



File Code: 1950

Date: November 20, 2013

Route To:

Subject: Project Initiation Letter - Cleopatra Test Drilling EA

To: Interdisciplinary Team Members

## *Purpose and Need*

The Forest Service has received a plan of operations from Red Flat Nickel Corporation to test drill for minerals on their claims on Forest Service lands. The goal of this project is to determine whether there are reasonable measures, in addition to those proposed, to minimize adverse effects to surface resources from planned activities.

## *Location, Area, Duration, and Details (see maps in plan of operations)*

**Location** – Curry County, Oregon, approximately 10 miles WSW of O'Brien, Oregon

**Access** - Access into the claim block is via Road 305 (2 wheel drive accessible), to road 450 (4WD only). Road 305 can be accessed from the west via Rowdy Creek Road (junction with US 101 in Smith River, California), from the south via road 17N49 (junction with Hwy. 199 immediately west of Gasquet, California), or from the east via Lone Mountain Road (meets Highway 199 in O'Brien, Oregon) to road 4402/305. No new road construction, or maintenance to the existing roads, is proposed.

**Legal Description** – T41S-R10W-Sections 5-8, 17, 18; T41S-R11W-Sections 1, 12 (Willamette Meridian)

**Watersheds** - Baldface, Taylor, and Fall Creeks, within the North Fork Smith River watershed

**Land Use Designations** – IRA, LSR, potential wilderness; potentially others.

**Area** – Project area (perimeter of claims) = approximately 3,980 acres. Cumulative area occupied = 0.8 acres.

**Duration** – Total = 10 to 12 weeks. Daily = 12 hours (daylight hours only). Weekly = 6 days per week. Per hole = 2-3 days of activity and visual impacts.

## *Proposed Action*

This is a summary of the proposed action based on the plan of operations submitted by the claimants. The full plan and maps can be found in the O drive project folder at:

<O:\NFS\RogueSiskiyou\Project\WRRD\wrCleopatraTestDrilling2013\PlanOfOperationsAndSummary>

### **Key Activities**

- Drill 59 3-inch diameter holes into rock or bare lateritic soils to a maximum depth of 50 feet to obtain core samples of minerals. Spacing at approximately 600 feet.
- No drill holes within 200 feet of any seasonal or perennial watercourse.
- Water removal of up to 10 gallons per minute from an unnamed tributary of Taylor Creek. Maximum daily usage not expected to exceed 2000 gallons (1000 gallons per drill-hole).
- Helicopter transport of personnel and equipment daily.



- Construct five 12' x 12' helicopter pads. No removal of trees larger than 4" DBH.
- No road construction or reconstruction.
- Reclaim drilling locations to their original condition, as closely as possible.

The Forest Service has received a plan of operations from Red Flat Nickel Corp. to drill 59 holes to obtain core samples of minerals on existing claims (ORMC #161516-161551 and 161764-162424). These claims are located in Curry County within the North Fork Smith River watershed between Baldface, Taylor, and Fall Creeks.

Operations would occur over a 10 to 12 week period. Drilling operations would occur 12 hours per day (daylight only); 6 days per week. Project activities and visual impacts would not generally exceed 2 to 3 days per hole. There could be up to 2 active drill sites at any one time and one site being prepared. A total of approximately 0.8 acres would be occupied over the life of the project.

The 59 drill holes would be a minimum of 600 feet apart. Each drill hole would be 3-inches in diameter and drilled to a maximum depth of 50 feet. No drill holes would occur within 200 feet of any seasonal or perennial watercourse. Drilling would be into rock or bare lateritic soils and typically no vegetation would be disturbed.

Helicopters would transport all personnel (9), equipment, and supplies to and from sites; requiring two trips each morning and two trips each evening (daylight hours only). Five temporary raised-wooden 12'x12' helipads would be constructed. To allow safe entry, a 50'x75' area would be cleared of vegetation above 3 feet in height via chainsaw and/or hand tools. No live trees larger than 4" diameter at breast height would be removed. Personnel would walk between drill sites and helipads. The drill(s) and larger equipment would be slung to each drilling location by helicopter.

