

Curiosity Exploration LLC
2021 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 210
Berkeley, CA 94704

September 2, 2026

New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department
Mining and Minerals Division
Attn: Maille Gray, MARP Permit Lead

RE: Response to Agency Review Comments – Permit Application HI026EM (Steins Project), Hidalgo County, New Mexico

Dear Ms. Gray:

Curiosity Exploration LLC (“KoBold”) appreciates MMD's review of Permit Application HI026EM and the comments provided by MMD and the cooperating agencies – the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO), the Historic Preservation Division (HPD), the Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), the Office of the State Engineer – Hydrology Bureau (OSE), and the Forestry Division (EMNRD) – as compiled in MMD's August 18, 2026 comment letter. This letter responds to each comment in turn, organized by the originating agency. We have addressed each item below and welcome any follow-up questions MMD or the cooperating agencies may have.

No.	Comment Summary	Response
MMD-1	Total disturbance acreage for drill pads did not include mud pits; clarify whether mud pits are included within the pad footprint.	Two mud pits/sumps are located within the drill pad footprints, as shown on the drill pad layout schematic included with the application. No additional disturbance acreage is associated with mud pit construction.
MMD-2	Total disturbance acreage, including the full area of road being improved, is 5.97 acres, exceeding the minimal-impact threshold. Applicant must either re-submit as a regular exploration permit or obtain landowner authorization allowing road improvements on private sections to remain unreclaimed.	The proposed improvements to Still Ridge Road have been removed from the scope of this application, as Hidalgo County has already completed those improvements independent of the project. See Exhibit A for updated site maps. In addition, a letter from the private surface owners (Susan and James Hooper) authorizing KoBold to leave project roads and drill pads on their land unreclaimed following exploration is being finalized and will be submitted to MMD to support retention of the minimal-impact classification. See Exhibit B for signed landowner letter. Lastly, with both of these updates we are under 5 acres of disturbance.
MMD-3	MMD recommends installation of an appropriately sized culvert at the spur road crossing to ST25P-6 where it crosses an ephemeral wash, to reduce erosion.	The spur road to the southernmost drill location (ST25P-6) crosses a small ephemeral wash. In lieu of a permanent culvert, KoBold proposes to construct this road segment, and complete final rehabilitation of the crossing, outside of the monsoon season, so that ground-disturbing work and re-stabilization are not exposed to peak storm flow. KoBold believes this timing-based approach will adequately reduce the risk of washouts and erosion at the crossing; a culvert in this setting

No.	Comment Summary	Response
		could become obstructed by sediment and debris during monsoon flow, which may divert flow around the structure and increase erosion rather than reduce it. This was also mentioned by the Surface Water Quality Bureau during our site visit as a clogging mechanism.
MMD-4	Clarify which boreholes are proposed in Phase 1 versus Phase 2 of exploration.	The borehole table and associated exhibit will be revised to add a phase designation (Phase 1 or Phase 2) for each proposed borehole. See Exhibit C for the borehole table.
MMD-5	At least two boreholes, or the equivalent depth of 7,000 feet, must be bonded at one time.	Acknowledged.
MMD-6	All boreholes require OSE permitting prior to drilling. A Form WD-11 plugging record must be submitted to MMD before financial assurance is transferred to a new borehole.	Acknowledged.
MMD-7	Provide the BLM-provided seed mix for reclamation.	KoBold is coordinating with BLM to obtain the approved seed mix specification and will submit the documentation to MMD upon receipt.
MMD-8	MMD and Forestry recommend temporary protective fencing around State Endangered plants (cacti) within 30 meters of construction/drilling activity.	KoBold will fence off State Endangered cacti located within 30 meters of construction and drilling activity, consistent with this recommendation and the parallel recommendation from the Forestry Division (see Item FOR-3, below).
MMD-9	Access to the southernmost borehole requires crossing State Land Office (NMSLO) land; a right-of-way authorization is necessary.	Right of Entry Permit RE-8255 was approved by NMSLO on August 14, 2026, authorizing transit access across the NE4NE4 of Section 32, T24S, R21W.
MMD-10	NMDGF recommends ground disturbance occur outside the migratory bird breeding season (April 15–September 1) and that mature cactus/agave be left undisturbed during construction to the maximum extent feasible.	Ground-disturbing activities will be scheduled outside the April 15–September 1 migratory bird breeding season where feasible. Where scheduling outside that window is not feasible, KoBold will conduct pre-construction active-nest surveys within the disturbance area with a 100-foot buffer, scanning outside the survey area for potential raptor nests, maintain the buffers recommended by NMDGF (100 feet for songbirds/ravens; 0.25 mile for most raptors; 0.5 mile for ferruginous hawk, golden eagle, and peregrine and prairie falcon), and postpone disturbance within those buffers until young have fledged or the nest has been otherwise verified inactive. Mature cactus and agave will be avoided to the maximum extent practicable during road and pad construction.
MMD-11	HPD requests that the archaeological consultant (WestLand Resources) upload the cultural resources report and photographs	WestLand Resources has revised the cultural resources report to address HPD's comments and is finalizing the NMCRIS data entry, including the eligibility (significance) field for each

