



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe
National Forest

August 2014

SCOPING AND NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION AND OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT

BIG SPRINGS MINE PROJECT

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

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INTRODUCTION

The Mountain City Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on Anova Metals USA LLC's (Anova's) Big Springs Mine Project, Elko County, Nevada. This letter serves as the Notice of Proposed Action and provides an opportunity to comment on the specifics of the Project. The Project is not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA); however is subject to the Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process under 36 CFR §218 Subparts (A) and (B). The Project Plan of Operations can be reviewed at the Mountain City Ranger District Office during normal business hours. Further information is also available from Douglas Powell, Geologist and Project Lead, at (775) 778-6129.

DECISION FRAMEWORK

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

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The United States Forest Service's (USFS's) need is to respond to the proponent's submittal of a Plan of Operations (Plan) and to ensure operations would be conducted so as to minimize adverse environmental impacts on National Forest System (NFS) surface resources (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 228.8, Subpart A) where feasible. The purpose of this proposed action is to authorize mining and mineral exploration activities consistent with the statutory right of the proponent to explore for and develop mineral resources on federally-administered lands under the General Mining Law of 1872, and with other laws and regulations including the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) of 1986 (IV-50) (USFS 1986). The proponent's purpose and need is to extract known mineral deposits within the proposed Project Area, to support the U.S. economy and to bring to market a needed commodity. The decision for the USFS to make is whether to approve the Plan (activities on NFS lands only) as submitted or to approve with additional measures to protect resources.

LOCATION

The Project is located on the eastern flank of the Independence Mountains to the north of McAfee Peak, approximately 63 miles northwest of Elko, Nevada. The Project is located on NFS land administered by the USFS in portions of Sections 1 and 2, Township 42 North, Range 53 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (Project Area), Elko County, Nevada. The Project Area is accessed via Nevada State Route (SR) 225 (Mountain City Highway), by traveling approximately 54 miles north of the City of Elko, turning onto the west-bound Elko County, North Fork Road (CR) 732, traveling 4.5 miles to the Doheny Ranch, then continuing 4.5 miles along CR 732 to the mine entrance gate (Figure 1).

PROPOSED PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Project Area includes previously mined areas, including open pits, partially reclaimed pit bottoms, unreclaimed waste rock disposal areas, reclaimed overburden storage areas, access roads and the reclaimed crusher and maintenance site. The new proposed operations include reopening reclaimed or partially reclaimed surface disturbance, and utilizing areas of existing

surface disturbance associated with the former Big Springs Mine. Under the Plan, Anova proposes to conduct open pit mining in the existing 601 Pit and underground mining of ore below both the 601 Pit and the existing 701 Pit (once open pit mining has been completed).

The proposed mining activities are located entirely within areas of previous and partially reclaimed surface disturbance associated with the original Big Springs Mine. All proposed mining activities would occur on NFS lands in an approximate 617-acre Project Area. Anticipated operational mine life is approximately two years, which includes construction and pre-stripping, followed by approximately three years of reclamation, site closure activities, and post-closure monitoring.

PROPOSED ACTION SUMMARY

The Proposed Action would consist of mining activities within the Project Area as shown on Figure 2 and described in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Surface Disturbance within the Project Area¹

Component ²	Proposed Surface Disturbance (acres) ¹
601 Open Pit Mine; and 601 and 701 Underground Mine Portals	10.8
Growth Media/Moraine Overburden Stockpile to be Used as Backfill into the 601 Pit and as Reclamation Material	5.4
Ore Stockpile Facility	1.2
Growth Media Stockpile at Facilities Area	0.4
Waste Rock Disposal Area	8.0
Mine Operations Office and Truck Shop Facilities	1.3
Haul Road to Ore Stockpile and to CR 732 (includes sediment basins)	11.0
Haul Road to WRDA (includes sediment basins)	0.6
Access/Utility Roads (includes sediment basins)	1.5
Water Pipeline and Associated Infrastructure	0.8
Total	41.0

¹Existing disturbed acreages would be re-disturbed as part of the Proposed Action and have been included in the proposed disturbed acreage totals. No new disturbance would be created.

²Each component includes disturbance associated with water control structures.

