



DEC 22 2017

DEQ-Coeur d'Alene
Regional Office

File Code: 2810
Date: December 19, 2017

Dear Interested Party,

Pend Oreille Silica Inc. has requested to conduct an exploratory drilling project on lands administered by the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF).

The Forest Service (FS) is obligated to process, administer and manage mining operations on National Forest System (NFS) lands conducted under the authorities of the following laws and regulations: the U.S. Mining Laws of May 10, 1872 (17 Stat. 91 as amended 30 U.S.C. 31-54), the Organic Administration Act of 1897 (30 Stat. 34 as amended 16 U.S.C. 473-478, 419-482 and 551), and Public Law 91-631, entitled the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970. The laws established a statutory right to go upon and use the open public domain land of the NFS. Regulations promulgated on September 1, 1974, enacted 36 CFR 228 Subpart A - Locatable Minerals. The regulations set forth rules and procedures for mining related activity on NFS land to minimize adverse environmental impacts on NFS surface resources. The Forest Service has worked closely with the operator to obtain a Plan of Operation (PLAN) that provides the necessary detail to analyze the proposal as directed under 36 CFR 228, Subpart A.

Proposed Project Description

The project area is located within the Lakeview 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle within the Sand Creek-Lake Pend Oreille watershed. The drilling site is located in Bonner County, ID, T54N, R1W, Section 25, Boise Meridian. The operation area is accessed from Forest Road (FR) 203, FR 332, FR 1073, FR 2238, FR 1050, and approximately .25 miles of new road to the drill pad. FR 203 and FR 332 are open roads, FR 2238 is a closed road with a gate. FR1073 and FR1050 have seasonal restrictions and are closed to motorized traffic from September 18th thru November 5th; the operator will not utilize these during the seasonal closure. Access control will be accomplished by way of appropriate signage as well as controlled access behind existing FS gates on FR 2238. Travel will commence via 4-wheel-drive vehicles and foot traffic as conditions/travel regulations permit. All drilling, and necessary exploration equipment, will be trucked to the drilling area via a lowboy, or trailer.

The company has proposed one (1) site for exploration, which includes an 80 foot long x 30 foot wide drill pad from which two (2) exploratory drill holes will be drilled to a maximum depth of 200 feet utilizing a truck-mounted drill rig. Idaho State Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be utilized to control sediment within the project area.

Drilling will occur during two, eight-hour shifts per day during daylight hours only, except from September 18th thru November 5th during the seasonal IPNF road closure. No winter operations are proposed. There will be up to eight personnel in the exploration area depending on the specific activities being carried out; numbers will vary depending upon the current stage of the exploration program.



A shallow sump (6' x 6' x 4') will be created within the footprint of the drill pad for excess water and drill cuttings. Upon completion of the drilling operation, drill cuttings will be removed and disposed of in compliance with the State of Idaho and Federal Regulations, and drill water will be pumped back into a water truck and reused for the next drill hole or disposed of in compliance with State and Federal regulations. The drill holes will be abandoned as per Idaho Administrative Procedure Act Title 37.03.09.

A list of supplies and equipment onsite includes: a rubber tired track hoe, truck-mounted drill rig, water tender, and 2-3 light duty pick-up trucks. Water for the drilling project will be drawn from a well permitted by the State of Idaho on private land. There will be no permanent structures constructed.

All lands disturbed during the activities in this proposal would be reclaimed and disturbed areas would be seeded with the FS approved site specific seed mix, where appropriate.

If this exploration is successful in revealing mineralization of value, the company may submit another PLAN for additional exploration and potential development of the discovery. This possible future proposal would be subject to documentation as appropriate under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and require a new decision.

Documentation

I have made a preliminary assessment that this proposal falls within a category of actions established by the Chief of the Forest Service that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and, therefore, may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA). The proposal falls within criteria set forth in the 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(8) - "...short term mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than one mile of low standard road (service level D, FSH 7709.56), or use and minor repair of existing roads..."

Resource conditions that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to a proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or an EIS are:

- (1) Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species;

Wildlife:

Threatened and Endangered:

This project has a "No Effect" determination for Canada Lynx, Grizzly Bear, Woodland Caribou, North American Wolverine, and Yellow-Billed Cuckoo.

Sensitive:

This project has a “May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Loss of Viability to the Population or Species” determination for Gray Wolf and the Western Toad. There are no known Gray Wolf denning or rendezvous sites within 1 mile of the site; and no impacts to breeding habitat for the Western Toad. All other listed Region 1 Sensitive Species have a “No Impacts” determination for this project.

Fisheries:**Threatened and Endangered:**

The project has a “No Effect” determinations for Bull Trout and Kootenai River White Sturgeon because operations will occur on dry ridges and dry hill slopes a minimum of several hundred feet away from any water source.

Sensitive:

The project has a “No Impact” determinations for Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Interior Redband, Burbot, and Western Pearlshell Mussels because the project is located on dry ridges and dry hill slopes a minimum of several hundred feet away from any water source.

Botany:**Threatened and Endangered:**

The project has a “No Effect” determination for the listed threatened and endangered plants, Water Howellia and Spalding’s catchfly.

Sensitive:

The project has a “No Impact” determination for moist, wet, deciduous riparian, subalpine, cold forest, peatland, and aquatic sensitive plant guilds. The project has a “May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but Will Not Likely Result in a Trend Toward Federal Listing or Reduced Viability for the Population or Species” determination for Dry Forest sensitive plant guild.

(2) Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds;

Project area does not contain any of the aforementioned areas of concern.

(3) Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas;

Project area does not contain any of the aforementioned areas of concern.

(4) Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas;

Project area does not contain any roadless or potential wilderness areas.