No.	Comment Summary	Response
	to NMCRIS and complete the eligibility (significance) field for each documented resource.	documented resource. KoBold will confirm completion with HPD (Michelle Ensey) once the NMCRIS entry is finished, and will submit the revised report to MMD and HPD at that time.
MMD-12	Prior to permit issuance, MMD requires a draft approved Financial Assurance (FA) instrument. Total FA is calculated at \$214,500 (Surface Reclamation: \$12,300 for the first acre and \$6,800/acre for acres two through five (\$27,200); Plug and Abandon: 7,000 feet at \$25/foot (\$175,000)).	KoBold is preparing a draft financial assurance instrument once the amount is confirmed after disturbance is recalculated, consistent with MMD's calculation.

I. Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) CommentsII. New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) Comments

No.	Comment Summary	Response
SLO-1	The application lists T24S R21W Section 32 (State Trust Land) as an access route, but there is no access agreement authorizing crossing of State Trust Land. The agricultural lessee (GT-1825-2) is the private landowner (James Hooper), who has not granted access through Section 32; routes through Section 32 must be removed from the application until this is resolved.	NMSLO Right of Entry Permit RE-8255 has since been issued, authorizing KoBold's transit-only access across the NE4NE4 of Section 32, T24S, R21W. KoBold understands this permit is limited to transit and does not authorize exploration activity or equipment storage on State Trust Land, and that surface lessees must be notified in advance of any equipment movement through the parcel.

III. Historic Preservation Division (HPD) Comments

No.	Comment Summary	Response
HPD-1	The cultural resources report recommends avoidance or restricted vehicle traffic at archaeological sites LA 208573, LA 208574, LA 208575, and LA 208576. MMD/SHPD requests information on how the operator will avoid these sites (fencing, monitor, etc.). LA 208574 may be impacted by proposed road improvements and LA 208576 may be affected by road maintenance; if these two sites cannot be fully avoided, additional archaeological investigation may be required.	The cultural resources report has been revised to address HPD's comments regarding sites LA 208573 through LA 208576, including avoidance measures and the assessment of potential impacts from road improvements and maintenance at LA 208574 and LA 208576. WestLand Resources is completing the corresponding NMCRIS data entry and will confirm with HPD once finalized; the revised report will be submitted to HPD and MMD at that point.
HPD-4	Because the project involves BLM-managed lands, it is subject to Section 106 NHPA consultation, and avoidance/mitigation	KoBold acknowledges that Section 106 consultation applies to the BLM-managed lands within the project area and will coordinate development of any avoidance or mitigation measures with BLM's cultural resources staff.

No.	Comment Summary	Response
	measures must be developed in coordination with BLM.	