Anova intends to reopen the 601 Pit by conventional open pit mining methods using trucks and excavators to extract ore and waste rock. Drilling and blasting would be used as required to fracture rock prior to excavation. Waste from the open pit would consist of two material types: overburden comprised principally of glacial moraine material and in-pit hard rock waste. Ore would be loaded into haul trucks and transported to an ore stockpile located in the area that was formally utilized for ore crushing operations. The ore would subsequently be trucked off site, using highway-rated covered trucks, for processing at a third-party facility.

There are five monitoring wells located near the existing 601 and 701 Pit areas. Water for the Project, including dust suppression would be obtained from two water wells permitted by the Nevada Division of Water Resources. One well is located at the southwest corner of the project area adjacent to the former SWX Pit, and the other well is approximately 4.5 miles east of the Project Area on private land.

The Proposed Action includes the following activities and facilities (shown on Figure 2):

- One open pit (601 Pit), including moraine water and diversion channel;
- Stored overburden material to be used in reclamation;
- One underground mine beneath the 601 Pit and the existing 701 Pit, accessed by declines from the 601 Pit and 701 Pit;
- Waste rock disposal area;
- Run-of-mine (ROM) ore stockpile facility;
- Trucking of ROM ore off site for processing in existing third-party facilities;
- Mine operations office and truck shop facilities;
- Access and haul roads; and
- Water pipelines and associated infrastructure.

The mine is scheduled to operate one 12-hour shift per day, 365 days per year for approximately two years. The estimated average staffing requirement during active mining operations for the Project is 24 employees for the first year and 22 during the second year of operations.

The General and Administration staff includes administration, technical (three employees), safety and environmental (one employee). These employees would likely be salaried and work a 40-hour per week schedule, Monday through Friday. Mine Operations staff would be employed by a mine contractor and consist of operations employees such as excavator operators, jumbo and air-leg rock drill operators, haul truck drivers, dozer and grader drivers, drillers and maintenance crews such as electricians, mechanics, and welders. Operations and maintenance crews would operate one 12-hour shift per day, seven days a week.

RECLAMATION

The final grading plan for the Project is designed in part to minimize the visual impacts of the disturbance proposed by Anova. Slopes of disturbed areas outside of the pits themselves would be regraded with standard mine mobile equipment (excavators, dozers, trucks, loaders, scrapers) to blend with surrounding topography, interrupt straight-line features and facilitate revegetation, where practicable. Where feasible, large constructed topographic features, such as the Ore Stockpile Area and the Truck Shop Area may have rounded crests and lessened slope angles to resemble natural landforms. Options for the location of waste rock storage are being evaluated.

ALTERNATIVES

Currently, two alternatives have been identified to be analyzed in detail with further analysis potentially generating other alternatives. The USFS is currently evaluating other options for the location of waste rock storage.

The No Action Alternative: The Plan of Operations would not be approved and Anova would not conduct mining activities. Conditions at the Project Area would remain as they are now. This alternative is used as a reference to evaluate the other alternatives.

The Proposed Action Alternative: Anova's Plan of Operations would be approved and Anova would be authorized to conduct the proposed mining Project. This alternative would include the proposed activities outlined in the Plan of Operations from Anova and would include environmental protection measures, timing, monitoring, reclamation, and protective resource measures based upon comments from the public, tribes, state, local and federal agencies and the interdisciplinary team during analysis of the Proposed Action. Mitigation measures can be added to this alternative to eliminate or reduce impacts to surface resources.

COMMENTS WELCOME

The USFS is now seeking public comments specific to the proposed Project. There are two purposes for this comment period:

1. To provide opportunity for public participation prior to a decision by the Responsible Official. In addition, submission of comments during this period is required to establish objection eligibility subject to *36 CFR 218.5 and 218.7 Subparts (a) and (b)*; and
2. To meet the NEPA requirements for public scoping.

The Project is not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act; however, the Project is implemented under land management plans and is subject to *36 CFR 218.7 Subparts (a) and (b)*. Instead of an appeal period, there is an objection process before the final decision is made and after the final environmental analysis document and draft decision are completed (reference *36 CFR 218*). In order to be eligible to file an objection, specific written comments related to the Project must be submitted during the Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA) and Opportunity to Comment period.

