



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe
National Forest

September 2011

**SCOPING DOCUMENT AND
NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION
OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT**

**BOLO
EXPLORATION PROJECT**

**TONOPAH RANGER DISTRICT
NYE COUNTY, NEVADA**

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COMMENTS WELCOME

The Tonopah Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the Bolo Exploration Project (Project) proposed by Cordex Exploration Co. (Cordex). The project will consist of constructing temporary roads, drill sites, and sumps. Total project-related disturbance will be up to 200 acres over ten years within Nye County, Nevada.

The Forest Service is now seeking public comments specific to the proposed Project. The purpose of this comment period has two purposes.

1. To provide additional opportunity for public participation prior to a decision by the Responsible Official. In addition, submission of comments during this period is required to establish appeal eligibility. Written, facsimile, hand delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA) in the *Tonopah Times-Bonanza*. For detailed information on how to provide comments, please refer to the "Comment Process" section of this document.
2. Meet the NEPA requirements for public scoping.

LOCATION

The Bolo Exploration Project is located in Sections 16 through 21 and 29, Township 8 North, Range 50 East (T8N, R50E), Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (MDB&M), Nye County, Nevada (Project Area). The Project is located on the east flank of the Hot Creek Range near the mouths of Wood and Hot Creek Canyons, on the southern border of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and managed by the Tonopah Ranger District. The Project Area can be accessed from Nevada State Route 6 via USFS Route 800 and 804 for approximately 12 miles, then northwest on a non-designated route that connects to the existing access up Wood Canyon and to the Project Area. The reference maps are the Hobble Canyon and Little Fish Lake, United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 minute quadrangles. The entire Project Area is located on National Forest lands administered by the United States Forest Service (USFS), Tonopah Ranger District within the Four Mile Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA), and approximately 0.3 miles from the Fandango Wilderness Study Area (WSA) to the northeast.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of and need for the Proposed Action is to identify and delineate mineral ore deposits, specifically by exploration drilling, on National Forest System lands in the Project Area to locate and delineate precious mineral deposits. The statutory right of Cordex to explore for and develop mineral resources on federally administered lands is recognized in the General Mining Law of 1872 and is consistent with the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan of 1986 (IV-50). Surface management regulations (36 CFR part 228) require that all mineral exploration, development, and operations activities be conducted in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental impacts on National Forest surface resources (36 CFR part 228.8).

DECISION FRAMEWORK

Based on the environmental analysis and disclosure documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA), the Deciding Official will decide 1) whether to select the Proposed Action as proposed or modified, or as described in an alternative; 2) what mitigation measures are needed; and 3) what monitoring is required.

THE PROPOSED ACTION

This is an exploration project that will consist of linear disturbance associated with drill and access roads and drill sites. Total surface disturbance associated with the project would not exceed 200 acres and would occur anywhere within the project boundary based on drilling results over a maximum of ten years.

In the first phase of exploration, Cordex plans to drill up to three drill holes per site for 79 constructed sites (for a maximum of 237 drill holes) on new road. There are several areas of existing disturbance within the Project Area including prospects and adits. The total length of proposed constructed road for Phase I is approximately 25,047 feet. Proposed roads will be constructed with a 14-foot travel width. Road construction will occur in areas with varying topography. The total proposed road-related disturbance is 116 acres. Road construction will be implemented using a Cat D7, D8 dozer, a Cat 320 excavator, or equivalent equipment, and a four-wheel drive backhoe. Balanced cut and fill construction will be used to the extent practicable to minimize the exposed cut slopes and the volume of fill material. Since the depth of the cut will be kept to a minimum, growth media removed during construction will be stockpiled as the fill slope to be used during reclamation. Road construction immediately adjacent to drainages will be avoided whenever feasible.

Drill site construction within perennial drainages will be strictly avoided. When drainages must be crossed with a road, Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be followed to minimize surface disturbance and erosion potential. These BMPs consist of using rip rap or weed-free straw bales. No culverts will be installed. It is not anticipated that blasting will be necessary to construct roadbeds. If drilling and blasting become necessary for the construction of exploration drill roads, Cordex will submit an approved safety plan to the USFS and NDEP prior to blasting. Routine road maintenance may be required and will consist of smoothing ruts, filling holes with fill material, grading and re-establishing waterbars when necessary.