A low impact, light drilling rig would be moved to each site by helicopter and placed onto a temporary 4-foot by 11-foot raised metal platform. Prior to beginning drilling at the next location, sealing of the hole, spreading of drill chips to blend with the natural slope, and removal of all equipment and materials would occur.

Water would be used during drilling operations to cool drill bits. A limited water use license has been issued by the Oregon Water Resources Department (LL-1445) which allows the removal of up to 10 gallons of water per minute from an unnamed tributary of Taylor Creek. Fish screening criteria apply to the intake. Water would be gravity fed to a holding tank then pumped up to temporary 1500 gallon water bladders through temporary 1-1/4" PVC pipe.

Two drilling additives (Bio-Cut Plus and DD2000), may be mixed with the water to improve sample recovery or maintain drill-hole stability, if needed. Up to 10 pounds per hole (590 pounds total) could be used. The proponent indicates that both are non-hazardous and biodegradable (MSDS on file; no hazards indicated).

Fuel and petroleum products would be used in equipment and vehicles. Multiple spill prevention measures would be employed. The helicopter and vehicles will be fueled off-site, but up to 110 gallons of jet fuel would be stored for emergency fueling. Up to 150 gallons of gasoline and 150 gallons of diesel fuel would be stored on-site to refuel equipment and water pumps. All trash and solid waste (including human) would be properly stored and removed.

#### **Mitigation Design Features in Plan of Operations (see plan of operations for full description)**

Drill holes would be a minimum of 200 feet from any intermittent or perennial springs or watercourses. In addition, an absorbent barrier would be installed between any equipment and a watercourse.

Spill containment materials and trays would be used under equipment and spill response kits would be readily available. In the case of a spill, drilling operations will cease, the spill will be contained and cleaned-up, and local authorities will be notified immediately.

Best management practices (BMPs) would be followed to limit potential erosion. No water is anticipated to return to the surface during the drilling process because of porous soils; however, in the event it does, the water would be directed away from the drilling location and allowed to naturally infiltrate.

## ***ID Team Responsibilities***

I am assigning the following resource specialists to the interdisciplinary team (IDT). The IDT needs to ensure NEPA, NFMA, and Forest Service direction is followed in the analysis of this proposal. The plan of operations submitted by the claimant is the proposed action. IDT members will identify issues and alternatives for my consideration. You will also contribute any information regarding affected environment and environmental effects of the proposed action or its alternatives.

Members will work together in an interdisciplinary fashion. You should represent all forest resources not just the resource which is your specialty. Full cooperation and timely progression of work is expected.

**FILE NAMING:** Please name all files using the R6 file naming standards (in project's O drive **Templates-Writing**). This prevents issues with O drive access, and the need to rename files for the project record.

- Capitalize first letter of each word, no spaces and no underscores (use a hyphen when needed for clarity), no special characters. See the project's O drive link above for an example.

**PLAIN WRITING:** Please follow the guidance below to create clear, concise, and consistent analysis documents that comply with Forest Service accessibility guidelines. For additional help, contact Holly.

- **Template:** Use the WO EA template on the project's O drive in **Templates-Writing**. Save the new document: > Change Styles > Style Set > Save as Quick Style Set. Name it WO-EA. To set as your default style: > Change Styles > Set as default.
- **Font: Times New Roman, size 11.** Use the WO template for Headings, paragraph spacing, table formats, etc. There should be no extra spacing between paragraphs to comply with WO guidance.
- **Minimize capitalization:** Generally, only capitalize proper names and titles with a name. Do not capitalize: proposed action, project area, land use classifications, common names of species, words used in an acronym, section headings. Use sentence case in captions for tables, figures, maps, etc.
- **Short is better:** Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Be brief and concise. Be sure the amount of information presented is clearly warranted. Don't over-write your affected environment section.
- **Important things first:** Give your conclusions and important information early in each section and paragraph, so the reader can prioritize what to read. Be sure to include your rationale.
- **Avoid:**
  - **jargon** (can your pre-teen understand it?)
  - **bias** (only, just, catastrophic, excessive, huge, etc.)
  - **vague terms & adjectives** (small, large, big, tall, somewhat, etc.- give a range of numbers instead)
  - **“significant”** (If used, the IDT needs to discuss why.)

