



File Code: 1950/2810

Date: March 16, 2010

Dear Interested Party:

The Payette National Forest is conducting an environmental analysis for the proposed Plan of Operations (POO) for the Golden Hand #1 and #2 lode mining claims. The POO, submitted by American Independence Mines and Minerals Company, would allow for mineral development drilling on the claims.

Project Description

The mining claims are located on the Krassel Ranger District in the Frank Church - River of No Return (FC-RONR) Wilderness, approximately 50 miles northeast of McCall, Idaho in section 26, T22N, R9E, Boise Meridian. The two claims encompass approximately 20 acres each adjacent to Coin Creek, a tributary of Beaver Creek, which flows into Big Creek, a tributary of the Salmon River.

Access to the claims would be on Forest Service (FS) roads to the FC-RONR Wilderness boundary at Pueblo Summit, north of the town of Edwardsburg. Proposed access would then require vehicle passage for approximately 3 miles within the wilderness boundary on FS trail #13. FS trail #13 is on a roadbed that existed before creation of the wilderness. The roadbed was converted to use as a trail upon establishment of the wilderness. Vehicle access would require clearing slough, downed trees and other obstacles to maintain a safe width for equipment transport, and repair of two fords across forks of Coin Creek.

The proposed operation would reconstruct approximately 4500 feet of pre-existing roadbed on the two lode mining claims. These roads would access 11 drill locations, from which 13 to 18 core holes would be drilled. Rock chip samples would be collected from pits excavated to bedrock at several locations within the roadbed. An underground mine adit, caved and inaccessible since the 1930's, would be reopened and timbered to allow access for underground mapping and sampling. Waste rock would be placed on the existing, flat work area.

Equipment proposed for use includes four-wheel-drive pickup trucks, a 7 cubic yard dump truck, flatbed truck, D-8 (or equivalent) bulldozer, 3-cubic yard loader, a track or skid-mounted drill rig, air compressor, small jackhammer, and generator.

A temporary tent camp is proposed to be situated adjacent to an existing, historic bunkhouse. The bunkhouse is proposed for use as an office and dining hall.

Project Analysis

The proposed action is being considered under the provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations at 36 CFR 228A and direction in the Payette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan to facilitate the orderly development of minerals (Forest Plan p. III-48). The responsible



official for the decision is the Payette National Forest Supervisor. I have determined that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is necessary for approval of the POO under federal regulations.

Public participation will be important at several points during the analysis. This letter initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the EIS. Public comments will help identify potential issues and issues to be analyzed in detail. Issues lead to the development of alternatives and/or mitigation measures to the proposed action. Preliminary issues identified by the Forest Service interdisciplinary team include use of mechanized equipment in wilderness, protection of wilderness character, effects to threatened and endangered species, and effects to aquatic species and water quality. Following preparation of the draft EIS and public review, the FS will prepare a final EIS. Based on the FEIS, the responsible official will document a decision and reasons for it in the Record of Decision. That decision will be subject to appeal under 36 CFR 215.

How You Can Participate

Interested parties are encouraged to comment on the proposed action by May 3, 2010. Electronic comments must be sent to: comments-intermtn-payette@fs.fed.us with “**Golden Hand**” as part of the subject line. They need to be in message, text, .doc, .docx or .rtf format. Written comments should be sent to Suzanne Rainville, Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, 800 West Lakeside Avenue, McCall, Idaho 83638, by FAX at (208) 634-0744. Hand delivered comments can be taken to the Forest Supervisor’s Office at 800 West Lakeside Avenue, McCall, Idaho during business hours.

Comments received in response to this solicitation will be part of the project record and available for public review pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jamie Parker (for):
SUZANNE C. RAINVILLE
Forest Supervisor