In the first phase, a total of 79 drill sites will be constructed to accommodate angled and vertical drill holes. Surface disturbance will vary based on the slope of the terrain where the sites are constructed. The 79 constructed drill sites, approximately 70 feet by 46 feet, will disturb approximately 5.84 acres. The drill sites will be constructed in areas with varying topography. Sumps approximately 15 feet by ten feet and five feet in depth will be excavated within the surface disturbance at each drill site to trap drill cuttings and manage drilling fluids. Cordex will conduct exploration drilling with up to two drill rigs. A reverse circulation track-mounted and/or skid-mounted drill rig will be utilized to drill angled and vertical holes averaging approximately 650 feet in depth. All drill holes will be plugged according to specifications NAC 534.4369 and NAC 534.4371.

In subsequent phases and based on the results of Phase I drilling, Cordex may construct approximately 106.56 acres of road and 72.01 acres of drill sites (Table 1). Cordex anticipates the construction of approximately 3,000 total feet of trenches in subsequent phases, with an average disturbance width of 14 feet, and excavated approximately five feet deep. Trenching/bulk excavation activities will have an approximate surface disturbance of one acre (Table 1). Cordex will likely construct four additional staging areas, each with an approximate surface disturbance of 0.25 acre, for a total surface disturbance of one acre (Table 1). Cordex plans to install monitoring wells during subsequent phases of the Project and have allotted approximately one acre of surface disturbance to this activity (Table 1). Cordex also plans to install a meteorological station at the Project under subsequent phases and depending on exploration results. The disturbance for the installation of a meteorological station is estimated to be approximately 0.15 acre (Table 1).

The total amount of surface disturbance associated with existing, proposed, and future exploration activities will be approximately 200 acres (Table 1) over the life of the Project. This surface disturbance will be created in phases. Phase I surface disturbance for proposed exploration activities will total approximately 14.14 acres in addition to the 4.14 acres of existing disturbance created under the CE (Table 1) for a total of 18.28 acres. A separate Reclamation Permit will be required by the NDEP Bureau of Mining Regulation and Reclamation (BMRR) because the total disturbance is greater than five acres.

The total amount of surface disturbance associated with exploration roads, drill sites, and sumps will be approximately 200 acres (Table 1).

Table 1: Project Related Surface Disturbance

Exploration Activity	Existing Disturbance (acres)	Proposed Phase I Disturbance (acres)	Subsequent Phases Disturbance (acres)	Total Proposed Disturbance (acres)
Roads	1.39	8.05	106.56	116.00
Drill Sites (including sumps)	2.00	5.84	72.01	79.85
Staging Areas	0.75	0.25	1.00	2.00
Trenches/Bulk Excavations (including spoil piles)	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Monitoring Wells	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Meteorological Station	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.15
Total	4.14	14.14	181.72	200.00

A Cat D7 or D8 dozer, a Cat 320 excavator, or equivalent equipment, and a four-wheel drive backhoe will be used to construct the roads and drill sites where needed. Exploration and drilling personnel will access the site in four-wheel drive vehicles. Up to two drill rigs will be used in the Project Area and will include the following support vehicles:

- Two 1,000-gallon all-terrain water vehicles;
- Three pick-up trucks; and
- One all-terrain vehicle (ATV).

Cordex will take steps to prevent fires by ensuring that each field vehicle carries hand tools and a fire extinguisher. The water truck at the Project Area will be used in the event of a fire. All portable equipment, including the drill rig(s), support vehicles and drilling supplies, will be removed from the Project Area during extended periods of non-operation.

The project will commence as soon as the NEPA analysis is complete and the Plan is approved and will continue for approximately ten years.

RECLAMATION

The intent is to reclaim the Project Area to a beneficial land use, prevent unnecessary degradation of the environment, and reclaim disturbed areas to ensure visual and functional compatibility with surrounding areas. Reclamation will be completed to the standards described in 36 CFR 228.8(g). Exploration roads and drill sites will be recontoured to approximate the original shape of the ground prior to road construction and to blend with the surrounding area. The area will then be reseeded with a USFS-approved certified weed-free seed mix at the appropriate time of year and at an application rate for optimum seed sprouting and plant growth. The seeding will be completed using a broadcast method and then raked. The reclaimed surfaces will be left in a textured or rough condition. Sumps will be backfilled with spoil material and the surface will be seeded in accordance with the methods described above. Upon the conclusion of the Project, Cordex will recontour and seed approximately 5,100 feet of existing unclassified roads within the Project Area (per request from Steven Williams, District Ranger in the letter dated May 1, 2007). Cordex will close the unclassified road in Wood Gulch at the narrow point in the W1/2 of Section 21, T8N, R50E, with the construction of a berm or placement of large rocks. Seeded areas will be monitored for stability and revegetation success, during the spring or fall, for a minimum of three years until attainment of the revegetation standards established in the Nevada Guidelines for Successful Revegetation for the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP), the Bureau of Land Management, and the USDA Forest Service (Instruction Memorandum #NV-13). This additional reclamation will not be included in the Reclamation Cost Estimate as the disturbance is pre-1981 and is not required to be reclaimed by regulation. Cordex is completing this additional reclamation as a good will effort.

