UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Border Field Office
1103 N. Fancher Rd.
Spokane Valley, WA 99212

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

QUEEN SEAL MINE WASTE ROCK REMOVAL

Introduction

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to review and approve a Plan of Operations (Plan) pursuant to 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 3809 and to authorize an access right-of-way for the activities proposed in the Plan. The Plan proposes the excavation and removal of approximately 40,000 tons of previously mined waste rock from BLM-administered public lands. This material is located in the Queen Seal mine waste rock pile adjacent to the inactive Queen Seal mine in Township 29 North, Range 37 East, Section 11, Center, Willamette Meridian (WM), in the southern Huckleberry Mountains, Stevens County, Washington. The site is approximately 4.75 air miles southeast from the town of Fruitland, Washington (Figure 1, attached map).

The proposed project would remove and eliminate a potential source of surface and groundwater contamination from the public land. It would also fulfill BLM's obligation under the mining laws to allow exploration and removal of minerals owned by private parties under an unpatented mining claim.

Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this information package is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the environmental review of the proposal. Public comments received in response to this scoping package will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and may be used to identify alternatives to the proposed action that also fulfill the purpose of and need for the project.

Project Area Description

The Huckleberry Mountains Management Area is located in Stevens County in eastern Washington, approximately 42 miles northwest of Spokane, Washington. The proposed project area consists of about two acres of waste rock dump material on BLM-administered public lands inside the Huckleberry Mountains Management Area (Figure 2).

Background

The primary land uses in the Huckleberry Mountains Management Area are hiking, hunting, camping, OHV riding, mining, and timber harvest. Mining has been present in the area since the turn of the century and numerous mine waste piles associated with adjacent surface and underground mine workings are present in the area. This mine waste rock generally contains elements such as arsenic, cesium, iron, lead, magnesium, molybdenum, phosphorus, tellurium, zinc and others. These elements have potential for leaching out of the waste rock piles and into the surface and groundwater associated with these sites.

In fall 2011, the BLM was given notice of sampling activity on the Queen Seal mine waste rock piles by Mr. Michael Inman, MJR Resources, LLC. Immediately after the sampling program, the BLM received a Plan of Operations from Mr. Inman, describing the intent to excavate and remove the entire Queen Seal mine waste rock pile. The material would be loaded into five cubic yard dump trucks using a track-mounted excavator and hauled about 8.5 miles over existing forest and paved county roads to a laydown facility located just south of Fruitland, Washington. The project is supported by the Steven County Board of Commissioners because it will help reduce potential contamination on federal lands within Stevens County and it will create local jobs for the community.

Proposed Plan of Operations

The attached photos show the waste rock pile proposed for removal. The attached map depicts how the material would be transported from the federal parcel to the private laydown facility. Once removed from federal land, no material would be returned. The ultimate destination for the material is shipment overseas for processing.

The proposed Plan includes the following components:

Excavation and removal of the waste rock material from the current pile.

A bond would be required by the BLM from Mr. Inman (MJR Resources) to cover the entire anticipated cost of cleanup for this proposed operation site. The ground disturbance would be limited to approximately two acres, the current footprint of the waste rock pile (see location map). A silt fence would be installed down gradient from the excavation area to prevent runoff of fine particles onto adjacent vegetation. During the winter of 2011-2012, material would be loaded with a tracked excavator into rubber tired or tracked dump trucks for the 8.5-mile haul to the private laydown site south of Fruitland, Washington.

Reclamation of the previously disturbed waste rock pile site.

The operator would remove waste rock down to native soils on the excavation site. The site would then be contoured to imitate surrounding topography using a small bulldozer. Soil material under the removed waste rock pile would be ripped (loosened) and spread as a growth medium. The entire site would be broadcast seeded during the winter snows with grass seed for soil stabilization in the spring. During the spring and early summer months, bushes and small local trees would be planted on the site and monitored to ensure survival and growth, by the operator. The site would be monitored for three years, including weed control and replacement of vegetation loss. Once the BLM determines that the site has been sufficiently reclaimed, the bond would be returned to the operator.

BLM Action and Decision to be Made

The BLM must review the proposed Plan and decide whether to, pursuant to 43 CFR 3809.411:

1. Approve the Plan as submitted,
2. Approve the Plan subject to changes or conditions that are necessary to achieve the standards set forth at 43 CFR 3809. 420 and/or to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the environment.
3. Disapprove the Plan because it is incomplete, proposed in an area withdrawn from application of the mining laws, or would cause unnecessary or undue degredation of public lands.

If approved, the BLM must also decide whether, and under what terms and conditions, to authorize a right-of-way grant (pursuant to 43 CFR 2800) for access to and from the waste rock piles.

BLM Purpose and Need for Action

The need for BLM action at this time, to make a determination on the Plan of Operations and request for right-of-way grant, is established by the BLM's responsibilities under 43 CFR Parts 2800 and 3809, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the 1872 Mining Law.

The purpose of the BLM's action is to provide Mr. Inman (MJR Resources) with legal access across public land to remove waste rock piles in a manner that does not cause unnecessary or undue degradation to the environment.

