

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0020 EA

Project Name: J Bird Mine Plan of Operations Amendment

Location: Protraction Block 41, W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 13; Protraction Block 42, E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 14; Protraction Block 45, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 23; Protraction Block 46, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 24, T. 47 N., R. 20 W., N.M.P.M.

Applicant: Rimrock Exploration and Development, Inc. (Rimrock)

Background

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) has completed Environment Assessment (EA) #DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0020, which documents the review of a mining plan of operations amendment from Rimrock Exploration and Development, Inc. (Rimrock) for the J Bird Mine. Rimrock is proposing to add exploration drilling to an existing mining plan of operation.

BLM provided a public scoping and comment period from March 29 through May 1, 2013. BLM received 11 comments from two interested parties, which were reviewed and addressed in the EA where warranted. The BLM is now providing a 30-day public comment period on the Preliminary EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0020 EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The proposed action includes design features which serve as mitigation measures. BLM also developed additional mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Extensive site specific design features and mitigation measures are included in the Mine Plan and the EA. The measures will be stipulated in the approved 3809 Plan of Operations authorization. The design features and mitigation are directed toward reducing short and long term impacts to vegetation, soils, air, water quality, cultural resources and wildlife values.

Context

Rimrock submitted a mining plan of operations amendment to consolidate the expired exploration activities covered under their mining notice (COC – 68883) into their existing J Bird Mine plan (COC – 68907). The project area is located on Wray Mesa in Montrose County, Colorado approximately eight miles west of Bedrock, Colorado and 20 miles east of La Sal Junction, Utah. Beyond the existing authorized mine plan, the project proposes (over a ten-year period) to drill up to 200 exploration holes and build up to 4,000 linear feet of road, for a maximum of 5 acres of additional disturbance. Concurrent reclamation would occur, which would reduce the amount of long-term disturbance. This area has historic uranium exploration roads and the existing J Bird Mine facilities as approved.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA considered possible beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed consolidation and expanded exploration project. There would be some beneficial economic impacts due to the addition of a job associated with exploration drilling, and use of local retailers and service industries that support the mining industry. In addition to the existing mining, impacts would be from access roads and drill sites. There are not expected to be any significant adverse environmental impacts to any of the affected resources due to the presence of these features.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

The mineral exploration activities proposed are not expected to cause adverse public health effects. The exploration activities proposed are not expected to cause adverse public health effects. The Proposed Action includes measures to mitigate hazardous materials and measures that protect health and safety. Safety requirements for the existing mining are required by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety.

3) Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The project would not affect park lands, prime farmland, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas. The existing mine site has been inventoried and evaluated for historic and/or cultural resources. Upon receipt of applications for exploration drilling work, the BLM would conduct further on-site cultural surveys and avoid any sites as needed.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The proposed mineral exploration is not new to Colorado or the Uravan Mineral Belt. Such activities are prone to generating public comment through scoping and the public comment period of the EA. Issues and concerns brought forward through scoping were taken into consideration for analysis in preparing the EA. Concerns have been addressed in the EA.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The proposed mineral exploration involved with this operation would utilize common methods employed in the mining industry and is not expected to produce uncertain or unique risks.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not set any known precedents or establish any principles for future decisions. The proposed mineral exploration action has been commonly used by the mining industry for over half a century.

7) *Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Cumulative effects were considered for the potential effects to migratory birds, special status species, wildlife, soils, vegetation, water quality, geology and minerals, air quality, invasive, non-native species and social and economic resources. Analyses of these resources were done to assess the potential cumulative impacts. Through these analyses it was determined that no significant cumulative impacts would result from the Proposed Action.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

The Proposed Action would have no adverse effects on any of these resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

These issues were examined in the EA and no adverse impacts are anticipated.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

No threats of violation were identified in the preparation of the EA and any authorization regarding this proposed project would stipulate that the operator must obtain all necessary approvals from other federal, state, and local agencies before proceeding.

Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the

implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the San Juan/San Miguel Resource Management Plan; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:

*This is an unsigned FONSI,
released with the preliminary EA
for public review and comment.*

Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office

Date

Preliminary