of the selected alternative would not be significant;

Based on a cultural resource survey conducted in the project area, there would be no known effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic places. The USFS has made a determination that the proposed project will have no effect upon heritage resources, however, implementation of this decision is contingent upon concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office ;

There are no effects on Threatened or Endangered species or its habitat; and

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

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SCOTT W. BELL
District Ranger
Mountain City Ranger District

9-27-96

Date