During the exploration program, reclamation activities will involve management of drilling procedures to contain cuttings and drilling fluids and to keep worksites clean and safe. Concurrent reclamation of roads and drill sites will be completed to the extent possible during operations. Annual reclamation will be performed on all roads left in place for more than one year or left in place over one winter and will include seeding of all road disturbances. Final reclamation will be completed within two years of project completion, temporary shut-down, non-use, or abandonment. The USFS will be notified before the commencement of final reclamation work.

All drill holes will be plugged according to specifications NAC 534.4369 and NAC 534.4371. If ground water is encountered, the hole will be plugged pursuant to NAC 534.4371.2. Drill holes will be plugged prior to the drill rig moving from the drill site. In the event that no personnel are on site for extended periods of time, all drill holes, including partially completed holes, will be plugged.

Table 2: Exploration Reclamation Schedule

TECHNIQUES	MONTH											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Regrading												
Seeding												
Monitoring												

MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation measures are proposed to avoid or minimize negative effects to resources surrounding and within the Project Area. Specific measures include:

Air Quality

- Dust from roads will be minimized by encouraging contractors and staff to minimize trips to and from the drill rig on a daily basis.

Water Quality

- Sediment control structures, including fabric and/or certified weed-free straw bale filter fences, siltation or filter berms, mud sumps, and downgradient drainage channels will be used.
- Sediment traps (sumps) will be constructed as necessary adjacent to the drill sites to settle cuttings and prevent their release.
- Project activities will avoid springs and seeps.
- All bladed roads will have waterbars constructed, as needed.
- Drill site construction within perennial drainages will be strictly avoided.

Wildlife and Vegetation

- Disturbed areas will be reclaimed to restore habitat.
- A survey of the flora and fauna has been conducted by Enviroscientists Inc. and areas containing sensitive species will be avoided.
- Potential habitat for sensitive bat species has been identified in the Project Area. Potential impacts to sensitive bat species will be evaluated.

Migratory Birds

- A migratory bird nest survey will be conducted yearly within potential breeding habitat prior to any surface disturbance.

Noxious Weeds

- Implement noxious weed assessment prevention measures.
- All vehicles will be washed entering/leaving the Project Area within a designated vehicle washing staging area.

Cultural Resources

- A cultural survey has been conducted in the Project Area by Chambers Group. Identified eligible cultural resource sites (historic or pre-historic) will be avoided, or treated, by all Project activities.

Public Safety

- All equipment and other facilities will be maintained in a safe and orderly manner.
- Signs will be posted at the entrance of roads that access the Project Area when exploration activities are in progress.

MONITORING

Throughout the project, Cordex will cooperate with the USFS to inventory and monitor noxious weeds/undesirable plants within areas of disturbance. At the conclusion of the project, seeded areas will be monitored for stability and revegetation success, during the spring or fall, for a minimum of three years until attainment of the revegetation standards established in the Nevada Guidelines for Successful Revegetation for the NDEP, the Bureau of Land Management, and the USDA Forest Service (Instruction Memorandum #NV-13).

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

The following preliminary issues have been identified for the project by the USFS:

1. Potential impacts to wildlife, including mule deer, greater sage-grouse, raptors, bats, and migratory birds as a result of project-related activities.
2. Potential impacts to cultural resources.
3. Potential impacts to surface and subsurface water quality.
4. Potential impacts to roadless/wilderness areas.

Table 3: Preliminary Effects Analysis

The following table summarizes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action. In the Environmental Assessment (EA), these impacts will be compared to those resulting from the Alternatives.