- **Would vs. will** – Use “would” (not “will”) in your reports. Exceptions are mitigation measures. “Will” is emphatic (so is used after a decision has been made).

## Timeline

Date	Who	Task
Nov. 22, 2013	IDT	IDT field trip.
Dec. 9, 2013	IDT	IDT meeting #1(conf. call): field trip review, templates, document guidance, consultation needs, mitigation measures, issues.
Dec. 11, 2013	EC	Begin 30-day public scoping
Dec. 2013	EC	Draft Ch. 1 and 2 of EA.
Dec. 2013	IDT	Outline of resource reports completed (EC will provide style template).
Jan. 13-17, 2014	EC	Analyze scoping comments received.
Jan. 21-24, 2014	IDT	IDT meeting #2: Review scoping and new issues.
<b>Feb. 7, 2014</b>	<b>IDT</b>	<b>Resource reports due.</b>
Feb. 2014	EC	EA/FONSI completed.
March 2014	EC	30-day public comment period
April	EC, IDT	IDT meeting #3: Response to comments. Finalize EA and draft decision notice.
May-June	EC	45-day opportunity to object

## ID Team and Work Plan

Name	Position (Location*)	Function	Days (per coll. agreement.)	Days (per work plan 5/6/13)
Bonnie Allison	Wildlife biologist (WRRD)	Wildlife analysis	15	15
Brian Long	Recreation program mgr. (SMRD)	Recreation analysis	7	7
Clint Emerson	Botanist (GBRD)	Botany analysis	10	10
Holly Witt	Environmental coordinator (GBRD)	IDT lead, NEPA oversight	50	50
Joni Brazier	Soil scientist (GPIO)	Soils/hydrology analysis	20	20
Kailey Albertson	Biological technician (GBRD)	Botany assistance	5	5
Karla Cottom	Fisheries biologist (PORD)	Fish analysis	15	15
Kevin Johnson	Mining geologist (MIO)	Project lead, minerals analysis	7	7
Kristen Hauge	Archaeologist (GBRD)	Heritage analysis	15	15
TBD	Roads/engineering	Road analysis	3	3
Roy Bergstrom	District Ranger (WRRD)	Responsible official	5	0
Stephen Boyer	Silviculturist (GBRD)	Silviculture analysis	3	3
Stuart Osbrack	Botanist (WRRD)	Botany analysis	5	5
Brent Hasty	GIS (DRM)	GIS mapping and analysis	6	0
<b>FOREST STAFF</b>				
Chris Park	Forest hydrologist (GPIO)	Hydrology review	2	0
Dave Clayton	Forest wildlife biologist (MIO)	Wildlife review	5	0
David Krantz	Forest planner (MIO)	NEPA review	15	30
Steven Brazier	Forest fisheries biologist (GPIO)	Fish review	5	5
TBD	Forest botanist	Botany review	2	0
TBD	Forest program lead (MIO?)	Silviculture review	3	0
			198	190
*Location: DRM = Data Mgmt.Services; GBRD=Gold Beach RD; GPIO=Grants Pass Interagency Office; MIO = Medford Interagency Office; PORD = Powers RD; WRRD = Wild Rivers RD (Cave Junction, OR)				

## *Job Code*

**CWFS07** (override 0610). This is a cost recovery account and should only be used for NEPA analysis related to this project. You must maintain an accounting record of the specific days and hours you work on this project should the proponent request it.

## *Contact*

Holly Witt 541-247-3688, [hfwitt@fs.fed.us](mailto:hfwitt@fs.fed.us).

*/s/ Kevin L. Johnson*  
KEVIN L. JOHNSON  
Acting District Ranger