

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS
BRIDGER-TETON NATIONAL FOREST, Jackson Ranger District
Teton County, Wyoming

Gros Ventre Mineral Exploration Project

Attached here is a description of the proposed action for the Gros Ventre Mineral Exploration Project on the Jackson Ranger District. This letter serves two purposes. The first is to request your input regarding the scope of the analysis that we will conduct in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act. The second purpose is to provide you with a description of the proposed action so you may submit formal comments pursuant to the Notice, Comment, and Appeal Procedures at 36 CFR 215. Please provide your comments on this action as described below.

The project area is located in T42N, R111W in the NE quarter of the NW quarter of section 31. Maverick Exploration out of Ogden, Utah has submitted a Plan of Operations to excavate up to 25 trenches to conduct assay work and determine the feasibility for using a dry electrostatic separation process for extracting gold, silver, and platinum from placer deposits along Cottonwood Creek about 2 miles above its confluence with Fish Creek, located in the upper Gros Ventre drainage (see Figures 1 and 2 in Attachment A). This activity falls under the provisions of the 1872 Mining Law. Consequently, the scope for this decision is not whether to authorize the activity, but rather to determine the appropriate scale of exploration and required resource protection measures and mitigations.

Based on consultation with the Regional Minerals staff, the district has determined that 10 to 15 test sites should be reasonable to meet the Purpose and Need for this project. The trenches are expected to be 10 to 12 feet in depth, 3 to 4 feet in width, and will be less than 30 feet in length, which may vary in size slightly as needed to ensure safety of personnel. A five acre boundary has been established within which the assay work will be conducted (see Figure 2 in Attachment A).

Unlike traditional placer mining, the electrostatic process requires dry material. Therefore, wetlands and riparian areas will be avoided. A backhoe will be used to excavate materials that will then be sampled for mineral content as well as characterized in terms of particle sizes so that concentrations and recovery rates of the precious metals can be determined. Excavated material will be screened so that the finer particles can be processed further to extract gold and other precious metals. Based on preliminary exploratory work, it is estimated that less than 2 percent of the total volume excavated will be retained for further processing and sampling. Some increases in volume are anticipated as the naturally compacted gravels are disturbed. Excavation sites will be backfilled to restore natural contours prior to moving on to the next location. Sites will be reseeded with a Forest Service approved native seed mix. A bond will be required to cover the cost of rehabilitation.

Roughly 4 personnel will be needed to conduct this work. Additional individuals may be used to resupply the camp. The crew will stay in a trailer on-site and would be required to haul out all trash and human waste. The list of equipment to be used includes the following:

- Case model 580 D Super or equivalent backhoe – everyday use
- Case model 90 skid loader or equivalent – everyday use
- Grizzly / Screener – everyday use to classify material to appropriate size
- Pickup trucks – used to transport and supply equipment to and from the site
- Electrical generator – used daily
- Camp trailer (self contained) – used daily
- 5th wheel gooseneck trailer – used to transport equipment and supplies to and from the site

Project mitigations include:

- No new roads will be constructed.
- No water diversions will be permitted.
- Forest Service must approve the location of staging areas for trailers and support equipment, which will preferably be located on existing disturbed areas.
- Top soil will be stored separately from spoils and reapplied on the surface during reclamation.
- Reclamation will be done to Forest Service specifications and will include travel ways and staging areas as well as the excavation areas.
- Back filling of excavated trenches and reclaiming with top soil will be completed prior to moving on to the next trench.
- No activity will occur within 200 feet of Cottonwood Creek.
- Grizzly bear food storage order 04-00-104 will be followed.
- Sieving of particles with the “grizzly” will be done next to each hole to avoid disturbing a larger area with cross-country travel to a centralized location.
- No equipment will be present or activity conducted prior to July 1 or later than November 1.
- Bonding will be required in the amount equivalent to that needed for site reclamation.
- Human waste, trash, and petroleum based products will be hauled to a suitable location off National Forest System lands.
- "Timely seeding" using FS approved seed mix will occur.
- All equipment shall be washed prior to moving onto National Forest Systems lands.
- The proponent will be responsible for noxious weed control for up to 3 years following site reclamation.
- The proponent will prepare and the Forest Service must approve the spill plan for fuels and chemicals used in equipment.
- The proponent will maintain a spill kit on-site and personnel will be trained in its use.
- The proponent is responsible for obtaining any necessary permits from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and Army Corp of Engineers.

Site-specific Issues

- A cultural resource clearance will need to be completed.
- The proposed project is located outside of the antelope migration corridor.
- No Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant or animal species would be impacted.
- Potential habitat for sage grouse may be impacted.