In development and preparation of the Project, the participation of interested persons, state and local governments, and Native American tribes is encouraged at this time and throughout the process.

HOW TO COMMENT AND TIME FRAME

Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements of *36 CFR 218 Subparts (a) and (b)*.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project during a public comment period established by the responsible official are eligible to file an objection under §218.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, 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*. 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 time frame information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Written comments must be submitted to the Responsible Official for this Project (Kathryn W. Fuell, Mountain City District Ranger) at 2035 Last Chance Road, Elko, Nevada 89801; phone (775) 738-5171, fax (775) 778-6167; or you may hand-deliver your comments during normal business hours from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays to 2035 Last Chance Road, Elko, Nevada. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to this email address: comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-mtn-city@fs.fed.us. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for objection eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

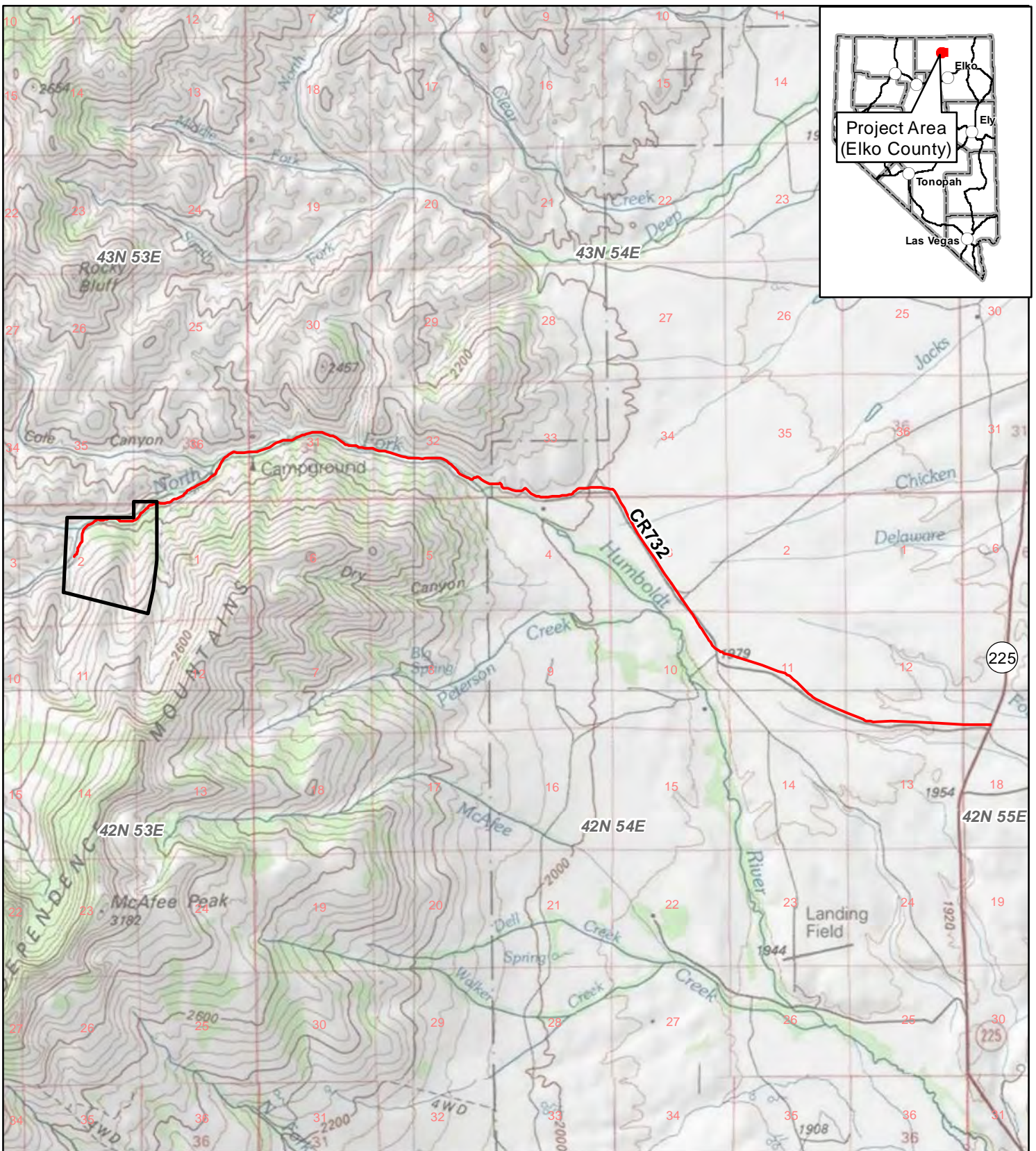
Additional Information:

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.

