

Wednesday February 7th, 2024

Capitol Dome Public Scoping Meeting – Deming, NM

Meeting start time: 6:03

Presentation start: 6:03

Presentation end: 6:27

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Start time: 6:27

1. Who started this? Who wants this project done?
 - a. AML. This project has been in the works for about 10 years. The BLM Las Cruces District Office put this project before us. Those of you familiar with the Floridas may remember some bat cupulas we built ~10 years ago on Cooke's Peak.
2. It's going to make it hard to hide bodies out there now...
 - a. These mountains are highly visited and close to the city of Deming, so we want to protect the mines for all those people.
3. What about the Three Sisters Area?
 - a. Yes there's hundreds of mine features there. That could be a project in the future.
4. Is this the only project you have in the county right now?
 - a. Yes; developing others but this is the only active one right now
5. Are you going to be doing the whole mountain?
 - a. These are the primary locations of the mine features (see map). We've already safeguarded ~100 mines in the Little Floridas. We've been working out here for 20 years in various mine projects.
6. So are you only talking about the Capitol Dome area?
 - a. The project area includes the Capitol Dome area, but has other areas throughout the range as well. This used to be called the Mahoney Park Project. Project selection is usually based on BLM's inventory of high priority features.
7. How much of an impact are you going to have on Ibex habitat?
 - a. Our work is very selective. Only work is done on the mine features themselves. We'll work with NM Department of Game and Fish to follow their guidelines for Ibex.
8. What road are you going to use to get there? Big trucks, small trucks?
 - a. Mostly pickup trucks carrying backhoe equipment. You can drive right into Capitol Dome area. Everywhere else we would use helicopters to drop off supplies.
9. Will there be any blasting?
 - a. No. We typically use the mine waste that is onsite for the backfill material. So the same material that was in the mine in the first place is used to fill it back up.
10. If there is something culturally significant in an area or have you found a species of bats in the mine area?
 - a. Nothing on the register of historic properties. We avoid important features that are important in the cultural resources. There are several bat species out there and what we're doing is conducive to their habitat.

11. Just one crew or multiple crews?
 - a. We haven't decided scope of construction. Probably 4-5 people working in one area at a time. Because of helicopters, there will probably be 2 or 3 phases of construction.
 - b. But you're just going to have one group?
 - i. Yes
12. Woman concerned about construction truck traffic.
 - a. No semi-trucks. Just pickup trucks and backhoes.
13. This won't have any impact on any natural springs? There's one near Mahoney Park.
 - a. No. Impacts are very isolated to the mine feature.
14. Are you guys done yet? (in all of NM)
 - a. There's 25,000 mines out there.
15. How long do you anticipate this project taking until completion. Budget? Where is the money coming from?
 - a. There will likely be a few construction phases. The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement manages funding from a tax on coal. We can use some of that coal tax funding for this project. We haven't talked about numbers yet. Probably several million dollars; BLM may help. Might be both programs doing work. They might do one, we may do another. How many years? I guess at most ~2 years. We're capped at how much money we can use on hard rock projects; we would have to have it phased out. In general 1-3 years, depending on complexity.
16. How come no one has brought up the fact that this was a past bomb testing sight. We don't even know what all they did up there, other than they dropped and they shot.
 - a. [other resident] They are all dummy bombs! I have a few at my house.
 - b. [first resident] NO they were live bombs, we don't know if they are currently flammable, toxic, etc. No one has brought this up. No one should dig up there because you can run into something like an unexploded bomb.
 - c. [AML] Army Corps of Engineers has an unexploded ordinances specialist, so we're going to call him out so he can take a look at things.
17. Are you aware that there are two giant targets the size of a football field out there? These are historical pieces, I don't want you to destroy those.
 - a. Localized disturbance; there won't be any historical piece destruction.
18. The road that goes up to Mahoney Park, there were old houses up there with addresses and stuff, are those in your area and will be affected?
 - a. Yes, Cultural would have looked at those. We won't be affecting anything like that. Everything will have to be transported via helicopter, Mahoney Park road unpassable.
19. I have spelunked many of these mines. These are not a danger to anyone with any common sense. I find them culturally interesting. 200 feet ones are the best, adventurous. Why all of a sudden is this a problem?
 - a. There have been numerous abandoned mines accidents in NM and one death is too many. It's a liability for the BLM.
 - b. We can't tell you that you can't go in a mine on your own property; for landowners we have closed mine features with a gate with a lock and give the landowner the key.
20. So that guy wouldn't be able to go spelunking then after you do this work?
 - a. No, but that's good because it's dangerous.

21. Can these barriers be removed
 - a. No, and we maintain them.
 - b. Manganese is on the critical mineral list. It's always possible that someone could come in here and propose to start a mine.
22. What about Ibex hunting season? Helicopters flying around during hunting season seems bad.
 - a. We will talk to NM Department of Game and Fish about working around the Ibex hunting season, as well as the migratory birds windows and bat windows.
 - b. [Resident] From what I understand, Ibex are doing well. Most recently about 118 individuals.
 - c. [Leeland] we'll have a formal consultation with NMGFD.
 - d. [Resident] I've also heard there's several mountain lions. Several years ago they thought there was just 2, now more than a few more than that.
23. Mines that are on the public land, can we get permits from BLM to go through and access those mines?
 - a. No I don't believe so. But you can always call BLM and ask about access.
24. When you said you'd fill in the mine, how will the materials used affect the environment? Like the air, land, fumes etc.
 - a. Mines that we do those kinds of closure methods are not connecting to other shafts. If they're deep and have bad air quality, we may use a puff plug (cover with 2 ft of fill to protect from ultraviolet light and fire), expandable foam, or polyurethane.
 - i. Is that biodegradable?
 1. We cover them with 2 feet of fill but otherwise yes. We typically use the existing mine waste that is onsite to go back into mine. We haven't had any issues with those kinds of mine fill.
25. Do you provide this service for private landowners who have mines on their lands?
 - a. Yes. AML can work on private land, BLM can't. Landowner can reach out AML. AML will also reach out to mine claimants to see if they can work on their parcels or not.
26. Will you be regrading the Mahoney Park road?
 - a. No. No road improvements. If inaccessible, helicopter.
27. Will there be some kind of detailed report that will show what type of cultural thing or wildlife thing at each point on that map?
 - a. Once Grouse Mountain has finished the Biological Evaluation, we can publish that online. We try to limit things like locations of raptor nests. BUT for cultural resources, both cultural and state laws prohibit releasing cultural information to the public. We will have to exclude maps/ locations of site areas of cultural sites but we can still disclose historical information.
28. Some of us gave you our emails, can you email the Biological Evaluation to the emails?
 - a. We have a website, but we can also email some out if some specific people are interested. Once an Environmental Assessment is ready, we will have another public meeting. The Biological Evaluation and Environmental Assessment will be posted so you can look at all of it at once. There will be newspaper postings, mailings, and website, to announce its availability.
29. What is the website?
 - a. Emnrd.nm.gov/mmd/public-notice/

- i. This is also where other projects are posted
- 30. Is this the only project in the state?
 - a. No, we have a massive project in Silver City too as well as others
- 31. What is the cost of the project?
 - a. Estimated at 3 million
 - b. Comes out of federal tax dollars?
 - i. No, comes out of coal tax 5 cent per tonnage of coal
 - ii. That's our (AML) primary work, coal reclamation
 - c. 40% of coal tax is used for for hardrock projects
 - i. That's why BLM is important, they give us 0.5-1 million for projects. We ONLY do safety closures

QUESTIONS DONE: 6:59