



STATE MINING AND GEOLOGY BOARD

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



ARNOLD
SCHWARZENEGGER
GOVERNOR

For Meeting Date: July 10, 2008

Agenda Item No. 5: Approval of Interim Management Plan for the Snows Road Quarry (CA Mine ID #91-09-0012), Cobalt Crushing Mining Contractors (Operator), Mr. Lee Hall (Agent), El Dorado County.

INTRODUCTION: The State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) is the lead agency for El Dorado County, pursuant to the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA). Interim Management Plans (IMPs) are approved by the SMARA lead agency for a period of time not to exceed five years, and may be, upon termination of the original IMP and at the discretion of the lead agency, renewed by the lead agency for another period not to exceed five years.

REGULATORY AUTHORITY: Within 90 days of becoming idle, a surface mine operator shall submit an IMP to the SMARA lead agency. An idle mine is defined pursuant to PRC Section 2727.1 as:

“to curtail for a period of one year or more surface mining operations by more than 90 percent of the operation’s previous maximum annual mineral production, with the intent to resume those surface mining operations at a future date.”

IMPs are required pursuant to PRC Section 2770(h)(1) which states:

“Within 90 days of a surface mining operation becoming idle, as defined in Section 2727.1, the operator shall submit to the lead agency for review and approval, an interim management plan...The interim management plan shall provide measures the operator will implement to maintain the site in compliance with this chapter, including, but not limited to, all permit conditions.”

Renewal of IMPs by SMARA lead agencies are addressed pursuant PRC Section 2770(h)(2) which states:

“The interim management plan may remain in effect for a period not to exceed five years, at which time the lead agency shall do one of the following:

- (A) Renew the interim management plan for another period not to exceed five years, if the lead agency finds that the surface mining operator has complied fully with the interim management plan,*
- (B) Require the surface mining operator to commence reclamation in accordance with its approved reclamation plan.”*



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BACKGROUND: The Snows Road Quarry is an active surface mining operation located in El Dorado County. Entry to the site is via Snows Road. The site encompasses 15.9 acres, and is characterized by a quarry pit, which encompasses the majority of the site, with a south- and west-facing, near-vertical working face situated along the northern and eastern portions of the site. The quarry floor is open to the south. Poorly- to well-cemented Tertiary auriferous gravels overlying competent bedrock form a nearly vertical to sloped working face approximately 35 feet in height. Elevation of the site ranges from approximately 2445 feet in the southern portion of the site to 2550 feet in the northern portion. Elevation of the south end of the pit floor ranges from 2439 to 2442 feet.

Snows Road Quarry has most recently operated under an Amended Reclamation Plan which was approved by the SMGB on April 12, 2007. Materials extracted are essentially mechanically removed or blasted from the sides of the working face and subsequently crushed, screened, and separated prior to being transported off-site. Several products are produced, including Caltrans Class II and III materials, clean ¾-inch gravel, sand, a 3/16-inch product similar to pea gravel, and minus 3/8-inch material stockpiled for gold recovery.

Due to litigation between the operator and the property owner, all surface mining activities have ceased. This period of inactivity is anticipated to extend for approximately one year. As a result, the operator has submitted an IMP with a request that it be approved for a minimum period of one year while legal matters are attended to.

At its March 13, 2008, regular business meeting, the SMGB decided to defer approval consideration of the IMP and requested clarification on issues including 1) stability of the cut slope along the northern perimeter of the site, 2) Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan status and compliance with above ground fuel storage tank regulations, 3) Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) status, and 4) the need for the IMP to be signed and stamped by a professional geologist, certified engineering geologist or geotechnical engineer.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S ANALYSIS: Material production at the site has been curtailed by more than 90 percent of the operation's previous maximum annual mineral production. In addition, the operator has indicated an intent to resume surface mining operations at a future date. In accordance with PRC Section 2770(h)(1), within 90 days of the surface mining operation becoming idle pursuant to PRC Section 2727.1, the operator has submitted an IMP to its lead agency, the SMGB, for review and approval. The operator utilized the SMGB's IMP form. The IMP provides measures the operator will implement to maintain the site in compliance with SMARA, including, but not limited to, all permit conditions. The Office of Mine Reclamation and SMGB staff have reviewed the IMP and considers it adequate in meeting the minimum requirements of SMARA and the SMGB's regulations.



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION: Over the past several years, numerous compliance issues have been identified, and enforcement actions implemented, at the Snows Road Quarry site. The site has required ongoing and frequent monitoring of site conditions. Thus, the Executive Officer recommends that the SMGB approve the IMP for a period of one year, at which time, the SMGB can consider an extension, if so desired, by the surface mine operator.

SUGGESTED MOTION LANGUAGE:

To approve the Interim Management Plan:

Mr. Chairman, in light of the information before the State Mining and Geology Board today, I move that the Board approve the Interim Management Plan for the Snows Road Quarry, CA Mine ID #91-09-0012, for a period not to exceed [one to five] years.

Respectfully submitted:

Stephen M. Testa
Executive Officer

