

necessary to further the purposes of the Agreement.

Threats to the northern Idaho ground squirrel include: habitat loss due to seral forest encroachment into suitable meadow habitats; competition from Columbian ground squirrels (*Spermophilus columbianus*); land use changes; recreational shooting; and naturally occurring events. The Agreement provides a net conservation benefit to northern Idaho ground squirrels by providing measures for ground squirrel habitat protection and enhancement, managing competition from Columbian ground squirrels, and controlling recreational shooting. The biological goal of ground squirrel conservation measures in the Agreement is to expand the northern Idaho ground squirrel population at this site beyond the 5-acre protected area by reducing threats to the species. The Agreement is expected to contribute to recovery of northern Idaho ground squirrels by reducing threats and expanding the ground squirrel population at this site. Recovery of the species would be enhanced by increasing the viability of the population at this site and potentially allowing ground squirrels to be translocated to other sites in need of population supplementation.

Consistent with the Service's Safe Harbor policy, under the Agreement, the Service would issue a permit to the Applicants authorizing incidental take of northern Idaho ground squirrels, as a result of activities on 9 acres of their property, outside the 5-acre protected area. These activities include construction and use of the Applicants' house, garage, and other associated out-buildings proposed for development on the property; installation of a well, underground power and telephone lines, a septic system/drainfield, and other required utilities; and operation of all terrain vehicles. We expect that the maximum level of incidental take authorized under the proposed Agreement will never be realized. The level of incidental take would be dependent on if, and how rapidly, northern Idaho ground squirrels expand beyond the 5-acre protected area.

We are providing this notice pursuant to section 10(c) of the Endangered Species Act and pursuant to implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR 1506.6). We will evaluate the permit application, associated documents, and comments submitted thereon to determine whether the permit application meets the requirements of section 10(a) of the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act regulations. If

we determine that the requirements are met, we will sign the proposed Agreement and issue an enhancement of survival permit under section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act to the Applicants for take of northern Idaho ground squirrels incidental to otherwise lawful activities in accordance with the terms of the Agreement. We will not make our final decision until after the end of the 30-day comment period and will fully consider all comments received during the comment period.

Dated: July 3, 2000.

William F. Shake,

Acting Deputy Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon.

[FR Doc. 00-18182 Filed 7-19-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[NV-060-3809]

Notice of Availability for the Record of Decision and Plan of Operations Approval for the South Pipeline Project; Expansion of Existing Gold Mining/Processing Operations; Lander County, NV

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, DOI.

COOPERATING AGENCIES: Nevada Division of Wildlife, US Army Corps of Engineers.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of the Record of Decision and Plan of Operations Approval for the South Pipeline Project, Lander County, Nevada.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508 Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has issued a Record of Decision for the South Pipeline Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Plan of Operations Approval for the Cortez Gold Mines' South Pipeline Project.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Appeals of the decision must be post-marked or otherwise delivered by 4:30 p.m. July 27, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Record of Decision are available at the BLM, Battle Mountain Field Office, 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, NV 89820.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gary Foulkes, Project Manager, Battle Mountain BLM at (775) 635-4060.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Cortez Gold Mines, Inc. (CGM) has been

approved to extend gold mining operations at the Pipeline Mine within the Gold Acres Mining District in Lander County, approximately 30 miles southeast of Battle Mountain, Nevada. The South Pipeline Project (Project) (as approved) includes an expansion of the existing open pit and waste rock disposal sites, and the development of heap leach and ancillary facilities. The Project will require additional surface disturbance of 4,450 acres, all of which is public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Operations are expected to occur seven days a week, 24 hours a day, for an additional 10 years.

Gerald M. Smith,

Field Manager, Battle Mountain Field Office.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[OR-030-00-1020-XU: GPO-0285]

Notice of Meeting of John Day/Snake Resource Advisory Council

AGENCY: Vale District, Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Meeting of John Day/Snake Resource Advisory Council: Walla Walla, Washington.

SUMMARY: On September 6, 2000 at 10 a.m. there will be a panel discussion to define and clarify the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The meeting will be held at the Cascade Natural Gas Corporation conference room, 324 W. Rose Street, Walla Walla, Washington. The meeting is open to the public. Public comments will be received at 10 a.m. on September 7, 2000. The following topics will be discussed by the council: Status and future of the RAC subgroups; RAC's position on the over stocked timber stands issue/ prescribed fire; Meeting quorum issues; OHV issues; A 15 minute round table for general issues.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Juan Palma, Bureau of Land Management, Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, Oregon 97918, Telephone (541) 473-3144.

Juan Palma,

District Manager.

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