

# **BASELINE DATA REPORT**

## **Section 12.0**

### **Present and Historic Land Use**

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Revision 1

Submitted To:

New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division  
&  
U.S. Forest Service (Cibola National Forest)  
&  
New Mexico Environment Department

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## 12.0 Present and Historic Land Use

### NMAC 19.10.6.602 D.(13) (j)

*Baseline data shall include, as applicable:*

*(j) A description of the present and historic land use of the permit area, the general patterns of land use in the surrounding areas, and a narrative of land capability and productivity based upon U.S. Soil Conservation Service land use capability classes or a similar classification.*

### 12.1 Introduction

The Roca Honda permit area encompasses all of Sections 9, 10, and 16 of T13N R8W, in McKinley County, New Mexico. Section 16 is owned by the State of New Mexico. The surface of Section 16 is leased to Fernandez Company, Ltd. (aka the Lee Ranch) as rangeland for grazing. The mineral estate is leased to RHR. Sections 9 and 10 are USFS lands within the Cibola National Forest. RHR has the unpatented mining claims on these two sections. The three-section Roca Honda permit area totals approximately 1,920 acres.

### 12.2 Present and Historic Land Use of the Permit Area

Sections 9 and 10 are owned by the federal government, administered by the USFS, and open to the public. The land is used for a multitude of purposes including grazing, mineral extraction, hunting, hiking, and other outdoor recreation activities. Forest land use also includes commercial logging and personal and commercial gathering of firewood. While there is no evidence of commercial logging having occurred on Sections 9 and 10, there are a sufficient number of trails and roads on the property to provide easy access for wood gatherers.

The Lee Ranch controls a vast amount of range land through private ownership and leases of rangeland including the surface grazing lease of Section 16. In addition, the permit area has also been the subject of significant mineral exploration activity. As described in Section 10, Prior Mining Operations, of this report, the permit area was extensively drilled in the 1960s, '70s and early '80s. The long-term land use of the permit area has been rangeland possibly since 1767 when the land grant was issued even when the grazers were not domestic livestock.

As described in detail in Section 11 of this report, Historic Places and Cultural Properties, together with the supporting archeological survey documents, historic use of the permit area dates back to use by the native peoples of the region to before the birth of Christ. Archeological evidence indicates that the Anasazi, Basketmaker and Pueblo cultures have all used the permit area. More recently, the Navajo and Anglo cultures have made their imprint on the permit area.

### 12.3 General Patterns of Land Use Surrounding the Permit Area

The general land use patterns in the surrounding area are similar to that of the permit area. It is a mix of state, private and federal ownership dominated by the Lee Ranch and the Cibola National Forest. The area is sparsely populated, rural and largely undeveloped. Predominant land uses are low density grazing and cultivation and recreational activity such as hiking, sightseeing, picnicking and seasonal hunting.

The community of San Mateo is located approximately four miles to the southeast of the permit area. There are estimated to be less than 200 persons living there. The Lee Ranch headquarters

and residence are also located approximately two miles southeast of the permit area. In addition, the Lee Ranch foreman has a residence approximately one mile west of the western boundary of the permit area on private property in Section 17. Several other rural residences are located along the San Mateo Valley west of the permit area.

Rio Grande Resources, Corp. owns the Mt. Taylor uranium mine located approximately four miles east of the project site. The mine is currently not operating and has been on stand-by status for a number of years. It operated from the late 1970's to the mid 1990's.

The Cibola National Forest administers most of the public land surrounding the permit area. Its responsibilities include general administration, management of timber resources, and development of specific land use management plans.

The permit area is located in an area known as the Grants Uranium Belt. Grants and Milan are the largest communities in the area and are the centers of what once was the uranium related populace in New Mexico.

The Grants Uranium Belt is an area about 100 miles long by 20 miles wide and extends from Gallup on the west to Rio Puerco on the east. It is located in one of the most diversified major energy-producing regions in the United States. Within or adjacent to the area are large oil and gas fields, and abundant accessible coal deposits. The Grants region was historically the major producer of uranium in the United States. It still contains approximately half of the nation's economically recoverable uranium reserves. A number of mines and mills operated in the region until the mid-to-late 1980s. Grants-Milan is primarily a mixture of state-owned and private land, although small parcels of BLM natural-resource lands are scattered throughout the area. BLM lands are managed under a multi-use land management system. The BLM lands in the area are generally used for grazing purposes.

## **12.4 Land Capability and Productivity**

Section 6, Topsoil, of this BDR discusses the soil capability classifications on the Roca Honda permit area obtained from two separate soil surveys. Both studies use the nomenclature "good," "fair," and "poor." The first survey was conducted by the USFS (Strenger et al. 2007) and covered Sections 9 and 10 of the permit area. The second survey covered Section 16 of the permit area and was conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) in cooperation with the BLM, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station (NRCS 2006). The results of the two surveys indicate similar capability classes. Class 6 soils are typically restricted to use for pasture, rangeland, forestland, and wildlife habitat.

## 12.5 References

NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), 2006. *Soil Survey of McKinley County Area, New Mexico, McKinley County and Parts of Cibola and San Juan Counties*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, in cooperation with U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station.

Strenger, S., S. Sebring, W. Robbie, F. Escobedo, C. Vaandrager, V. Andrew, E. Brooks, C. Krasine, B. Nielsen, and R. Fletcher, 2007. *Terrestrial Ecosystems Survey of the Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands*, USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region.