



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Elko Field Office
3900 East Idaho Street
Elko, Nevada 89801



In Reply Refer To:
3809 (NV-013)
N-76802

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)/Decision Record for the Hollister Development Block Project Environmental Assessment (EA). The Hollister Development Block Project is an underground exploration project that would create 29 acres of surface disturbance on previously disturbed ground within the East Pit of the existing Hollister Mine, and 22 acres of new surface disturbance associated with the construction of the water disposal pipeline and rapid infiltration basins. This underground exploration project will not require dewatering; however, water encountered in the decline will be pumped to the surface and utilized in the operation. Excess water that is not utilized in the operation will be piped to the rapid infiltration basins where it will infiltrate back into the hydrologic basin.

Comments concerning this FONSI/Decision Record need to be received in the Bureau of Land Management, Elko Field Office by close of business on May 3, 2004. Comments should be sent to the following address:

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Hollister Development Block Project Coordinator
3900 East Idaho Street
Elko, Nevada 89801-4611

Please direct comments or questions to Janice Stadelman, Project Coordinator, at the above address or by calling (775) 753-0346.

Sincerely,

DAVID J. VANDENBERG, Manager
Nonrenewable Resources

Enclosures: FONSI/Decision Record for the Hollister Development Block Project
Environmental Assessment

Hollister Development Block Project Environmental Assessment

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
HOLLISTER DEVELOPMENT BLOCK PROJECT
HECLA VENTURES CORPORATION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
BLM/EK/PL-2004/002
3809, N-76802**

The Hollister Development Block Project is an underground exploration project that would create 29 acres of surface disturbance on previously disturbed ground within the East Pit of the existing Hollister Mine, and 22 acres of new surface disturbance associated with the construction of the water disposal pipeline and rapid infiltration basins. This underground exploration project will not require dewatering; however, water encountered in the decline will be pumped to the surface and utilized in the operation. Excess water that is not utilized in the operation will be piped to the rapid infiltration basins where it will infiltrate back into the hydrologic basin.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL-2004/002, I have determined that the action will not have a significant effect on the human environment, and therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

The reasons for the Finding of No Significant Impact are that the environmental protection measures proposed in the plan of operations and the mitigation developed through the environmental assessment for the protection of the resources will reduce or eliminate the impacts created by the proposed action. Potential impacts to cultural resources will be minimized through avoidance and implementation of these measures. Potential impact to groundwater resulting from acid rock drainage will be minimized by the design, construction and reclamation of the waste rock disposal facility.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the Hollister Development Block Project as described in the proposed action of Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL-2004/002. This Finding of No Significant Impact and decision is contingent on meeting the monitoring requirements and stipulations listed below:

Stipulations

As a result of the construction of the water pipeline and reconstruction of the Little Antelope Creek access road through the BLM enclosure on Little Antelope Creek, 0.025 acres of identified potential wetlands will be temporarily impacted. During reclamation of this section of the Little Antelope Creek road following completion of the project, the

0.025 acres of wetlands will be restored. Reclamation of this area will include regrading or reshaping the access road to make it impassable for vehicular travel and seeding and/or planting vegetation such as willows.

When active migratory bird nests are located, a protective buffer around the nest will be delineated. Buffer distance will be decided as appropriate for a specific species by a qualified biologist in consultation with and approved by the BLM.

If buried artifacts of any kind or buried features are discovered, work will cease at and within a 10-meter buffer zone surrounding the location of the discovery. Hecla will immediately notify the Authorized Officer (BLM Elko Field Office Manager). Work will not commence until the discovery has been inspected by a BLM archaeologist and the BLM has determined in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), whether mitigation measures are required before installation of the pipeline.

The BLM will reestablish the boundaries, if necessary, of eligible cultural sites that could be impacted by the proposed action and flag off the avoidance and buffer zones.

