

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ARIZONA
TUCSON FIELD OFFICE**

EA #: AZ-420-2006-003

Project Name: Smithco Bobbitt Quarry

BLM Contact Person: Bill Auby

Legal Description and Map Name: Public land administered by the BLM in the Middle Gila, in the vicinity of Smith Wash, 4 miles SW of the town of Winkleman, Pinal County, Arizona. The general location is T. 5 S., R. 15 E., NWNW section 29 of the Gila and Salt River Principal Meridian. The area is covered by the Winkleman 7.5' USGS quadrangle, and shown on Maps 1 and 2.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background:

The Bobbitt Quarry has been mined as a source of high-silica smelter flux since the early 1990's. It was originally authorized as a mining notice under the 43 CFR 3809 regulations because smelter flux is a locatable mineral and the disturbance was 5 acres. In the 2000's, Smithco attempted to expand the products mined at the quarry into the decorative rock market, so the quarry was authorized under a mineral material sale issued in February 2002. In the three years since the contract was issued, sales to the decorative rock market have not been good. Most of the rock mined during this period was for the flux market. The mineral material contract expired in February 2005 and BLM needs to reauthorize the quarry under the proper regulations.

The Need for the Proposal:

Smithco Enterprises, Inc. has submitted a plan of operations for BLM approval under the 43 CFR 3809 regulations because most of the material that has been mined and will continue to be mined is a locatable mineral. The present footprint of the quarry will stay the same under the Plan of Operations. In addition to approving the plan, BLM will authorize periodic mineral material sales for any rock that is sold to the decorative rock market under the 43 CFR 3600 regulations.

Conformance with Land Use Plan:

The proposed action is subject to the *Phoenix Resource Management Plan (RMP)*, approved September 1989. This proposed action has been reviewed to determine if it conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5, BLM MS 1617.3. The Phoenix RMP allows for locatable mineral activity to be administered on a case-by-case basis.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans or Policies:

The operator obtained a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit from EPA in 2001 and an Air Quality permit from Pinal County in 2002 that is good for five years. These permits can be seen in Appendix II.

The BLM decision only authorizes use of BLM land. Use of non-BLM land (National Forest, State Trust land, private land) is subject to the agency or private landowners' permission.

II. THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Description of the Proposed Action:

Smithco Enterprises, Inc. will continue to operate the Bobbitt Quarry within the current footprint under a 43 CFR 3809 Mining Plan of Operations. Operations consist of drilling and blasting quartzite rock from a section of Dripping Springs Quartzite that has been inclined to near vertical. Blasted rock is removed by front-end loader and fed into a crushing and screening plant for sorting into different sizes. Throughout the life of this plan the bench that is currently being mined will be lowered from the 2620 elevation to the 2560 elevation which is near the elevation of Smith Wash. The current footprint including access roads,

benches, and pit walls is 7.3 acres. The Plan of Operations for the Bobbitt Quarry is shown in Appendix I. Smithco regularly waters the road to control fugitive dust and uses dust control equipment on the screening plant as required by the Pinal County Air Quality permit in Appendix II.

When the quartzite rock resource is mined out, Smithco will begin reclamation operations. Smithco will install a fence around the perimeter and reseed all disturbed areas. Berms will be built across access roads to prevent entry. Disturbed areas will be hydroseeded using a mix of native species.

General Stipulations:

Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the holder, or any person working on his behalf, on public or federal land shall be immediately reported to the Bureau of Land Management authorized officer. Holder shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values.

No Action Alternative:

Smithco Enterprises, Inc. will cease mining the Bobbitt Quarry and commence reclamation work.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES:

Critical Elements: The following critical elements are not affected by the proposed action or alternatives because they do not occur in the proposed use area, or because of the nature of the proposed action: ACEC's, Environmental Justice, Prime & Unique Farmlands, Floodplains, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Wild & Scenic rivers, Wilderness, National Energy Policy, and native American Religious Concerns.

Air Quality: The Bobbitt Quarry is located in a Class II airshed. Classifications are established by the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards and Class II can accommodate normal, well-managed industrial growth.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create particulate matter from the blasting, excavation, crushing, screening, and loading of rock. Haul trucks transporting material from the mine will create dust on the dirt access road. In compliance with their Pinal County Air Quality permit, Smithco will continue to water roads and work areas and use dust control equipment which will greatly reduce emissions.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Shutting down the mine will remove all particulate matter emissions.

Threatened and Endangered Species: The Bobbitt Quarry is 1 mile south of critical habitat for the Cactus Ferruginous pygmy owl. Nests of the Southwest willow flycatcher are known on the San Pedro River, 4 miles to the east, and on the Gila River. The quarry is within Category 2 Desert Tortoise habitat and within 40 miles of a Lesser long-nosed bat roost site. The San Pedro River, 4 miles to the east, is also critical habitat for the loachminnow and spikedace. The following special status species may also occur within 5 miles: Longfin dace, common Blackhawk, Desert sucker, Sonora sucker, western yellow-billed cuckoo, San Carlos wild-buckwheat, Mexican broomspurge, bald eagle, and Mississippi Kite.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: There is no known occurrence of pygmy owls near the mine and the habitat score is below 20. The mine site is not within a forage area of the Lesser long-nosed bat. Continued mining will not impact any Threatened or Endangered species (see Appendix III).