For more information on the NEPA process or this Project please contact Kathryn W. Fuell, Mountain City District Ranger at (775) 738-5171 or Douglas Powell, Geologist and Project Lead, at (775) 778-6129.

Attachments: Figure 1 – Project Area and Access; Figure 2 – Existing Disturbance and General Facilities Layout within the Project Area



Explanation

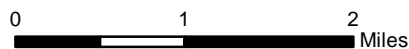
-  Project Area
-  Project Access Road

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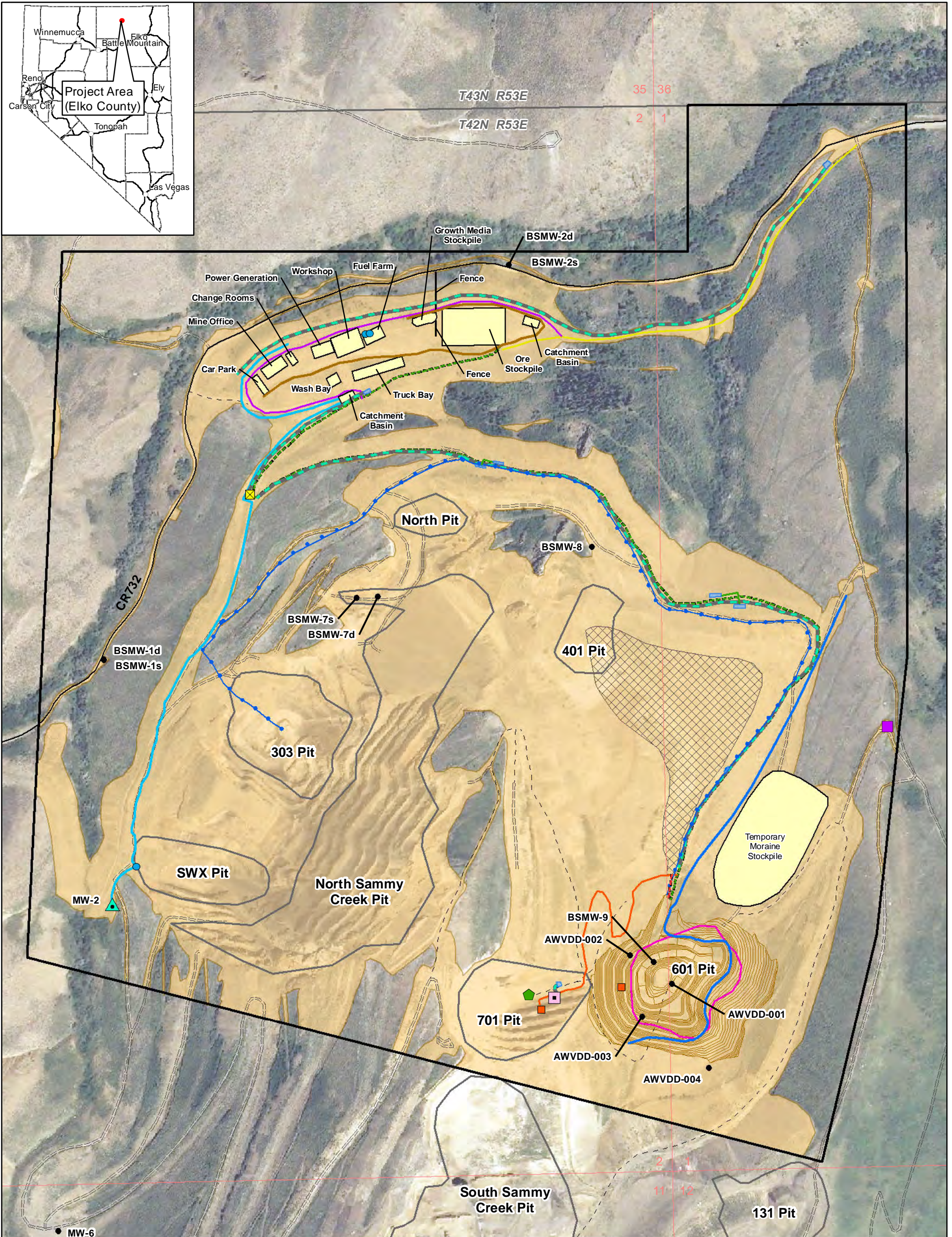
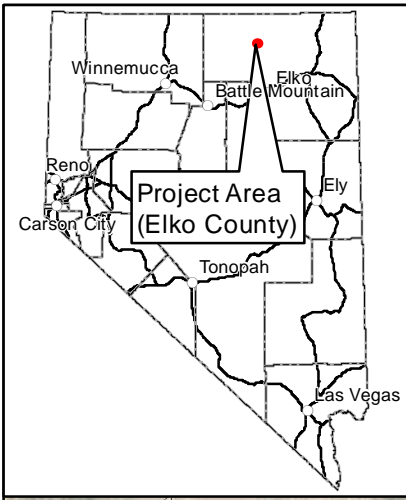
Project Area and Access