IV. New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) Comments

No.	Comment Summary	Response
DOW-1	Mud pits create entrapment hazards for wildlife and should be fenced or covered (solid metal, plywood, or appropriate netting, mesh $\leq$ 3/8 inch, never monofilament) taut over a rigid frame. NMDGF strongly recommends a closed-loop drilling system instead, which eliminates the need for fencing/netting, reduces disturbance, and uses less water.	KoBold will use a closed-loop drilling system where feasible. Where a sump is used, sump slopes have already been incorporated into the design as a wildlife mitigation measure, and any open sump will be fenced or netted to NMDGF's specifications (solid metal, plywood, or appropriate synthetic netting, mesh $\leq$ 3/8 inch, taut over a rigid frame).
DOW-2	NMDGF recommends preventing wildlife entrapment in stockpiled drill pipe by capping pipe and visually inspecting each section before use.	A pre-use visual inspection procedure for stockpiled drill pipe will be added to the field operating plan..
DOW-3	NMDGF recommends ground disturbance and vegetation removal occur outside the primary migratory bird breeding season (April 15–September 1); if unavoidable, active-nest surveys and buffers should be maintained, and active nest removal may require a scientific collection permit or USFWS take permit.	KoBold's response to Item MMD-10, above, addresses this recommendation as well.
DOW-4	NMDGF recommends leaving mature cactus and agave undisturbed to the maximum extent feasible during road/pad construction (barrel cactus, Palmer's agave, Parry's agave), noting their importance as a nectar source for bats.	KoBold's response to Item MMD-10, above, addresses this recommendation as well.
DOW-5	NMDGF recommends using only certified weed-free, native seed (not sterile non-native) for reclamation, ideally sourced from the same region/habitat.	KoBold's response to Item MMD-7, above, regarding the BLM-provided seed mix addresses this recommendation as well.

V. Office of the State Engineer (OSE) – Hydrology Bureau Comments

No.	Comment Summary	Response
OSE-1	If groundwater is encountered during drilling, the applicant must submit plugging plans of operation (Form WD-08), with accompanying drilling and lithologic logs, for OSE approval before plugging.	Acknowledged.
OSE-2	Given the geologic complexity and the distance between boreholes, OSE suggests that a unique plugging plan be submitted for each borehole.	Acknowledged.

VI. Forestry Division Comments

No.	Comment Summary	Response
FOR-1	Proposed activities have the potential to adversely affect the State Endangered <i>Peniocereus greggii</i> var. <i>greggii</i> (night-blooming cereus); known occurrences are adjacent to the project area, suitable habitat is present, and the species is cryptic, so additional undocumented individuals may be present.	KoBold acknowledges this risk and will brief field crews on identification of <i>Peniocereus greggii</i> var. <i>greggii</i> prior to mobilization, so that any additional individuals encountered in the field are recognized and avoided.
FOR-2	The Spring 2026 biological survey found the project was designed to avoid known individuals with a 10-meter buffer. If additional individuals are found during implementation and cannot be avoided, an Incidental Take Permit from the Forestry Division may be required before disturbance.	Acknowledged.
FOR-3	Forestry recommends temporary protective fencing around State Endangered plants within 30 meters of construction/drilling activity to prevent inadvertent damage.	KoBold's response to Item MMD-8, above, addresses this recommendation as well.

Additional Application Updates

We have removed the road disturbance on Still Ridge Rd from the application, as this work is no longer required due to the county's planned improvements.

Additionally, we would like to include an alternative water source we are planning to utilize, separate from the commercial supply. We may shift to using groundwater sourced from the private parcel where we are working.

Please let us know if MMD or any of the reviewing agencies would find it helpful to discuss any of the items above further. We are glad to provide supporting documentation (schematics, draft plans, correspondence, or permits) as it becomes available, and we appreciate the agencies' time in reviewing this application.

Sincerely,

Claire Sebald

Curiosity Exploration LLC

Exhibit A

Attached in PDF Maps.

Exhibit B

A landowner letter will be attached soon.