Resource	Potential Project-related Impacts
Wildlife	A survey of the flora and fauna was conducted in the Project Area by Envirosientists. Areas containing sensitive species will be avoided. No active raptor nests will be removed as a result of any exploration activities unless approved by the USFS or other appropriate agency. To benefit wildlife species that inhabit standing dead trees, removal of snags will be avoided when possible. Potential habitat for sensitive bat species has been identified in the Project Area. Potential impacts to sensitive bat species will be evaluated.
Neotropical Migratory birds	Up to 200 acres of surface disturbance could result in the destruction of active nests or disturb the breeding behavior of migratory bird species; however, disturbance will be localized and will be spread out over ten years. Surveys will be conducted during the migratory bird nesting season in the Project Area; therefore, impacts to neotropical migratory birds will be minimized.
Water	Cordex will conduct exploration activities so as to minimize soil erosion. Equipment will not be operated when ground conditions are such that excessive resource damage or increased sediment transport will occur. BMPs will be utilized to control erosion and sedimentation. All drill holes will be closed according to NRS 534 immediately following drill completion. Drinking water resources are known to occur within the Project Area. Railroad Valley springfish (<i>Crenichthys nevadae</i>) occur in adjacent public and private springs, east and west of the Project Area.
Cultural	A cultural resources survey was conducted in the Project Area in November 2010, by Chambers Group, Inc. A total of 24 archaeological sites were recorded during the inventory. These include ten newly recorded prehistoric sites, a newly recorded historic site, two previously recorded historic sites, and the remaining 11 were multi-component sites. Cordex will avoid impacts to any culturally eligible or unevaluated sites; therefore, there will be no impacts to cultural resources as a result of the project.
Vegetation	Some vegetation, not to exceed 200 acres, will be removed during project-related activities. The effects to vegetation will be minimized with concurrent and final reclamation returning all disturbances to a revegetated condition in time. No NDOA listed noxious weeds were found in the Project Area. Invasive, non-

Resource	Potential Project-related Impacts
	native plant species identified in the Project Area includes cheatgrass (<i>Bromus tectorum</i>), Russian thistle (<i>Salsola kali</i>), and rubber rabbitbrush (<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>).
Rare Plants	No USFS sensitive plant species were located in the Project Area; therefore, no impacts to USFS sensitive plants are expected.
Riparian Zones	No riparian zones are known to occur within the Project Area; therefore, no impacts to riparian areas are expected. The closest surface water source to the Project Area is located approximately 685 feet south of the Project Boundary near Hot Creek.
IRA/Wilderness	The Project Area lies within the Four Mile IRA and is approximately 0.3 miles from the Fandango WSA to the northeast. The impacts to the IRA/Wilderness will be evaluated relating to the temporal disturbance of the Proposed Action.
Recreation	The Project will result in minimal and limited disruption to public access; therefore, no impacts on recreational activities in the Project Area are expected.

ALTERNATIVES

Currently, two alternatives have been identified to be analyzed in detail with further analysis potentially generating other alternatives.

The No Action Alternative: The Plan of Operations will not be approved and Cordex will not conduct exploration activities. Conditions at the Project Area will remain as they are now.

The Proposed Action Alternative: Cordex's Plan of Operations will be approved and Cordex will be authorized to conduct a ten-year drilling project with up to 200 acres of surface disturbance. This alternative will include the proposed activities outlined in the Plan of Operations from Cordex and will include environmental protection measures, timing, monitoring, reclamation, and protective measures based upon comments from the public, tribes, and the interdisciplinary team during analysis of the Proposed Action.

COMMENT PROCESS

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the *Tonopah Times-Bonanza*. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period excluding federal holidays.

Written comments must be submitted to: District Ranger, Tonopah Ranger District; P.O. Box 3940, Tonopah, NV, 89049, or fax (775) 482-3053. The telephone number is (775) 482-6286. Office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Acrobat (.pdf), and Word (.doc) to *comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-austin-tonopah@fs.fed.us*. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