The Bridger-Teton National Forest has made a preliminary assessment that this action falls within a category of action listed in the Forest Service NEPA Handbook (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30) that is excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS and that no extraordinary circumstances exist that would preclude use of the category. The specific category is 31.2.8 “Short-term (one year or less) 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.” No significant impacts to the elements contained in extraordinary circumstances are anticipated.

The potential for future exploration or mining will depend on the results of the test excavations and will require separate additional site-specific analysis. The level of environmental analysis conducted for any future proposal will depend on the types and extent of activities requested. The location for future activities would be within the areas of existing claims in the area. No additional proposals are known at this time.

Additional Background: This claim has been held by the Sturlin family under the name of Goldwest Corporations from the late 1960’s through to 2005. Prospecting, exploration, and mining activities have occurred throughout this period until the early to mid 1990s and are successfully reclaimed. To date,

mining the deposits has not proven commercially viable because the very fine particles of “flour” gold are hard to recover. The Sturlin’s allowed the claim to lapse in 2006. Placer claim relocation notices were executed in February 2007 with Maverick Exploration Inc. replacing Goldwest Corporation as the operator. The Notice of Intent for this current proposal was received on March 17, 2007 and a site visit with Forest Service personnel occurred on May 10, 2007. This project has been on the Schedule of Proposed Actions since the last quarter of 2007.

This comment period provides those interested in or affected by these projects an opportunity to make their concerns known. It is being provided pursuant to the July 2 and September 16, 2005, orders issued by the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Case No. CIV F-03-6386JKS. Those who provide timely comments will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations. A copy of this description of the proposed action is also available at www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf/projects.

Additional information regarding this project can be obtained from Dale Deiter, Jackson District Ranger.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of the legal notice of the opportunity to comment in the Casper Star-Tribune. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this proposal. You should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Comments must be submitted to Dale Deiter, Jackson Ranger District, 25 Rosencrans Lane, P.O. Box 1689, Jackson, WY 83001, 307-739-5410, fax: 307-739-5410.

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official’s office during normal business hours via telephone or in person; or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments. Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-bridger-teton-jackson@fs.fed.us. Comments must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 215.6. Only those who submit timely comments will be eligible to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215.

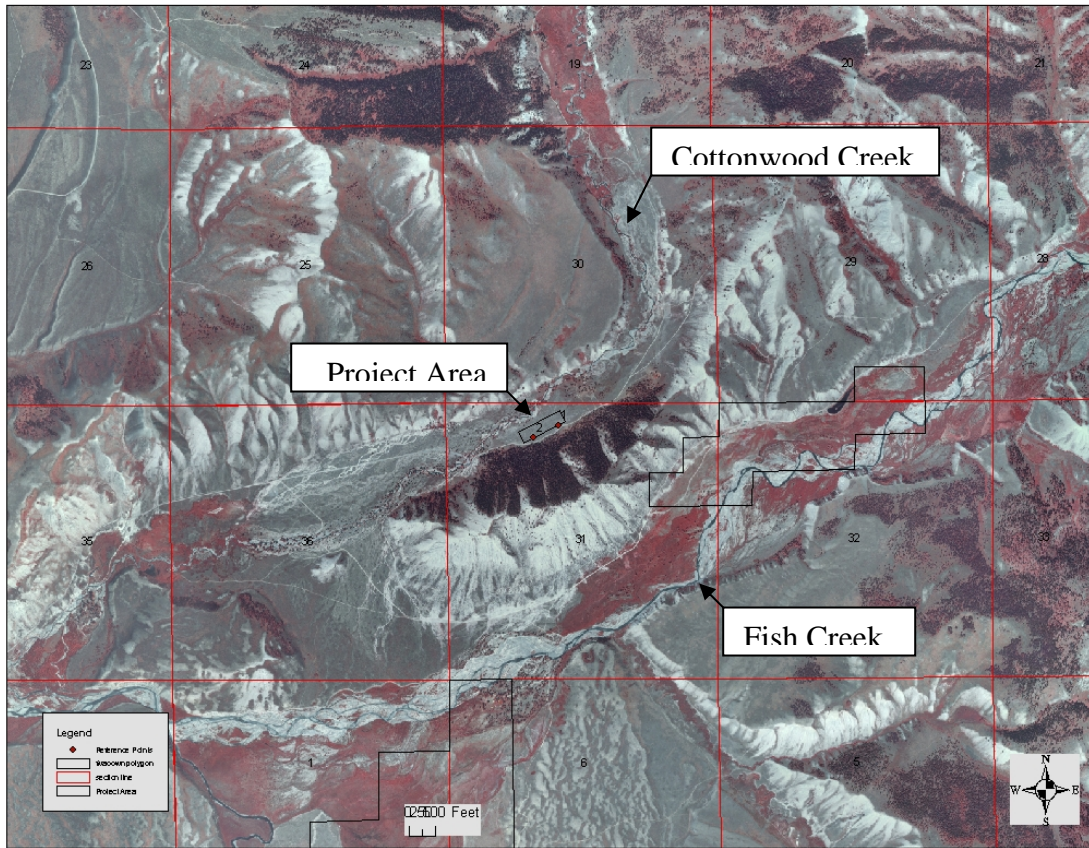
Note: Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Parts 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), 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, and where 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 within 15 days.