Exhibit C

Steins Phase I:

ST25P-5

ST-PP-009

ST25P-6

ST25P-8

Steins Phase II:

ST25P-9

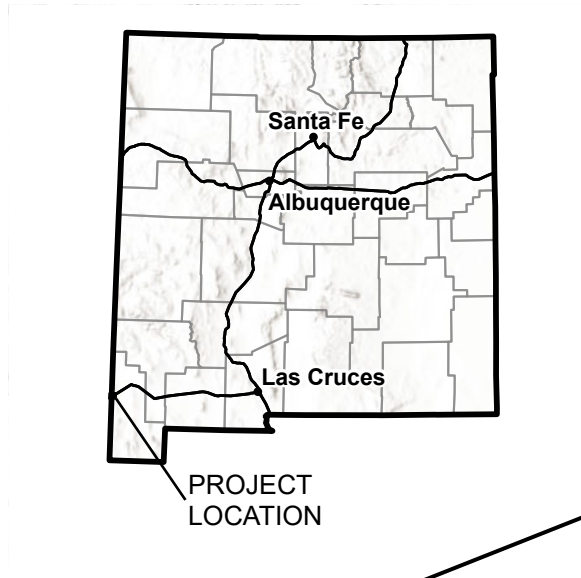
ST25P-4

ST25P-2

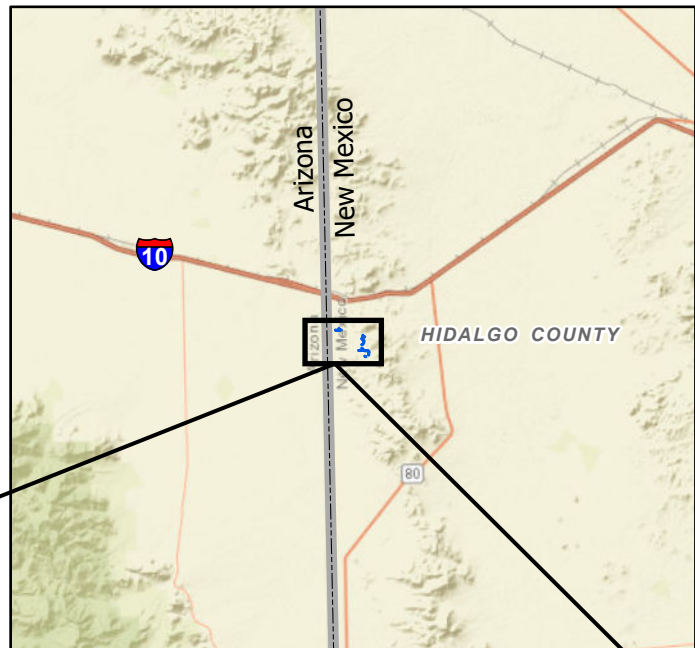
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ST25P-1