Prior to the implementation of the Proposed Action, Hecla Ventures Corporation (Hecla) will ensure avoidance of the eligible cultural sites by:

1. placing exclusion barriers a minimum of 30 meters (100 feet) from the perimeter of known cultural sites. The exclusion barrier perimeter will be marked with steel t-posts and/or concrete barriers to ensure that a visible barrier is present between the cultural sites and the surrounding operations area in order to protect the cultural sites from damage;
2. restricting maintenance and off-road travel to the existing roadbed when using roads that are located within or adjacent to a cultural site. Neither road widening nor construction of wing ditches will be authorized. A t-post barrier line shall be established on the outside edges of the berms of primary access routes through eligible cultural sites;
3. directing its personnel and the personnel of its contractors to avoid all staked areas under penalty of Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (16 U.S.C. 470).

Monitoring

A BLM representative will conduct regular field inspections throughout construction, operation, and reclamation activities associated with the Proposed Action. Field compliance inspections will be documented in the project file at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Elko Field Office.

Periodic monitoring and documentation of erosion and sediment control structures throughout construction, operation, and reclamation will occur. Surface erosion relative

to individual activities will be evaluated. If erosion, sedimentation, or other surface water and groundwater quality impacts occur, the situation will be evaluated for the potential source(s) and the problem will be corrected. Corrective action measures will be performed in consultation with and approval by the BLM and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP).

Hecla must submit, on a quarterly basis, waste rock material characterization reports to the BLM. Hecla will submit, to the BLM, a copy of the Water Pollution Control Monitoring Reports and closure plan required by NDEP as a condition of the Water Pollution Control Permit. These monitoring reports include characterization of water quality, de-silting basin sediment, mine materials, mine materials discharge, and spill reports.

Hecla will submit to the BLM, a copy of the Wildlife Mortality Reports required by Nevada Division of Wildlife as a condition of the Industrial Artificial Pond Permit.

The Water Pollution Control Permit issued by NDEP allows for continued monitoring of the project as determined by NDEP up to 30 years. Monitoring as determined by the BLM under 43 CFR 3809 Regulations is discretionary. The monitoring period will be reviewed periodically by the agencies to determine if modifications are warranted and whether long-term bonding will be necessary.

Rationale

As a result of the analysis in the Hollister Development Block Project Environmental Assessment, BLM/EK/PL-2004/002, it was determined that the proposed action will not result in unnecessary or undue degradation to the public lands. The proposed action is in conformance with the Elko Resource Management Plan, Issue-Minerals, Management Prescription-1.

The implementation of the proposed action will allow Hecla to conduct underground exploration. The 43 CFR 3809 Regulations require the claimant and/or operator to file a plan of operations when the proposed surface disturbance will be more than five acres. The Hollister Development Block Project is located in a sensitive area for cultural resources. The mitigation proposed in the plan of operations and the monitoring and mitigation developed through the environmental analysis for this project provide the BLM with a means of greater protection and management of the project and affected resources.

The No Action Alternative was not selected because it would not allow Hecla to conduct the proposed underground exploration activities. The project as described in the plan of operations and the mitigation developed as a result of the environmental analysis would eliminate undue or unnecessary degradation and provide the BLM with measures to manage and protect the resources. The General Mining Law of 1872 gives the claimant the right to explore, discover, and diligently develop the mineral deposit(s) on their claims in a prudent manner. The Bureau of Land Management's responsibility is to determine and assure that unnecessary or undue degradation does not occur to the public lands during the exploration for and/or development of locatable mineral deposit(s).

The decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 43 CFR 3809.4. A party that is adversely affected may file such an appeal in accordance with the procedures in 43 CFR, Part 4. An appeal shall be filed no later than 30 days after the date the Decision Record is available to the public.



Helen Hankins
Elko Field Manager

3/26/04

Date

ERRATA PAGE

The following paragraph was accidentally deleted from Section 4.3.3 Cultural Resources.

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