

Intent To Prepare Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a mining Plan of Operations (POO) amendment for the Pegasus Gold Corporation, Florida Canyon Mine expansion project (Amendment #10), Pershing County, Nevada, and; notice of scoping period and public meetings.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and, and title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, subpart 3809, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will be directing the preparation of an EIS for the proposed development of a mine in Pershing County, Nevada. The EIS will be prepared by contract and funded by the Pegasus Gold Corporation, Florida Canyon Mining Incorporated (FCMI). Public meetings will be held to identify issues to be addressed in the EIS, and to encourage public participation in the review process. Representatives of the BLM and FCMI will be summarizing the POO and accepting comments from the audience. The BLM invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis.

DATES: Two scoping meetings will be held. The first is on Tuesday, January 7, 1997 at the Pershing County Community Center, 820 6th St., Lovelock, Nevada. The second will be Wednesday, January 8, 1997, at the Winnemucca Field Office of the BLM, 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd., Winnemucca, Nevada. Both meetings are scheduled to run from 7-9 p.m. Written comments on the POO and scope of the EIS will be accepted until the close of business, January 24, 1997. The Draft EIS is expected to be completed by July of 1997, when the document will be made available for public review and comment.

ADDRESSES: Scoping comments may be sent to: District Manager, Winnemucca Field Office BLM, 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd., Winnemucca, NV 89445, Attn: Ken Loda, Florida Canyon Project NEPA Coordinator.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ken Loda, Winnemucca Field Office BLM, 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd., Winnemucca NV 89445, phone (702) 623-1500.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This EIS will address the issues of geology, minerals, soils, water resources, vegetation, wildlife, grazing management, air quality, aesthetic resources, cultural resources, ethnographic concerns, paleontologic

resources, land use, access, recreation, social and economic values related to project development.

FCMI has been operating the Florida Canyon Mine, an open-pit gold mine, since 1986. The Florida Canyon Mine is located on public and private lands adjacent to Interstate Highway 80, in Pershing County, Nevada, approximately 35 miles northeast of Lovelock and approximately 42 miles southwest of Winnemucca, Nevada.

Florida Canyon Mine uses conventional open pit mining methods including drilling, blasting, loading, and hauling. Production is currently at approximately 13.7 million tons of ore per year. A portion is crushed, agglomerated and conveyed to a single heap leach pad. The remainder is run-of-mine ore, hauled directly to the heap leach pad by trucks. Waste rock is delivered to waste dumps, or backfilled into portions of the mined out pit. Processing includes both a Merrill-Crowe plant and two carbon adsorption circuits. There are approximately 3,157 acres contained within the current plan boundary. Under current authorization, the existing operation will continue mining through 1997.

Proposed operations would require a plan boundary expansion of 2,362 acres, bringing the area within the total plan boundary to approximately 5,519 acres. Approximately 637 acres would be disturbed by this proposal, of which 466 acres is BLM-administered public land. Upon approval of this expansion proposal, mining would continue through 2002 at approximately the current level of production. The proposed dump expansion would require 304 acres to accommodate an additional 117 million tons of waste rock and up to 30 million tons of run-of-mine stockpile.

A conveyor corridor is proposed to move crushed ore from the existing crusher site to the new leach pad. An additional crusher would be installed near the proposed leach pad or the existing crusher would be relocated near that leach pad. The proposed leach pad is sized to hold 64 million tons of ore and the total lined pad area is approximately 203 acres. A new process plant would be located near the proposed leach pad. A carbon adsorption circuit with associated ponds and a solution corridor from the existing solution ponds to the new solution ponds is proposed. Other ancillary proposed actions include rerouting one public access road, relocating two stock water tanks, re-directing drainages, and constructing sediment ponds.

The mine would continue to be a zero discharge facility. An annual consumptive use of 2,000 acre feet of fresh water is anticipated. The Florida Canyon Project area contains three major drainages: Florida Canyon, Johnson Canyon, and Black Canyon. In addition, numerous unnamed drainages occur throughout the area. Surface water within the project area is limited to ephemeral streams resulting from snow-melt, precipitation events, and variations in local geology. All ephemeral drainages within the project area drain west toward the Humboldt River and Rye Patch Reservoir, located approximately three miles west of the proposed project area.

The reclamation plan includes re-contouring slopes where needed and covering with a minimum of one foot of suitable plant growth medium, then fertilization and seeding. Detoxification of FCMI's heap leach facilities would be accomplished through natural degradation (volatilization) of cyanide and trace metal recovery by conventional Merrill-Crowe and/or carbon adsorption or other suitable technology. Buildings, process structures, and other equipment would be removed from the site at the end of mining. Foundations would be buried in place prior to growth medium application and revegetation. Equipment, electrical and instrumentation, piping, miscellaneous fencing, and mobile trailers would also be removed from the site or returned to local vendors.

The main issue identified thus far in the project expansion is visual impact due to the proximity of Interstate 80.

Federal, state, and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the BLM's decision on the POO are invited to participate in the scoping process. The Authorized Officer will respond to public input and comment as part of the final EIS. The decision regarding the proposal will be recorded as a Record of Decision, which is subject to appeal under 43 CFR part 4.

Dated: November 26, 1996.

Ron Wenker,

District Manager, Winnemucca.

[FR Doc. 96-31635 Filed 12-12-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-HC-P

[NV-050-1020-001]

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council; Notice of Meeting Locations and Times

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.