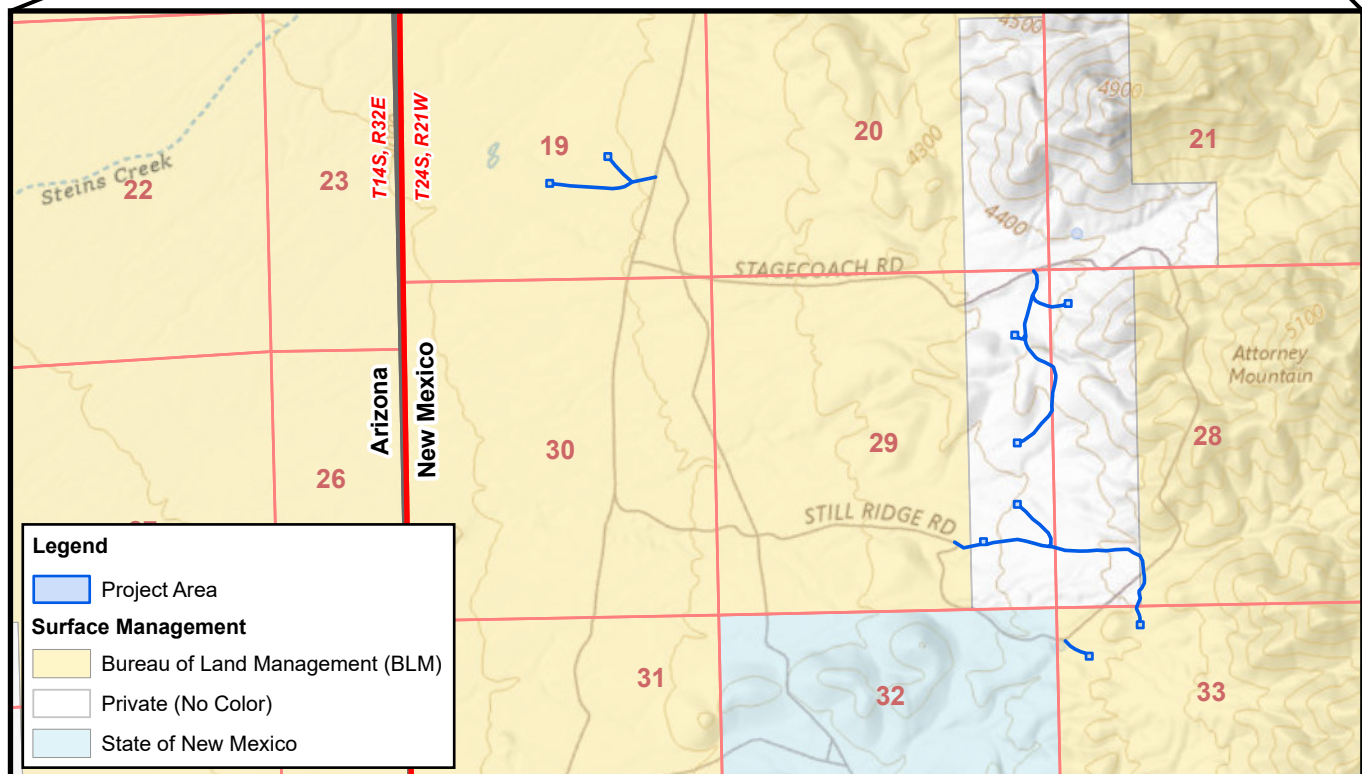
NEW MEXICO

PROJECT
LOCATION

PROJECT VICINITY



Approximate Scale 1 inch equals 10 miles



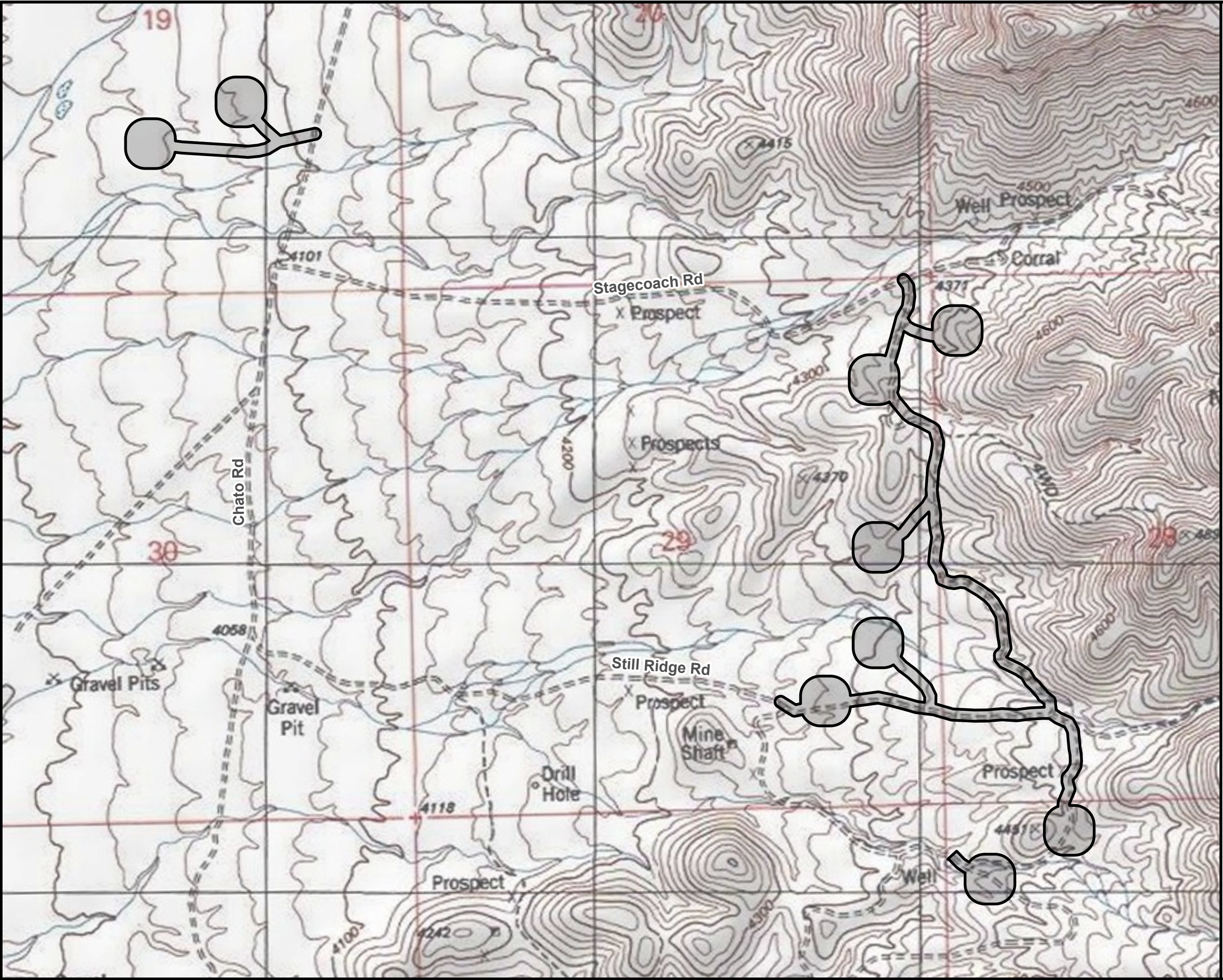
T24S, R21W, Portions of Sections 19, 28, 29, 32, and 33,
Hidalgo County, New Mexico
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N
Surface Management: BLM ArcGIS service accessed 08/28/2026
Image Source: ArcGIS Online, World Street Map
and USGS TNM Topo Base Map

CURIOSITY EXPLORATION
Steins Exploratory Drilling Project
Minimal Impact Exploration
Operation Permit Application

VICINITY MAP

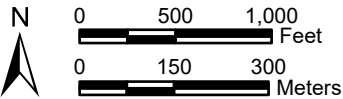
Figure 1





T24S, R21W, Portions of Sections 19,
28, 29, 32, and 33,
Hidalgo County, New Mexico
Vanar USGS 7.5' Quadrangle
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

