

# FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

## **Makayla 2 Pumice Mine Plan of Operations CACA-58637 and Right-of-Way CACA-56716**

### **Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CA-D050-2021-0019-EA**

#### **Introduction:**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental assessment (DOI-BLM-CA-D050-2021-0019-EA) to analyze the potential effect(s) of authorizing Southwest Global Pumice LLC to mine approximately 25 acres and remove 100,000 tons of pumice from BLM-managed public lands located in the Coso Mountains north and east of Coso Junction, Inyo County, California. See location map attached below.

The need for this action is established by the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA to respond to a request for mineral materials made under Title 43, Part 3600 of the Code of Federal Regulations. These regulations specify that: (1) it is BLM's policy to make mineral materials available unless it is detrimental to the public interest to do so (43 CFR 3601.6(a)), and; (2) that BLM will not dispose of mineral materials if it is determined that the aggregate damage to public lands and resources will exceed the expected public benefits (43 CFR 3611).

#### **Plan Conformance and Consistency:**

The proposed authorization is consistent with the California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan of 1980 (CDCA Plan) and its amendment, the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) because:

The involved lands are within the Mohave Ground Squirrel Area of Critical Environmental Concern, which objective(s) include to "Support the national need for reliable and sustainable domestic minerals while protecting the sensitive resources in the area." See Appendix B of the *Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan* Amendment of the California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed project site is within California Desert National Conservation Lands (CDNCL). The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Land Use Plan Amendment provides that CDNCL land may be made available for mineral material sales subject to mitigation requirements, including compensatory mitigation (reference Conservation Management Action NLCS-MIN-3).

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/66459/510>

**Finding of No Significant Impact:**

Based on a review of the Environmental Assessment and supporting referenced documents, I have determined the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and none exceed those effects as described in the California Desert Conservation Area Management Plan of 1980, as amended. An environmental impact statement is not required and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as explained below.

**Context:**

This project involves an area of up to 25 acres to be mined for pumice, and a right-of-way for access to the site. ‘Significance’ in this context means effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole (40 CFR 1508.27(a)). The impacts associated with this project are short-term and local, and not likely in & of themselves to have international, national, regional or statewide impacts.

**Intensity:**

Intensity refers to the severity of impact. The NEPA criteria for evaluating intensity under 43 CFR 1508.27(b) include:

1. *Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The proposed action may have impacts to resources as described in Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CA-DOI-D050-2021-0019-EA. The proponent has incorporated measures to reduce or mitigate impacts into the proposed action, with further stipulations recommended by BLM in Chapter 3 of the Environmental Assessment (*Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences*).

2. *The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.*

No potentially hazardous substances will be left on or in the vicinity of the project area. No hazard to the general public is anticipated from this action.

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The action has no effect to any prime farm lands, wilderness, or wild/scenic rivers. A class III cultural survey was completed for the project in accordance with Conservation Management Action CMA-LUPA-CUL-4. The Area of Potential Effect was surveyed by Duke Resources Cultural Management. Four prehistoric archeological sites identified, chiefly of lithic debitage, recommended as ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and BLM concurs with this recommendation. Approval of this project will not cause any adverse effects to any National Register eligible Historic Properties.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

BLM received many comments expressing concern or opposition to the project, and also received a comment expressing support. Controversy in this context means disagreement about the nature of the effects, not expressions of opposition to the proposed action or preference among the alternatives.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The pumice mining program is not unique or unusual. The effects to the human environment are fully analyzed and disclosed in this environmental assessment. No unique or unknown risks are identified by this assessment. The likely effects of the proposed action to air quality, water, wildlife, heritage resources, Native American values and recreation are adequately disclosed in the Environmental Consequences chapter of this Environmental Assessment. No unique, unusual or unknown risks to these resources are identified by this assessment.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The proposed action (including issuance of a mineral material sale contract and a right-of-way for access) are common actions on public land and would not set a precedent for future actions with significant impact.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The proposed action was considered by the interdisciplinary team with the context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not anticipated. An analysis of the effects of the proposed action is described in the EA.

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The project will not adversely affect scientific, cultural, or historic resources, including those eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. An analysis of the effects of alternatives is described in the EA.

9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

The area is not within designated critical habitat for any species listed as threatened or

endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The BLM has made a No Effect call for federally listed species, so long as the proposed protective measures found in the EA and Decision Record are followed.

*10. Whether the action threatens violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment.*

BLM's authorization of the proposed action will not violate any federal, state, local, or tribal laws, regulation or policy imposed for protection of the environment.

FONSI for DOI-BLM-CA-D050-2021-0019-EA

Signed:

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Carl B. Symons  
BLM, Ridgecrest Field Manager

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Date