Figure 1

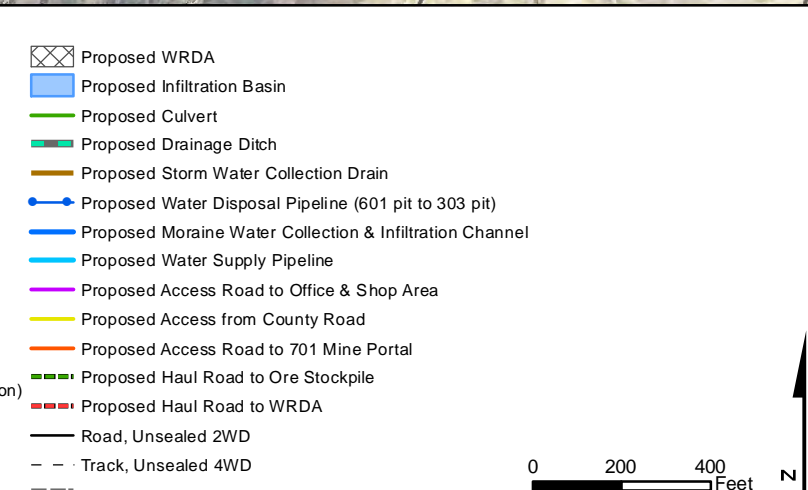


Date: 04/23/2014	Drawn By: GSL
Revised:	Project No.: 3102
Base Map: USGS 100K Quads: Jarbidge Mts., Double Mountain	
File Name: 3102X_Figure2_LocAccess.mxd	





- Explanation**
- Project Area
 - Existing Disturbance, Partially Reclaimed
 - Historical 601 Pit
 - Historical Pit Outline
 - Proposed Facility
 - 601 Pit Design
 - Pit Portal
 - Ventilation Generator
 - Proposed Standpipe
 - Proposed Water Tank
 - Existing Monitor Well
 - Existing Monitor Well (Proposed Pump Station)
 - Magazine
 - Air Vent
 - Proposed WRDA
 - Proposed Infiltration Basin
 - Proposed Culvert
 - Proposed Drainage Ditch
 - Proposed Storm Water Collection Drain
 - Proposed Water Disposal Pipeline (601 pit to 303 pit)
 - Proposed Moraine Water Collection & Infiltration Channel
 - Proposed Water Supply Pipeline
 - Proposed Access Road to Office & Shop Area
 - Proposed Access from County Road
 - Proposed Access Road to 701 Mine Portal
 - Proposed Haul Road to Ore Stockpile
 - Proposed Haul Road to WRDA
 - Road, Unsealed 2WD
 - Track, Unsealed 4WD



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Existing Disturbance and General Facilities Layout within the Project Area

Figure 2

Date: 08/25/2014	Drawn By: GSL
Revised:	Project No.: 3102
Base Map: NAIP Nevada 2013 1m NC	
File Name: 3102X_Figure3_DisturbanceFacilitiesLayout.mxd	