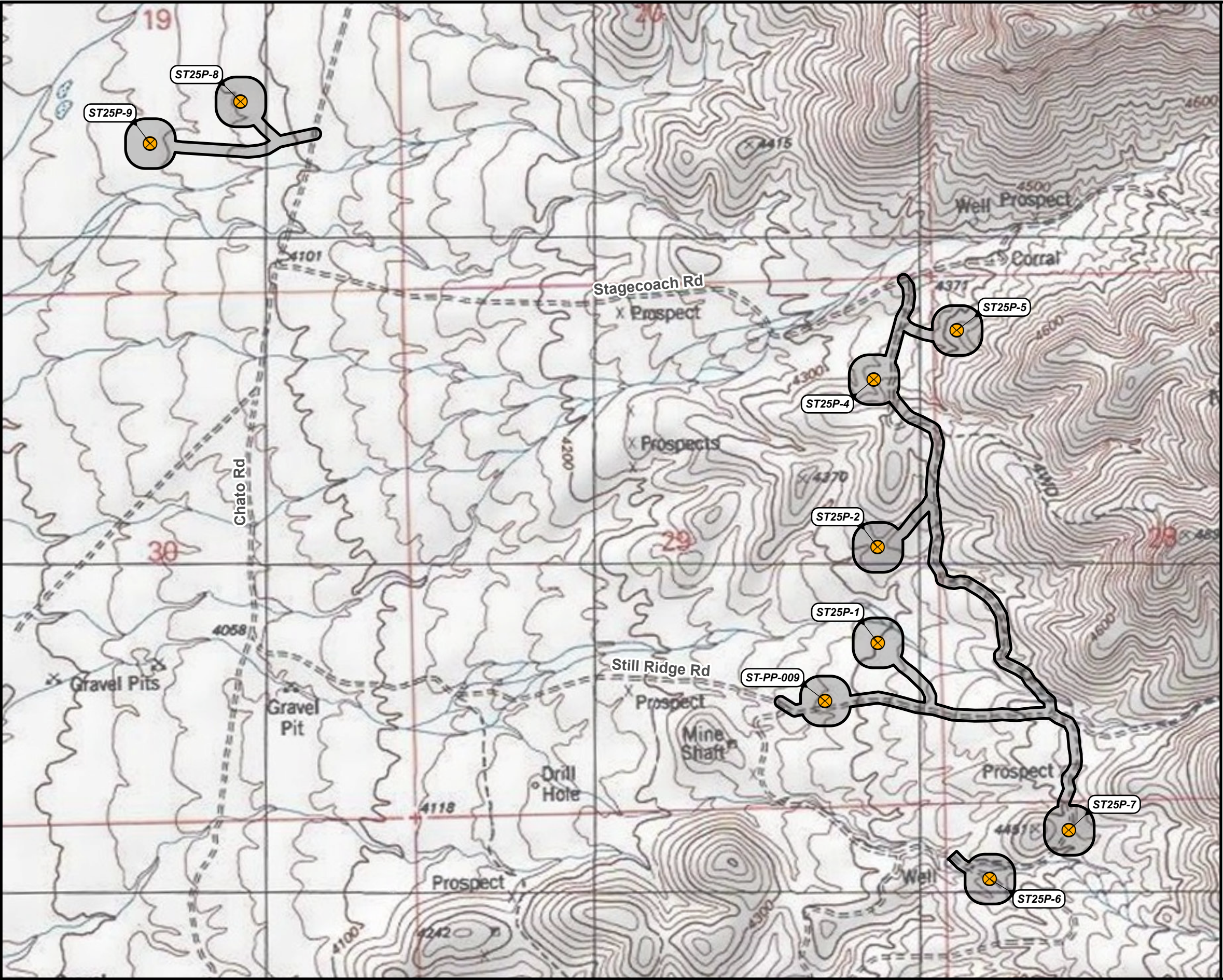
Legend
Permit Area



WestLand Engineering & Environmental Services

CURIOSITY EXPLORATION
Steins Exploratory Drilling Project
Minimal Impact Exploration Operation
Permit Application

PERMIT AREA
Figure 2



T24S, R21W, Portions of Sections 19,
28, 29, 32, and 33,
Hidalgo County, New Mexico
Vanar USGS 7.5' Quadrangle
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