APPEAL ELIGIBILITY

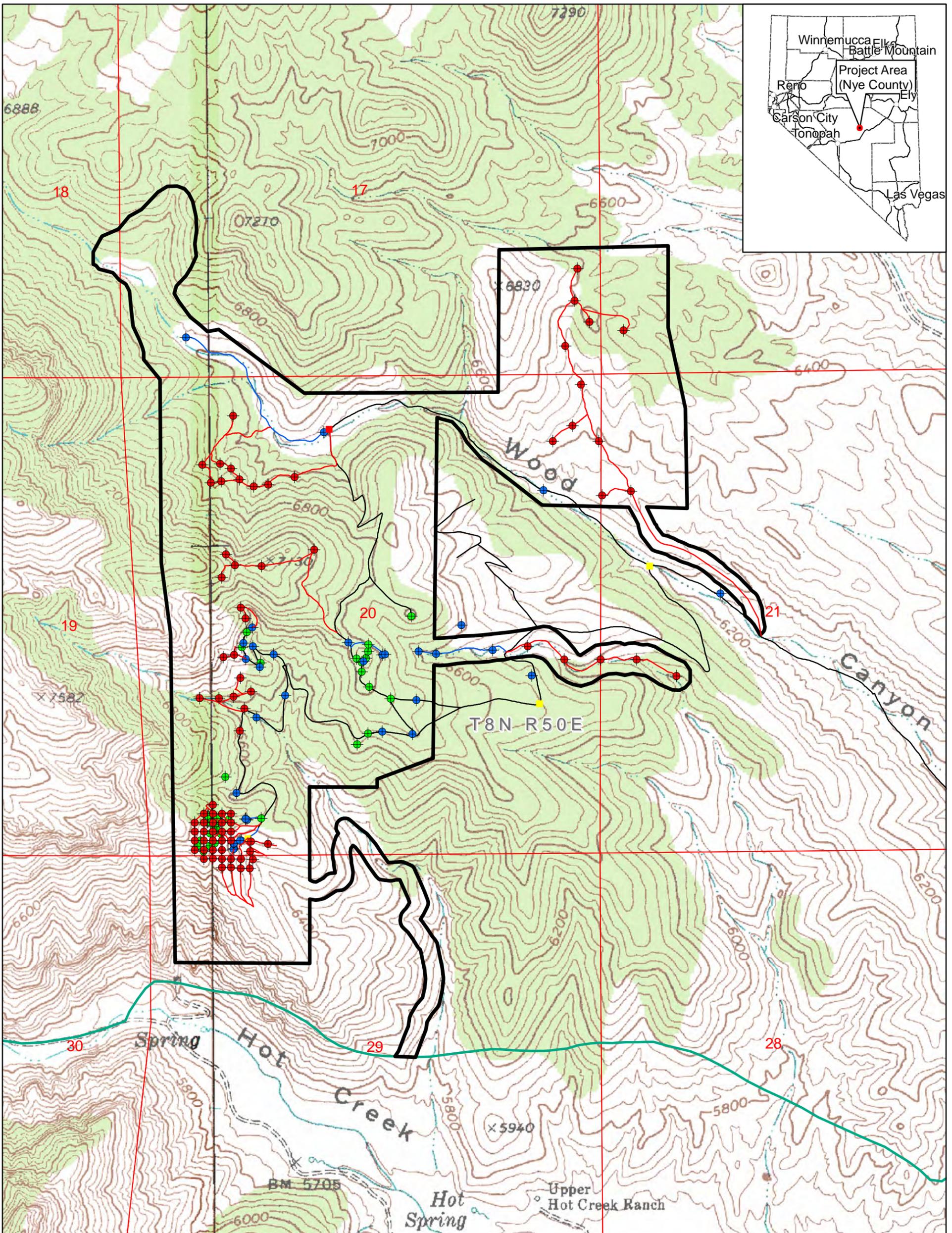
Comments must be received by the close of the comment period. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215, including:

- Name and Address,
- Title of the Proposed Action,
- Specific comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the Proposed Action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision,
- Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility,
- For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
- Individual members of organizations must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual, comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

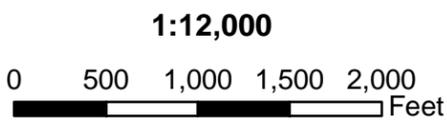
For further information, contact Jim Rigby, Project Lead, at (775) 482-7887, or email at jrigby@fs.fed.us.

Attachment: Bolo Exploration Project Map



Explanation

- Project Boundary
- USFS Boundary
- Existing Drill Sites (Cordex)
- Existing Drill Sites (Other Operators)
- Proposed Drill Sites
- Staging Areas (Approved)**
- Proposed
- Existing
- Proposed Cordex Roads
- Existing Roads**
- Existing (Pre-Cordex)
- Existing Cordex



Projection: UTM Zone 11 North, NAD83



CORDEX EXPLORATION CO.

BOLO PROJECT

Project Location, Existing Disturbance, and Proposed Activities

Figure 1

Date: 05/27/2011	Drawn By: JAK/GSL
Revised: 08/09/2011	Project No.: 2591
Base Map: USGS 7.5' Quads: Hobble Canyon, Little Fish Lake	
File Name: 2591Q_Bolo.mxd	