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Shutting down the mine and reclaiming the site will not impact any Threatened or Endangered species.

Cultural Resources: A cultural resources inventory is not required because the Bobbitt Quarry is an existing quarry where the ground surface has been so extensively altered that intact cultural resources probably would not exist.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: There will be no impacts to cultural resources.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to cultural resources.

Wastes, Hazardous or Solid: Explosives are stored at the Bobbitt Quarry in a safe and secure manner. No hazardous products, other than explosives, are stored on site. Mining vehicles are fueled with mobile units that remove used oil from site. There is no trash or scrap stored on site.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: None

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: None

Water Quality, Drinking or Ground: Smithco has a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan as required by their EPA National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit. This permit prevents sediment from running off into Smith Wash. All water used at the mine is delivered and there is no water well at the mine.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Continued mining will not impact water quality.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: None

Noxious Weeds: There are no recognized noxious weed problems at the mine.

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Continued mining will not introduce noxious weeds to the site. Native plants will be used to revegetate the site after reclamation.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative: Native plants will be used to revegetate the site after reclamation.

Cumulative Impacts: *(include discussion of the impacts of other projects in the same vicinity)*

Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action: The quarry has been operated under the same footprint since the early 1990's so, no cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Cumulative Impacts of the No Action Alternative: None.

Description of Mitigation Measures: *(repeated from proposed action)*

Proposed Action:

1. Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the holder, or any person working on his behalf, on public or federal land shall be immediately reported to the Bureau of Land Management authorized officer. Holder shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values.

2. After mining is completed, the operator will reclaim the quarry as per the reclamation plan.
3. In compliance with their Pinal County Air Quality permit, Smithco will continue to water roads and work areas and use dust control equipment which will greatly reduce emissions.

No Action: None.

Compliance and Area Monitoring:

Compliance inspections will be conducted once a year to ensure the MPO is being followed and compliance with BLM regulations.

PREPARERS

Bill Auby, TFO Geologist

Persons and Agencies Consulted:

Jane Childress, TFO archaeologist, provided comments on the cultural resources.

Jack Whetstone, TFO biologist (retired) prepared the no affect determination.

TFO NEPA team reviewed this EA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

EA Number: AZ-420-2006-003
Lease/Serial/Case File No. AZA 33257
BLM Office: TFO

Finding of No Significant Impact:

I have reviewed the environmental assessment, #AZ-420-2006-003 Smithco Bobbitt Quarry including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the Phoenix Resource Management Plan approved in Record of Decision dated September 1989.

Below are the substantive reasons for finding no significant impact:

- **The site has been mined since the early 1990's and the current plan will remain in the same footprint resulting in no new disturbance.**
- **The operator must provide a financial guarantee in an amount sufficient to cover the cost of the proposed reclamation.**
- **The operation will have negligible impact on air quality because Smithco controls fugitive dust as required by its Pinal County Air Quality Permit.**
- **The project does not affect any Threatened or Endangered or any other listed species.**

Attachments: EA No. AZ-420-2006-003

Manager _____ Date _____ Field

DECISION RECORD

EA Number: AZ-420-2006-003

Lease/Serial/Case File No. AZA 33257

BLM Office: Tucson Field Office

Decision: It is my decision to select the proposed action which is to approve the mining plan of operations for the Bobbitt Quarry.

Alternatives Considered: The only alternative to the proposed action that was considered in the environmental assessment was the “No Action” alternative. This alternative was not selected because the Bobbitt Quarry would be shut down thus creating an economic hardship on the operator and preventing access to a mineral resource that is needed by the copper industry.

Rational for Decision: The proposed action is specifically provided for in the (Phoenix) RMP. The environmental assessment analyzed the potential impacts to the environment and the public should the application be granted. A FONSI has been signed; therefore there are no significant impacts to the environment that would require an environmental impact statement. The RMP allows for locatable mineral activity to be administered on a case-by-case basis: By selecting the proposed action, the Tucson Field Office is implementing this portion of the Phoenix RMP.

Mitigation Measures:

3. Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the holder, or any person working on his behalf, on public or federal land shall be immediately reported to the Bureau of Land Management authorized officer. Holder shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values.
4. After mining is completed, the operator will reclaim the quarry as per the reclamation plan.
3. In compliance with their Pinal County Air Quality permit, Smithco will continue to water roads and work areas and use dust control equipment which will greatly reduce emissions.

Terms / Conditions / Stipulations: per 43CFR 10.4(g):

“All Federal authorizations to carry out land use activities on Federal lands or tribal lands, including all leases and permits, must include a requirement for the holder of the authorization to notify the appropriate Federal or tribal official immediately upon discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony pursuant to Sec. 10.4(b) of these regulations.”

“There will be no adverse energy impact”.

Field Manager

Date

Attachments: Finding of No Significant Impact dated _____

Assessment – AZ-420-2006-003

Environmental