



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe  
National Forest

December 2013

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

## **BIG SPRINGS GOLD EXPLORATION PROJECT**

**MOUNTAIN CITY RANGER DISTRICT  
ELKO COUNTY, NEVADA**

### **USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Mountain City Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is seeking public comments on the proposed Big Springs Gold Project (Project) which is located within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. This document initiates both the scoping process (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [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. Only those who provide comment or express interest in this proposal during this comment period will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

The Project proponent (Anova Metals USA LLC) proposes to construct drill pads and sumps in the support of drilling to explore for precious metal minerals. The District Ranger has determined that this proposed activity may be categorically excluded (36 CFR 220.6(e)(8)) from further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement (36 CFR 220). The Forest Service is applying notice, comment, and appeal regulations found at 36 CFR 215 to this project.

## **PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION**

The purpose of and need for the Proposed Action is to identify, locate, and delineate mineral deposits, specifically by exploration drilling on National Forest System (NFS) Lands in the Project Area. The statutory right of Anova Metals to explore for 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 (IV-50). 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).

## **LOCATION**

The Big Springs Gold Project is located in the Independence Mountains approximately 65 miles north of Elko, Nevada. The Project is located in Sections 1, 2, 11 and 12, Township 42 North, Range 53 East (T42N, R53E), Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, Elko County, Nevada. The Project is located on NFS Lands administered by the United States Forest Service (USFS). The project is accessed by travelling north on State Highway 225 (Mountain City Highway) then west along the North Fork road (Elko County Road 732) for about 8 miles to a well maintained system of roads at the project site (See Attached Map).

## **PROPOSED ACTION SUMMARY**

Anova Metals proposes to conduct a one year exploration drilling program within previously disturbed areas of the former Big Springs Mine site. Exploration activities would include drilling up to 60 drill holes from approximately 17 pads with multiple drill holes at each pad to minimize disturbance. The holes would range in depth from 200 feet to 750 feet. Access to each of the drill sites would be on existing roads, except for 0.71 miles of previously reclaimed road that would be reopened for use during the project. Environmental protection measures are proposed to avoid or minimize potential negative effects to resources surrounding and within the project area.

Reclamation would include plugging and sealing drill holes in a manner consistent with State of Nevada regulation requirements and Forest Service recommended practices, recontouring to the approximate original contour and reseeding with a USFS approved certified weed-free seed mix.

#### **HOW TO COMMENT AND TIMEFRAME**

Only those who provide comment or express interest in this proposal during this comment period will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

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 *Elko Daily Free Press*, Elko, Nevada. 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. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period.

Written 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.

Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone at (775) 738-5171 or in person, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, pdf, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc or .docx) to [comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabemtn-city@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabemtn-city@fs.fed.us).

In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for appeal eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 215.6.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

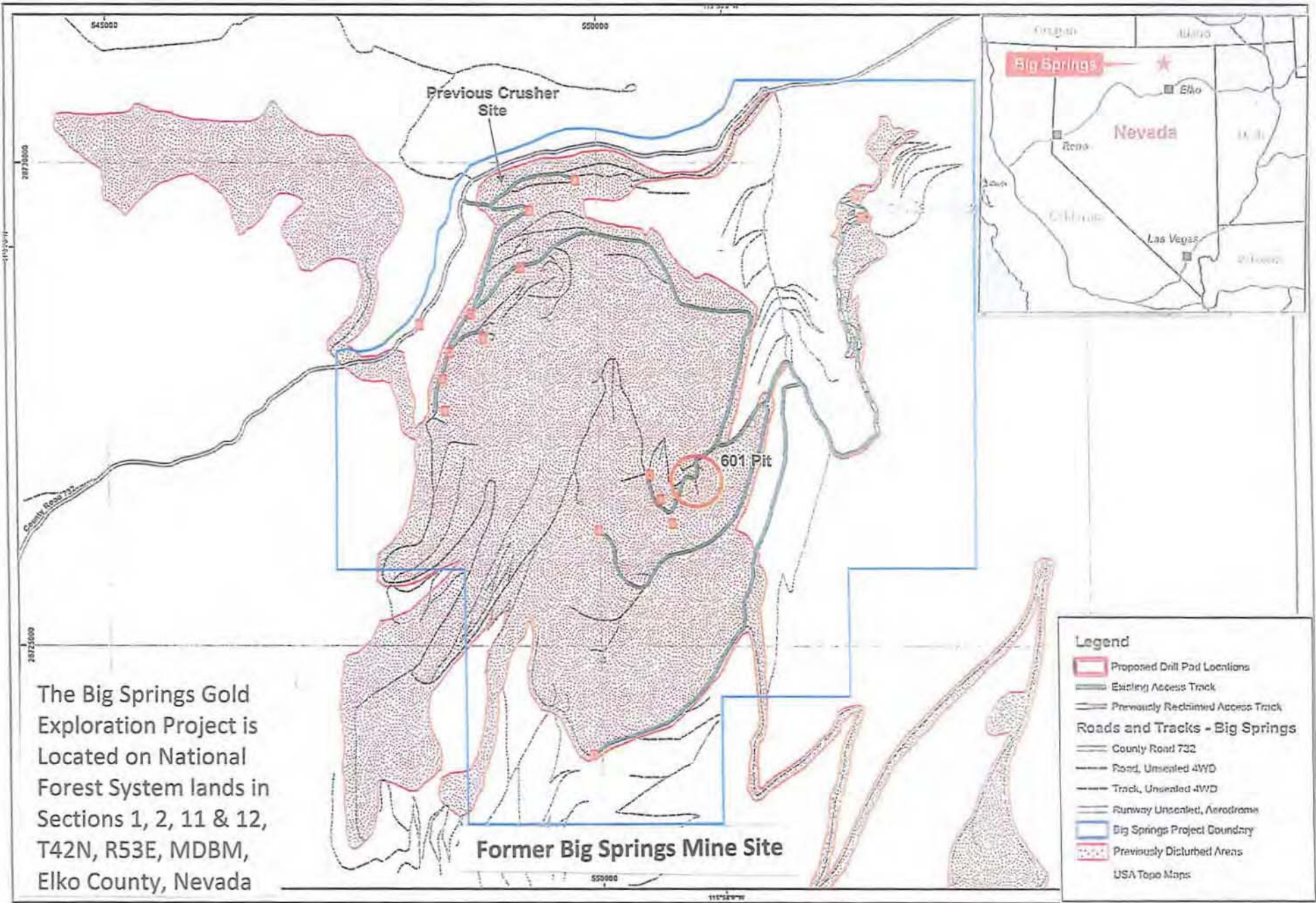
The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of this legal notice in the *Elko Daily Free Press* (Newspaper of Record).

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 will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Scoping and Notice of Proposed Action and Opportunity to Comment  
Page 4

For more information on the NEPA process or this Project please contact Jose Noriega, Elko Acting District Ranger at (775) 738-5171 or Douglas Powell, Geologist and Project Lead, at (775) 778-6129.

# Big Springs Gold Exploration Project



The Big Springs Gold Exploration Project is Located on National Forest System lands in Sections 1, 2, 11 & 12, T42N, R53E, MDBM, Elko County, Nevada

**Former Big Springs Mine Site**

- Legend**
- Proposed Drill Pad Locations
  - Existing Access Track
  - Previously Redrained Access Track
  - Roads and Tracks - Big Springs**
  - County Road 732
  - Road, Unsealed 4WD
  - Track, Unsealed 4WD
  - Runway Unsealed, Aerodrome
  - Big Springs Project Boundary
  - Previously Disturbed Areas
  - USA Topo Maps