



Public Scoping and Notice of Proposed Action & Opportunity to Comment

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Humboldt-
Toiyabe
National Forest

Prunty Project

Mountain City Ranger District
Elko County
Nevada

April, 2012

Comments Welcome

The Mountain City Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the proposed Prunty Project (Project) which is located on National Forest System land within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The Project proponent (Humboldt Mining Company, Inc.) proposes to construct drill pads, and sumps in support of drilling to explore for precious metal minerals. The District has determined that this proposed activity may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) [36 CFR 220]. The Forest Service is applying notice, comment, and appeal regulations found at 36 CFR 215 (specific to EAs) to this project due to a recent U.S. District Court decision.

This document initiates both the scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7) and provides notice of the 30-day comment period pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215. The purpose of this comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide meaningful input on the proposed action prior to a decision by the Responsible Official.

Purpose and Need

The proponent's need is to determine if economically viable precious metals-bearing deposits exist within the proposed Project Area, and define the nature and extent, shape, and economic value of those deposits, if identified. The statutory right of the proponent 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 Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan of 1986. Surface management regulations (36 CFR 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 228.8).

The Proposed Action

The Prunty Project is located on Union Gulch, Charleston Mining District on National Forest System land administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Mountain City Ranger District (Forest Service) (Figure 1), within all or portions of:

- T44N, R57E, Section 13, 14, 23 and 24

The Project proponent, Humboldt Mining Company, Inc., proposes to drill a total of 8 reverse-circulation or core drill holes for mineral exploration from 4 drill pads. The drilling would occur near or on existing roads with one drill pad requiring cross-country travel. No new roads would be constructed. Each location would require a drill pad approximately 30 feet by 70 feet, except where a site can be located within an existing road. Each location will require the construction of a sump (10 feet × 20 feet × 8 feet deep), to contain drill cuttings and fluids from each hole.

Due to the rocky nature of some drill pads, up to 2 sumps may need to be constructed off the drill pads.

Mechanized equipment proposed for the Project includes: one tracked or articulated, rubber tired buggy drill rig; one pipe truck with all-terrain rubber tires; one 4,000 gallon water truck with all-terrain rubber tires; and one D 5-G dozer with 12 foot wide blade. Other supporting vehicles may include one four-wheel drive pickup. The water truck would make 3-5 trips per day to the site; the pickup would make 2-3 trips per day. The pickup will be used for fueling, transporting crew members, and servicing the other equipment.

The anticipated disturbance for this drill program has been calculated for the drill pads and sumps. The total anticipated disturbance for this drill program would be approximately 0.25 acres, drill site construction (8 pads - 30 feet × 70 feet & 4 sumps - 20 feet × 10 feet). The Project is expected to last for approximately four months.

Reclamation

Upon completion of drilling, the drill holes would be plugged and abandoned according to the regulatory requirement set forth in Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 534.4369, NAC 534.4371, NAC 534.4373, and NAC 534.4375. If any unusual groundwater conditions are encountered (e.g., artesian flow) the drill hole would be sealed according to NAC 534.4375. The drill pads and sumps would be regraded to pre-exploration slopes, roads would be pulled back to contour, and removed soil would be spread on top of regraded areas. An approved Forest Service seed mix would be applied and raked into the soil of disturbed areas.

Environmental Protection Measures

Environmental protection measures are proposed to avoid or minimize potential negative effects to resources surrounding and within the Project area. Specific measures currently include, but are not necessarily limited to the following list.

Air Quality: Dust control would be accomplished by watering access routes as necessary. A minimal amount of limb trimming and removal of trees is anticipated for access roads and in areas where existing roads experience overgrowth; no burning of slash is planned. Disturbed areas would be reclaimed to restore vegetative cover.

Water Quality: Approximately 12,000 gallons of water would be used over the life of the Project as a drilling lubricant, to carry the cuttings to the surface of the drill holes, and for dust suppression. Water would be obtained from several sources; 76 Creek using water rights secured from nearby ranchers, water from the nearby Bruneau River using water rights obtained from ranchers and water from the Union Gulch area also utilizing the water rights and permission from nearby ranchers. There would be no diversion of surface water. Water would be stored in a water truck with a 4,000-gallon capacity and transportable plastic or metal tanks with a

capacity of approximately 250 gallons. Drill fluids and cuttings would be contained in drill sumps to ensure they do not enter surface waters drainages. Roads would be constructed using water bars and other best management practices (i.e., certified weed-free straw bales, silt fences, or other measures as appropriate) to minimize runoff and control erosion. Disturbed areas would be reclaimed to restore vegetative cover and to reduce the erosional potential for these areas.

