

Idaho Cobalt Project EIS and the Idaho JRP Process

The Supervisor, Salmon-Challis National Forest (Forest) determined early in 2001 that the Forest's consideration of Formation Capital Corporation, U.S. (FCC) proposed Plan of Operations for the Idaho Cobalt Project required the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to ensure Forest compliance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regarding project review and approval decisions. In April 2001, the Forest selected an independent Environmental Consulting Firm (Contractor) to begin preparation of an EIS, with participation by the Forest's Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team), and other participating state and federal agency representatives.

The Contractor's EIS team and the Forest's ID team includes qualified professionals in many disciplines, including:

- Surface Water and Groundwater
- Sediment and Stormwater Management
- Water Balance and Dynamic Systems Modeling (DSM)
- Geochemistry, Geotechnical/Mine Engineering and Geology
- Transportation and Road Analysis
- Vegetation, Wetlands, Soils, and Reclamation
- Aquatic Biology and Fisheries
- Fire Ecology
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Air Quality
- Terrestrial Wildlife
- Recreation, Visual, and Wilderness Resources
- Noise
- Land Use
- SocioEconomics

The Idaho Joint Review Process (JRP) was developed by the State of Idaho in 1996 to provide for a structured interactive consultation process between State of Idaho agencies and federal land management agencies designed to address an often complex interaction of laws and regulations concerning mineral development proposals on public lands in Idaho. The JRP process is used to increase communication and cooperation between mineral development companies, state and federal government agencies, and the public in Idaho to reduce conflict and delays in the state and federal permitting review process concerning proposed mineral development projects.

The Forest's EIS contractor team and ID team initiated the JRP process in May 2001, and have continued the JRP process throughout the evaluation of FCC's proposed Plan of Operations and supporting technical reports, and the development of the Project's EIS process. In addition to routine interagency cooperation and joint reviews of FCC Plan of Operations' baseline information

and technical reports, several formal JRP meetings have been held to discuss the review of pertinent Project-related information necessary to complete a science based impact evaluation for the Project's EIS process. Official JRP meetings have occurred as listed below during the Forest's ongoing development of the EIS for FCC's proposed Idaho Cobalt Project

- May 3, 2001: Initial JRP meeting, Salmon, Idaho.
- June 8 - 9, 2004: JRP meeting and on-site field review, Salmon, Idaho
- March 8, 2005: JRP meeting, Boise, Idaho

Participation in the Forest's JRP meetings and on-site field reviews have involved representatives from the following state and federal agencies, tribal representatives and presentations by FCC on their proposal.

- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ)
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA)/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribe
- Nez Perce Tribe

In addition, a representative from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has participated in a 2004 on-site review of project area wetlands and Waters of the U.S.

As the Forest's review of FCC's Modified Plan of Operations (February 2005) and supporting technical documents continues, including preparation by the EIS team of the Draft EIS, additional JRP meetings are anticipated.