(5) Research natural areas (RNA);

RNAs are not present in the project area.

(6) American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites, and

No religious or cultural sites are within the area of potential effect.

(7) Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

No known sites within the area of potential effect.

The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion (CE). It is the existence of a cause-effect relationship between a proposed action and the potential effect on these resource conditions and if such a relationship exists, the degree of the potential effect of a proposed action on these resource conditions that determine whether extraordinary circumstances exist. (36 CFR 220.6(b))

Your Comments

This notice provides an opportunity for those interested in or affected by this project to comment and make their concerns known. Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the postmark on this letter or email sent date. Written comments may be mailed or hand-delivered to our Supervisors Office, 3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, 83815. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted to:

comments-northern-idpanhandle-sandpoint@fs.fed.us.

Acceptable formats for electronic comments are text or html e-mail, Adobe portable document format (pdf), and formats viewable in Microsoft Office applications. Please enter the project name (**Green Mountain Exploratory Drill**) on the subject line. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names, addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality. When the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

For more information, please contact Courtney Priddy at the IPNF Forest Supervisor's Office, 3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815; (208)765-7207; or by email at cpriddy@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erick Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Erick" being more prominent than the last name "Walker".

Erick Walker
District Ranger
Sandpoint Ranger District
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

Green Mountain Drilling Project Proposed Access Overview

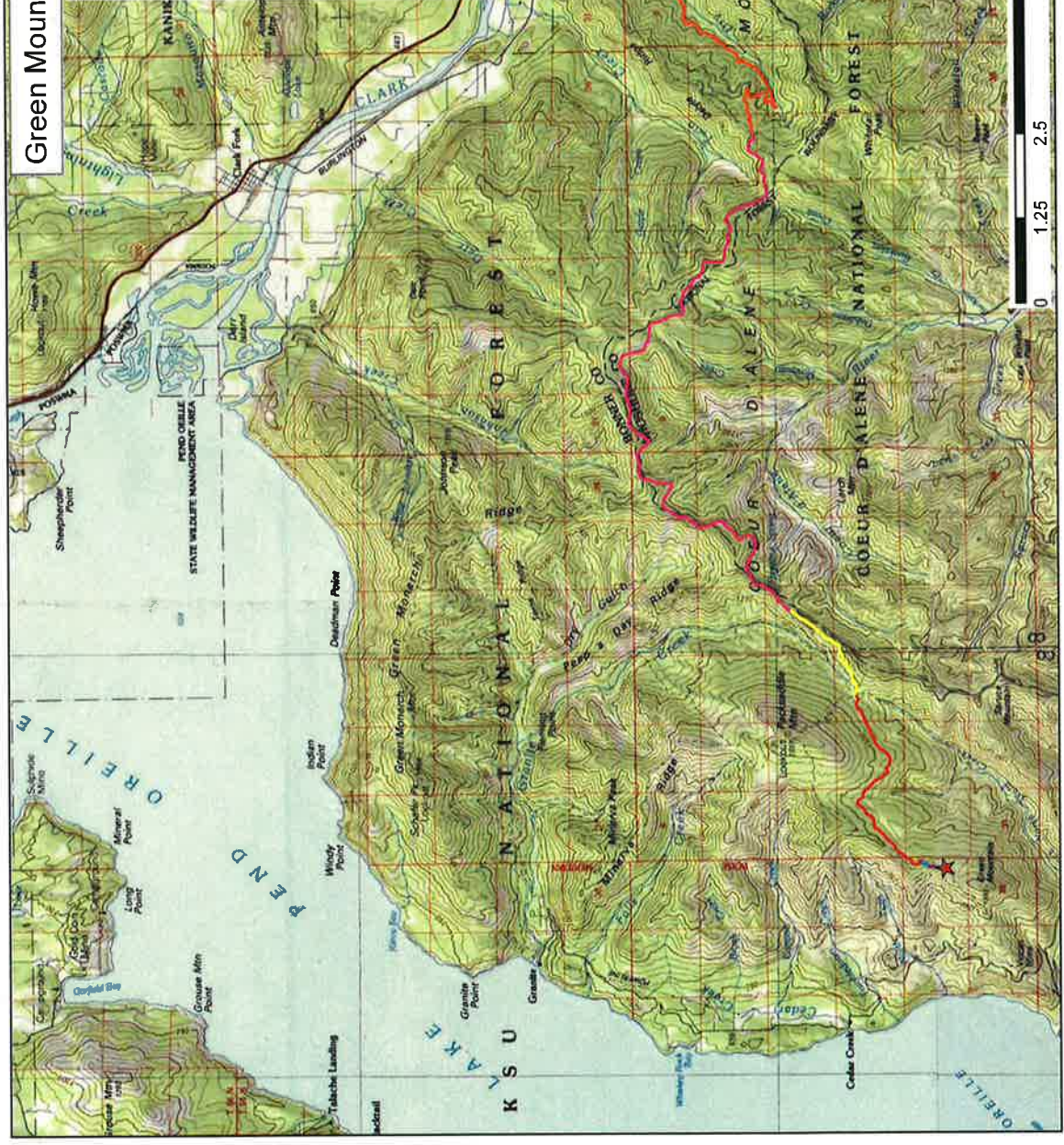
Legend

- ★ Green Mtn. Approximate Site Location

Green Mountain Exploratory Drilling Proposed Route

Symbology

- River Road (County Road)
- FR203 (Open)
- FR332 (Open)
- FR1073 (Open; Restrictions)
- FR2238 (Closed)
- FR1050 (Open; Restrictions)
- Access Road (New Construction)



Green Mountain Drilling Project Proposed Access Detail

Key

★ Green Mtn. Approximate Site Location

Green Mountain Explanatory Drilling Proposed Route

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