Solid Wastes: Drill cuttings and drilling product packaging would be the only solid waste generated by the Project. Cuttings would be impounded in sumps. All non-hazardous trash would be taken to the county landfill (or other approved disposal facility). If generated, hazardous wastes created during the exploration program would be properly disposed of offsite in approved hazardous waste facilities according to local, state, and federal regulations.

Scenic Values: Reclamation would be completed after cessation of drilling activities to minimize potential visual impacts. Drill sites would be reclaimed following drilling.

Wildlife and Vegetation: The Proposed Action construction schedule would avoid potential conflicts with migratory and breeding birds. Sumps would be constructed with bovine exit ramps for the protection of livestock or wildlife that may inadvertently enter the sumps. Sumps would be backfilled after use. Humboldt Mining Company would implement controls to prevent the spread of noxious weeds including the identification of noxious weed stands in the vicinity and washing vehicles moving in and out of the Project area as required. Drill sites would be reclaimed following drilling if no further development plans are implemented, and roads would be reclaimed upon completion of the Project to restore vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Cultural Resources: Project construction would be designed to avoid cultural resources. If unevaluated archaeological or cultural sites or resources are encountered during Project work, activity in that area would cease immediately, the Forest Service would be notified, and the resource would be evaluated. The results of the evaluation would determine subsequent action.

Hazardous Substances: No. 2 diesel fuel would be used for the drill rig and water truck, and unleaded gasoline or No. 2 diesel fuel would be used in the pickup truck. Other petroleum products, such as hydraulic oil or motor oil, would be used to service equipment as necessary. Drill additives would be non-hazardous and not detrimental to the environment. Fuel would be transported to the Project area in metal tanks on drill support vehicles. Fueling would occur every day or every other day, as required. Drill personnel would be instructed to manage products in a proper manner and to prevent spillage during fueling and servicing operations. Drill rigs would be equipped with absorbent pads, shovels, and buckets to clean up any spills that may occur. Drill support vehicles with service tanks would have appropriate warning signs and fire extinguishers. Equipment would have Forest Service-approved spark arrestors. Drill contractors would be required to have a proper spill response plans. Humboldt Mining Company would ensure that spill prevention measures are in place and containment, notification, and

clean-up of any spills are accomplished as per regulation. Soils contaminated by petroleum spills would be removed and disposed of in an approved off-site waste facility.

Monitoring

During the Project, Humboldt Mining Company would cooperate with the Forest Service to monitor all project activities. Monitoring would include but not be limited to:

- Drilling
- Sediment control
- Road maintenance
- Reclamation
- Noxious weed control

At the conclusion of the Project, reclaimed areas would be monitored for at least three years to ensure successful establishment of vegetation, per the revegetation standards established in the *Nevada Guidelines for Successful Revegetation* for the NDEP, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Forest Service, are attained. Monitoring for the control of erosion and control of noxious weeds would be carried out in conjunction with reclamation monitoring.

Comment Process

The Forest Service encourages your comments on this Project. Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the legal notice for this project in the Elko Daily Free Press. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Interest expressed or comments provided after the close of the 30-day comment period will be considered, but will not confer eligibility to appeal a decision to proceed with the Project.

Mailed comments must be submitted to: District Ranger, Mountain City Ranger District, 2035 Last Chance Road, Elko, Nevada 89801. The fax number is (775) 778-6167. Office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 7:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc/.docx) to: comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-mtn-city@fs.fed.us.

Appeal Eligibility

Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215.6, including : [i] name and address; [ii] title of the proposed action;

[iii]specific comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision; [iv] signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comment(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility; [iv.A] for appeals listing multiple organizations or multiple individuals, a signature or other means of verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization and for each individual in the case of multiple names, to meet appeal eligibility requirements; [iv. B] those using electronic means may submit a scanned signature. Otherwise another means of verifying the identity of the individual or organizational representative may be necessary for electronically submitted comments or comments received by telephone; [v] individual members of an organization must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility; comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this notice, 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 will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For additional information please contact Manuel Silva, Mountain City Ranger District at (775) 778-6129 or email at mrsilva@fs.fed.us. We thank you for your interest in our National Forests.

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