/s/ Dale Deiter
Dale Deiter
JACKSON DISTRICT RANGER

June 16, 2008
Date

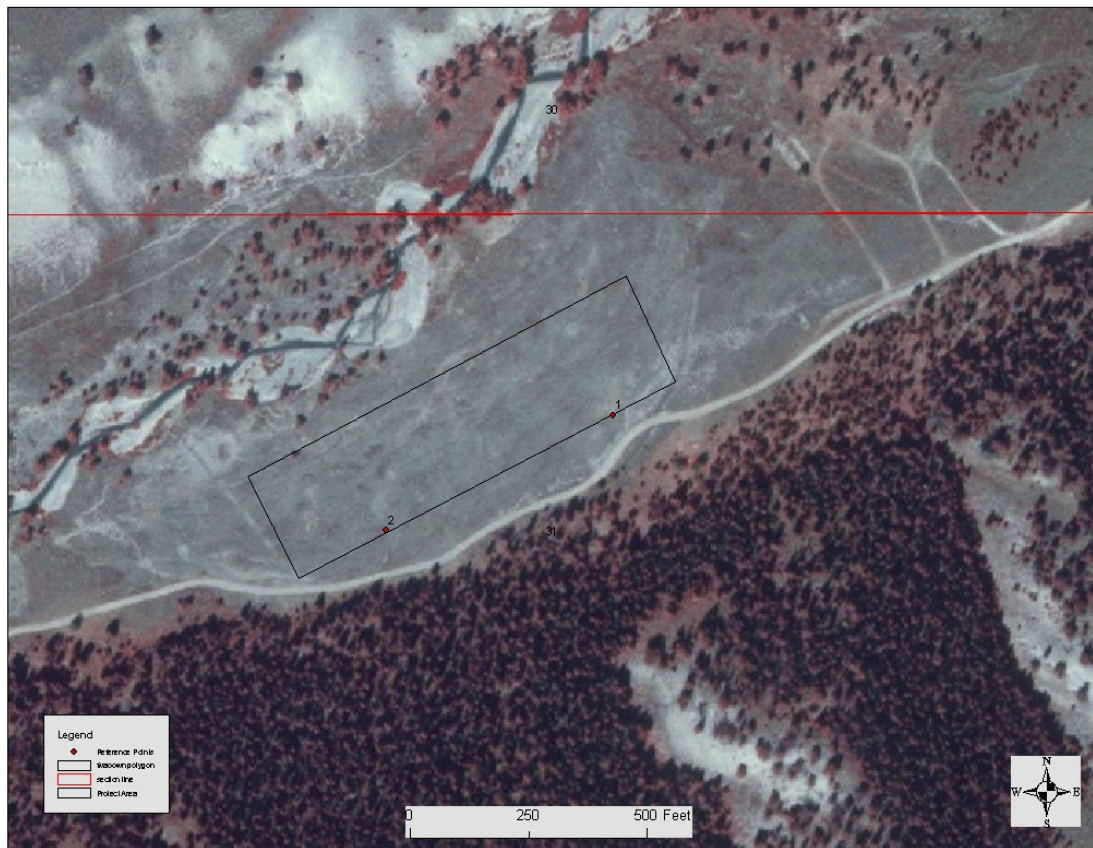
ATTACHMENT A

Figure 1. Infrared photo showing nearby locations relative to the activity area



The activity area is located near Cottonwood Creek about 2 miles above its confluence with Fish Creek. The private lands in section 1 is the area the Dew Place Ranch and Halpin Ranch. The private lands in section 32 is Bull Creek Ranch.

Figure 2. Closeup infrared photo of the activity area



This photo shows a closeup of the sage brush flat where 15 trenches will be excavated on regular spacing to conduct assay works and to test the how much material the electrostatic separator recovers. Trenches will be dug to a depth of 10 to 12 feet unless ground water is reached prior. Trench will be 3 to 4 feet in width and less than 30 feet in length. Sedimentary layers will be stratified and sampled to determine particle size distributions and precious metal concentrations. Samples will be collected and sent for analysis in a certified lab. This will allow the proponents to validate or invalidate previous assays and to determine the logistic and economic feasibility of using the electrostatic separation process.