

Mining District File Summary Sheet

DISTRICT	McCoy
DIST_NO	3020
COUNTY	Lander
If different from written on document	
TITLE	Echo Bay Minerals Company McCoy / Cove Mine
If not obvious	Phase III Infiltration Project Finding of No Significant Impact
AUTHOR	US. Bureau of Land Management; King W
DATE OF DOC(S)	1993
MULTI_DIST Y / N?	
Additional Dist Nos:	
QUAD_NAME	McCoy 7½'
P_M_C_NAME	Echo Bay Minerals Co.; McCoy / Cove Mine
(mine, claim & company names)	
COMMODITY	Gold
If not obvious	
NOTES	Finding of No Significant Impact
	5 p.

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)

Revised: 1/22/08

SS:	DD	12/11/08
	Initials	Date
DB:	DB	12/03/09
	Initials	Date
SCANNED:	mt	12.17.09
	Initials	Date

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain District
Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area Office
Battle Mountain, Nevada**

*Finding of No Significant Impact
for the
Echo Bay Minerals Company McCoy/Cove Mine
Phase III Infiltration Project*

Environmental Assessment Number N64-EA3-73
Plan of Operations Number N64-85-003P(93-5A)

Introduction

The Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Battle Mountain District is responding to Echo Bay Minerals Company's (Echo Bay) Plan of Operations (PO) for their Phase III Infiltration Project. The BLM is required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) to review the environmental impacts of Echo Bay's proposal through the preparation of an environmental analysis; in this case the document is an Environmental Assessment (EA).

The EA is available for public review at the Battle Mountain District Office (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 BLM interdisciplinary team with the assistance of a third-party contractor (JBR Consultants Group, Reno, Nevada). The EA describes the potential environmental impacts resulting from a water infiltration proposal, submitted by Echo Bay, at their McCoy/Cove Mine.

Proposed Action

The proposed project would be located in Lander County, Nevada, approximately 30 miles to the south of the community of Battle Mountain. Echo Bay currently operates on 4018 acres of Public Land in this vicinity and refers to the area as the McCoy/Cove Mine. The specific location of the proposed project would be T. 29 N., R. 43 E., section 18.

Total surface disturbance for the proposed Phase III Expansion would be 367 acres. The estimated duration of the proposed action would be for the life of mining in the Cove pit -- ending in 1999. The proposed action involves the addition of 21 ponds to the infiltration system.

Echo Bay's infiltration system has been designed as a series of basins with the capacity to return up to 35,000 gallons per minute (gpm) of mine dewatering back to the local groundwater system. Typically, reinfiltration is measured in the number of minutes it takes each inch of water to reenter the groundwater system. Preliminary test work at Echo Bay indicated that application rates in the order of 50 minutes per inch could be expected through the soils in the basin area. In practice, actual observed rates have been

100-120 minutes per inch (much slower than expected), revealing the need for further infiltration ponds. These new ponds (Phase III) will be an extension of the first two phases.

Like the existing system, the expansion will be designed so that any pond can be isolated. System integrity would be monitored routinely to ensure proper basin performance.

The 367 acres of surface disturbance caused by the expansion would include the ponds, a channel, a diversion berm, and construction access. The area would be fenced to preclude cattle usage. The reclamation plan and the bond would be adjusted appropriately to reflect the Phase III Expansion.

A detailed PO (e.g., the proposed action) is available at the Battle Mountain District Office for your review.

Public Involvement

A public scoping process for the proposed project was conducted. Notification, briefly outlining the Phase III Project and soliciting public input, was mailed to 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 on the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area, as well as affected grazing permittees.

The preliminary EA has been sent to the Nevada State 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 EA (127 copies mailed).

Environmental Considerations

The EA details the proposed action's impacts to the environment. Echo Bay has worked closely with the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area to address environmental concerns that may result from the project. This process limits the amount of mitigation necessary to reduce impacts from the project. Mitigation that was built into the proposal is listed below:

- Design of the Phase III system incorporates guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) document, *Process Design Manual: Land Treatment of Municipal Wastewater -- Supplement of Rapid Infiltration and Overland Flow (EPA-625/1-81-013a)*.
- The proposal includes stormwater runoff diversion ditches and a monitoring well network. Diversion of runoff would ensure that suspended solids do not contaminate the water in the basins and conveyance channels which could compromise the infiltration efficiency of the system.
- The pond area would be fenced to exclude livestock to prevent excessive trampling and congregation around the ponds.
- Each basin could be isolated from the entire infiltration system if necessary.
- All components of the proposed project (infiltration basins, mine-water conveyance system, and stormwater runoff diversion ditches) have been designed to withstand, without damage, a 100-

year, 24-hour storm event. Each pond is designed with two feet of freeboard to hold precipitation without overflowing.

- During construction, the topsoil and underlying alluvial material would be excavated and stockpiled for use in future reclamation.
- All disturbed areas would be sprayed with water pumped from trucks on a continuing basis to reduce dust emissions.
- System integrity would be monitored routinely to ensure proper basin performance. In addition, monitoring flow, pond water levels, and water quality would continue as required under the modified Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP) discharge permit. Installation of monitoring wells would occur around the perimeter of Phase III after consultation with NDEP.

Alternatives

Alternatives to the proposed action considered in the EA include alternate pond locations, discharge of waters to the Reese River, and the use of injection wells. These alternatives were rejected either because they would cause undue environmental impacts or they would be so expensive as to make the project unfeasible.

The No-Action Alternative, or not approving the project, was considered in the EA as well. The BLM is required to analyze the No-Action Alternative under the Council of Environmental Quality's Regulations for implementing NEPA. This alternative is used primarily as a baseline for understanding the "action alternatives". Under the 1872 Mining Law and the Surface Management Regulations, the BLM may only reject a Plan of Operations 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.

Environmental Impacts

The identification of issues that the EA would address were developed by the BLM using two methods: 1) internal scoping by staff specialists which is based on experience and expertise, 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, the Clean Water Act, Native American Religious Concerns); and 2) public input.

BLM internal scoping resulted in a number of impacts that needed to be addressed in the EA. These impacts include: air quality, water quality (including post-mining pit water quality and quantity), soils, vegetation, livestock grazing, wildlife, threatened and endangered plants and animals, visual resources, cultural heritage, socio-economics, and paleontology. Cumulative impacts were assessed in the EA as well as direct and indirect impacts for each affected resource.

The public comments and interests as presented during the public scoping process included concerns about wild horses and water resources.

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed the Echo Bay Minerals Company McCoy/Cove Mine Phase III Infiltration Project EA 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 EA Number N64-EA3-73 (*Echo Bay Minerals Company McCoy/Cove Mine Phase III Infiltration Project*), that this is not an action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. 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

- 1) The short and long term impacts as disclosed in the EA are not considered to be significant to the human environment. The short term impacts from implementation of the proposed action are local; they are not national or regional in nature. The long term impacts resulting from the proposed action will be mitigated upon completion of the final reclamation.
- 2) Specific management direction, constraints, and mitigation measures will limit the physical and biological effects to the area.
- 3) Public health and safety are not affected by the proposed action. All considerations to protect public health and safety are properly addressed through licensing by appropriate Nevada State agencies.
- 4) There will be no significant irreversible resource commitments or irretrievable loss to areas of critical environmental concern, cultural resources, prime or unique farmlands, Native American religious concerns, threatened and endangered species, wetlands or riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers, or wilderness.
- 5) Public participation indicated that the effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be controversial.
- 6) There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
- 7) The proposed action does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objective of the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan.
- 8) This action does not violate Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Authorized Officer: _____ Date: _____

Wayne King
Area Manager
Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area