

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

Sarah Cottrell Propst
Cabinet Secretary

Todd Leahy, JD, Ph.D.
Deputy Cabinet Secretary

Albert Chang, Director
Mining and Minerals Division



August 18, 2023

Ms. Katie Zemlick
Office of the State Engineer
P.O. Box 25102
Santa Fe, NM 87504-5102

RE: Request for Additional Comments on New Minimal Impact Exploration Permit Application, Hermanas Exploration, Luna County, New Mexico, Permit No. LU048EM

Dear Ms. Zemlick,

On August 16, 2023, the Mining and Minerals Division (“MMD”) received a public comment from Johnson Ranch LLC regarding the permit application from Southern Silver Exploration Corp. for a new minimal impact exploration permit in Luna County, New Mexico. The comment concerns the potential for adverse effects to a local spring named Carazalillo Spring (also known as Corrizalillo Spring) due to drilling from the proposed exploration project. The letter from Johnson Ranch LLC is enclosed for your review. The Hydrology Bureau of the Office of State Engineer previously provided comments on the Hermanas Exploration Project in a memorandum dated May 2, 2023, however MMD is requesting comments from your agency specifically addressing whether this exploration project is expected to have a direct surface impact on Carazalillo Spring. The application from the operator can be downloaded from MMD’s website at

<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/mmd/lu048em-hermanas-exploration-minimal-impact-exploration-project/>

In accordance with 19.10.3.302.G NMAC, your agency has 20 days from the date of receipt of this letter in which to provide comments. The Director will consider these comments in making the determination of eligibility for minimal impact status. If you have any questions, please contact me at (505) 470-5354 or by e-mail at kevin.barnes@emnrd.nm.gov.

Sincerely,

Kevin Barnes
Permit Lead
Mining Act Reclamation Program (MARP)

enc: Johnson Ranch LLC letter
Topographic Map of Carazalillo Spring and Hermanas Exploration Project

cc: Mine File (LU048EM)

Johnson Ranches, LLC
P. O. Box 510
Columbus, NM 88029
575-531-2571
johnsonranchesllc@hotmail.com
AUGUST 16, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

As successor-in-interest to Carazalillo Spring, located in the southwest corner of Luna County, New Mexico, I am taking the opportunity to express my opinion as to the proposed core drilling scheduled in the immediate vicinity of the Spring. This core drilling by Southern Silver Exploration Corporation could and most probably harm the production of water that is used by my ranch in furnishing drinking water for over 1300 head of cattle and also is the residential water source for my home.

This Spring and the land upon which it is located is a historical water source and has been used for centuries by Native Americans, Spanish and Mexican explorers and American ranchers as the country was settled in the 19th century. The line of title traces back (long before New Mexico became a state). As I have stated I am the owner of the surface estate, the subsurface estate and all of the water produced as defined in relation to a natural spring with the water percolating to the surface. My ranch is heavily dependent on this natural water remaining available in its present form with no diminishment of quantity or quality.

Natural water appearing at the surface and in the quantity that this Spring produces is rare and almost non-existent in this corner of New Mexico. The debacle that occurred at the San Simon Cienega stands as an example of the danger of tampering with such rare water sources. San Simon Cienega is located just over the state line in Cochise County, Arizona. This water source was lost when "qualified experts" decided they could increase and manipulate the quantity of water by drilling and dynamiting the immediate sub-strata of the pool of water. This resulted in a loss of this magnificent historical spring. The fracturing of the underground strata allowed the water that heretofore percolated to the surface, to flow downward and not surface. The imposing remains of giant cottonwood trees that have died testify to the mistake of tampering with this natural spring.

I am asking any and all individuals and agencies receiving this letter to address my concerns over these proposed actions and to allay my fears. The drilling is to be conducted on staked federal mining claims so I assume the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Interior will govern the use and type of exploration of the claims. Also, the New Mexico Office of State Engineer should be concerned as deep core drilling is nonetheless drilling and perforating the subsurface. It is feasible that the core drill may reach extreme depth and encounter various strata of water aquifers, fissures and pressurized spring water. Also, liability as to the loss of Carazalillo Spring and/or the quantity and quality of water (ie. production measured in gallons per minute) should be allocated to the appropriate party causing the harm. If

the drilling is allowed, great care must be taken to guarantee that the core is sealed as it is drilled to prevent any loss of the natural percolating water and the sustaining pressure.

This spring and ranch, has been in my family since 1918. I am the third generation to live and work on this magnificent ranch. Not only does my family and my livestock rely on this water source, but multiple species of wildlife. It would be completely and utterly devastating and most likely irreparable if this water source was damaged by the proposed drilling by Southern Silver Exploration Corporation.

