

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Newmont Mining Corporation
Vista Pit Expansion Project
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2011-0004-EA**

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The Vista Pit Expansion Project Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-WO10-2011-0004-EA, dated September 2011, was tiered to the 1996 Twin Creeks Mine Environmental Impact Statement. Based on the interdisciplinary analysis conducted in the EA for the Proposed Action without the implementation of a revised method for process fluid stabilization on heap leach facilities (hereafter the modified Proposed Action), and my consideration of the Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts, I have determined that there are no new significant impacts associated with the modified Proposed Action. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to Section 102(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is not required.

This modified Proposed Action consists of the Proposed Action without the implementation of a revised method for process fluid stabilization on heap leach facilities. Based on the EA, the proposed method for process fluid stabilization on heap leach facilities would require further analysis before a FONSI could be determined and decision made regarding its implementation.

The modified Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan (1982) and is consistent with other Federal agency, state, and local plans to the maximum extent consistent with Federal law and Federal Land Policy Management Act provisions.

No mitigation beyond those environmental measures specified in the Proposed Action (EA section 2.2.14 Environmental Protection Measures and 2.2.15 Monitoring Programs) were developed through the analysis.

Context

Newmont Mining Corporation submitted an amendment to their Twin Creeks Mine Plan of Operations (POO) expanding their existing Vista Pit project. The project area is located approximately 35 miles northeast of Winnemucca, Nevada and east of the Osgood Mountains, in Humboldt County, Nevada. The project, located entirely within the Twin Creeks Mine boundary, is located in T39N, R43E, sections 5, 6, 7 and 8, MDB&M, and the amendment would disturb approximately 580 acres of combined public (223 acres) and private (357 acres) surface. This area is already disturbed with a haul road, portion of a heap leach and other ancillary features.

Newmont's existing plan of operations boundary is approximately 20,000 acres in size (12,160 acres of public land). The total proposed disturbance for the project is 580 acres, all of which would be located within the proposed expanded project boundary. The mine-life of this project is approximately 6 years.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA considered possible beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed expansion project. There would be continued employment of the current mining work force, and use of local retail services, restaurants and lodging are possible throughout the approximate 6 years mine-life of the project. Under the modified proposed action impacts to the resources would include the presence of an expanded open pit, a pit lake, an expanded heap leach facility and expanded waste rock disposal facilities. The presence of these features themselves would be long term impacts to the local topography. Under the modified Proposed Action including environmental measures specified in the Proposed Action (EA section 2.2.14 Environmental Protection Measures and 2.2.15 Monitoring Programs) there are not expected to be adverse impacts to any of the affected resources due to the presence of these features. The water resources monitoring proposed under the modified Proposed Action is one key to avoiding potentially unexpected adverse impacts.

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

Mining activities are not expected to cause adverse public health effects. The Proposed Action includes a Dust Control Plan, a Site-Wide Monitoring Plan, and Dark-Sky Measures. Safety requirements would be required by Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and the Nevada Industrial Relations Division of Mine Safety. No long term adverse public health or safety affects are expected from use of the reclaimed area.

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. All areas to be disturbed by mining activity have been inventoried and evaluated for historic and/or cultural resources.

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

Mining activities are not new to Nevada. Such activities are prone to generating public comment through scoping and the public comment period on the preliminary EA. Issues and concerns brought forward through scoping were taken into consideration for analysis in preparing the preliminary EA. Concerns raised on the preliminary EA have been addressed in the final EA and in the decision making process.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The mining techniques involved are all common methods employed in the mining industry and are 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 a modified proposed action would not set any known precedents or establish any principles for future decisions. The proposed mining activities have been commonly applied for several decades.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Cumulative effects were analyzed for the potential effects to migratory birds, special status species, wildlife, soils, vegetation, water quality (surface and ground), geology and minerals, air quality and invasive, nonnative species and social and economic resources. Detailed analyses of these areas were done to assess the potential cumulative impacts. No cumulative impacts were identified for Native American religious concerns, paleontology and cultural resources. Through these analyses it was determined that no significant cumulative impacts would result from the modified 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 NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

The modified 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 habitat that has been determined to be critical under ESA of 1973.*

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.

 *Acting Field Manager*

For **Michael Truden, Field Manager,**
Humboldt River Field Office


Date