Preliminary Issues

The following issues or factors have been identified for potentially further analysis or consideration:

- Potential safety risk for local residents and the public
- Potential effect on cultural resources
- Potential effect on biological resources
- Potential effect on botanical resources
- Potential effect on local employment
- Potential effect on recreational access to the area

Public Input Needed

Please submit your comments on the proposed action and other issues to be considered to the address noted below by **January 17, 2012**.

Public comments may be submitted electronically or by U.S. Mail to the addresses noted below.

Please send electronic comments to:
BLM_OR_SP_Mail@blm.gov with "**Queen Seal Mine Waste Rock Removal**" in the subject line.

Please send U.S. Mail comments to:
Attn: **Queen Seal Mine Waste Rock Removal**
BLM–Border Field Office
1103 N. Fancher Rd.
Spokane Valley, WA 99212

For all comments submitted, please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization.

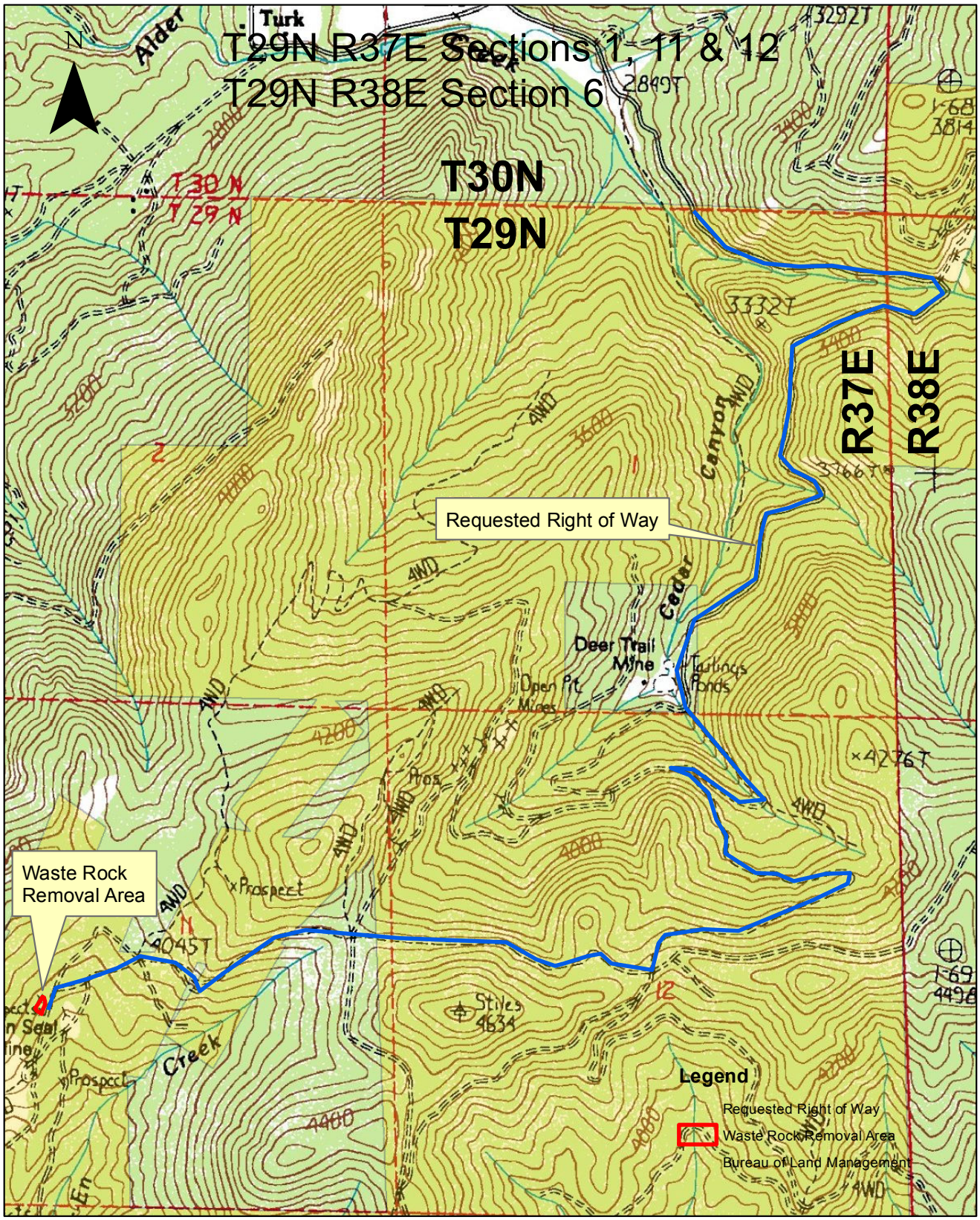
Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have questions, please contact Tom Sweeney, Border Field Geologist, at 509-536-1200.

Enclosures:

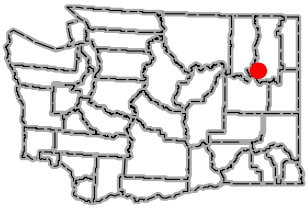
Queen Seal waste rock removal - site map
Photographs of Queen Seal mine waste rock removal area

Inman Queen Seal Mine Proposed Tailing Removal Plan of Operations Area and Right of Way



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Location Diagram



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Spokane, WA 99212-1275

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Stevens County, Wash.

Figure 2. Photographs of Queen Seal mine waste rock removal area. (Photos from site reclamation work completed by BLM in 2002.)