In closing, everything I have stated here is within the realm of probability and should not be taken lightly. I am not taking my concerns lightly and would appreciate a response from all.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Johnson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

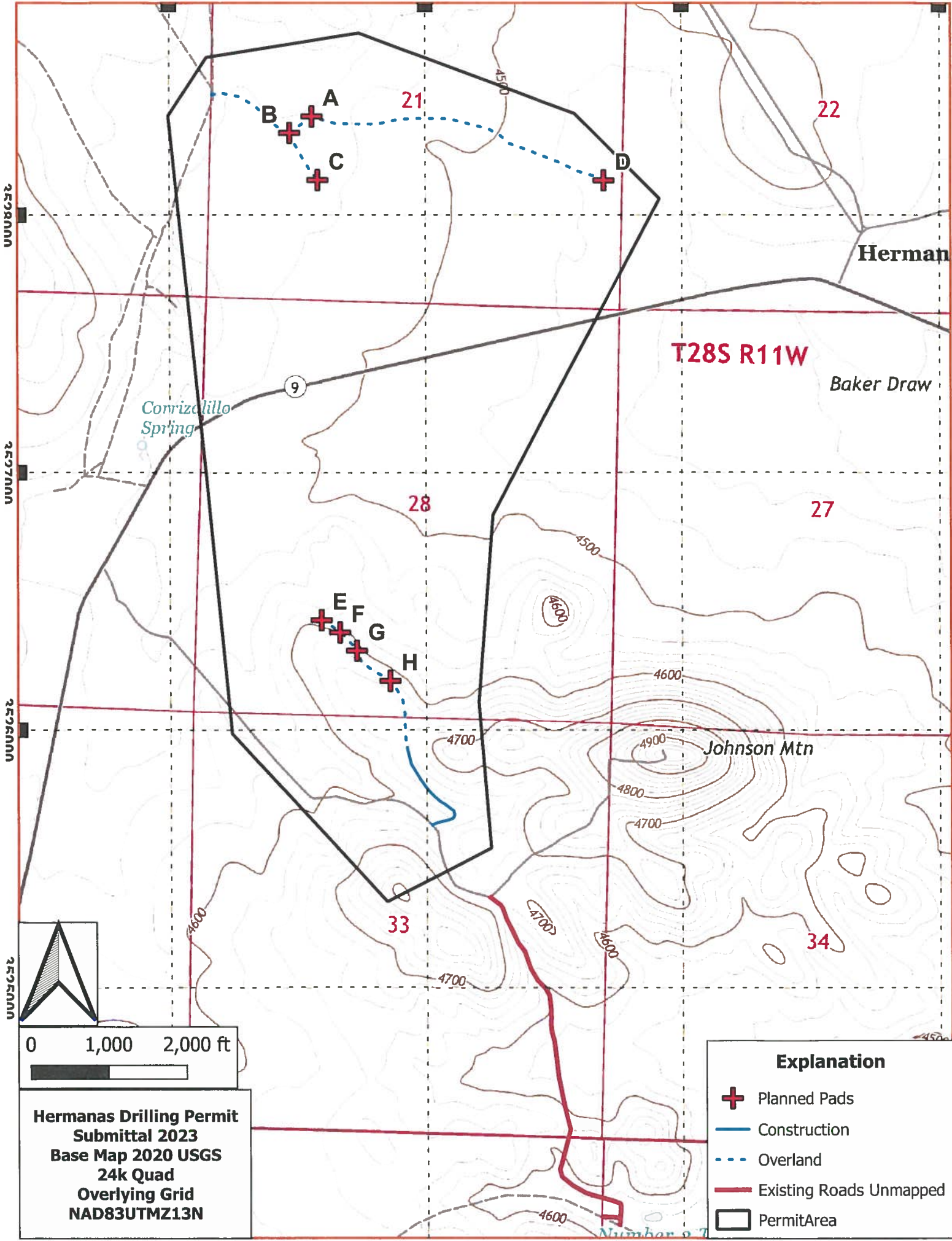
Joe Johnson, Member-Manager

cc: Office of New Mexico State Engineer-Deming, New Mexico

Bureau of Land Management-Las Cruces, New Mexico

Southern Silver Exploration Corporation

Joseph Anothony Kizis, Jr., Consulting Geologist



Explanation

- + Planned Pads
- Construction
- - - Overland
- Existing Roads Unmapped
- PermitArea

**Hermanas Drilling Permit
 Submittal 2023
 Base Map 2020 USGS
 24k Quad
 Overlying Grid
 NAD83UTMZ13N**