Legend

-  Drill Hole
-  Permit Area

N

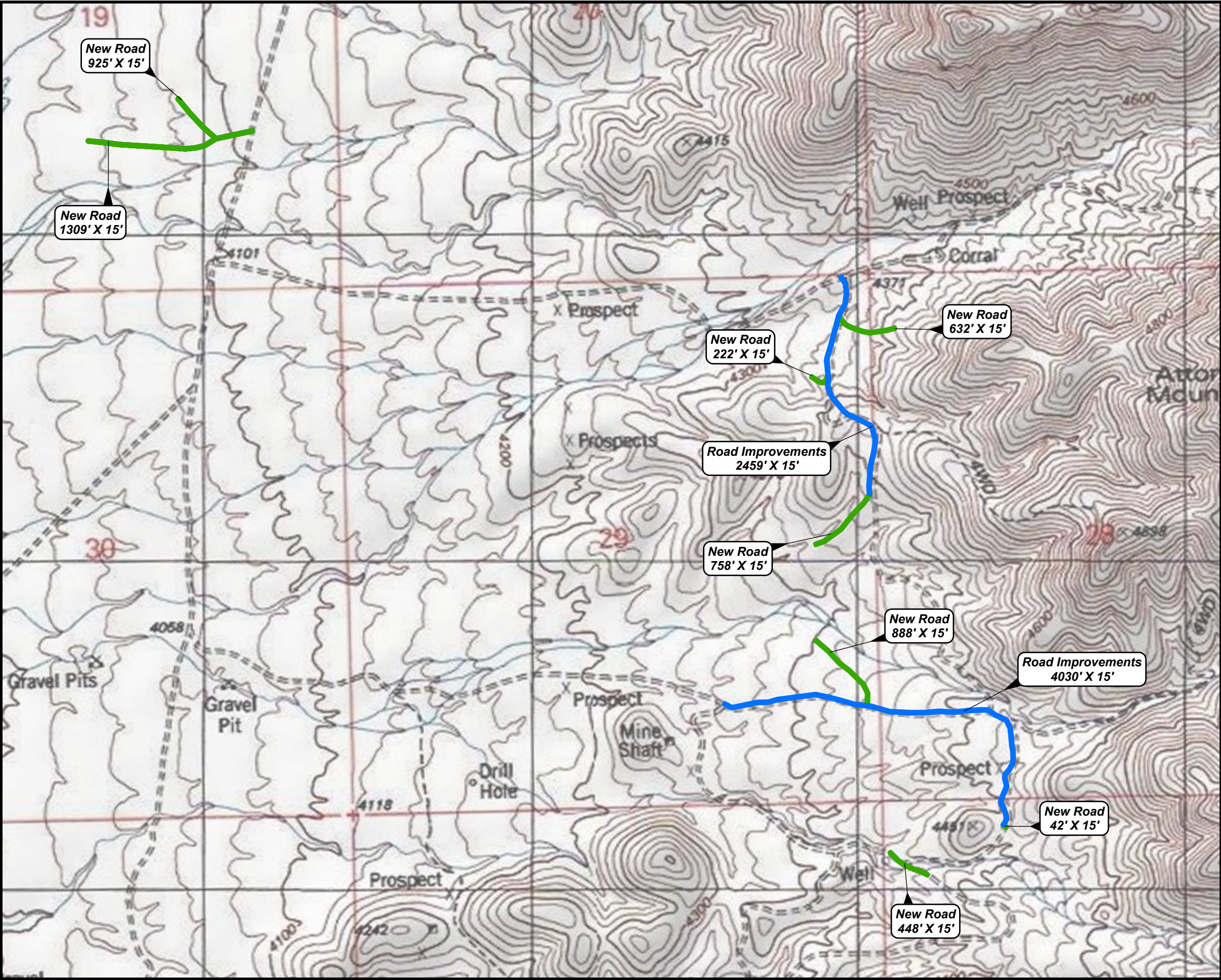
0 500 1,000 Feet

0 150 300 Meters

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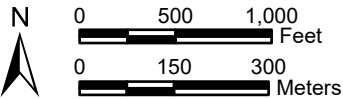
CURIOSITY EXPLORATION
Steins Exploratory Drilling Project
Minimal Impact Exploration Operation
Permit Application

BOREHOLE/EXPLORATION LOCATIONS
Figure 3



T24S, R21W, Portions of Sections 19,
28, 29, 32, and 33,
Hidalgo County, New Mexico
Vanar USGS 7.5' Quadrangle
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

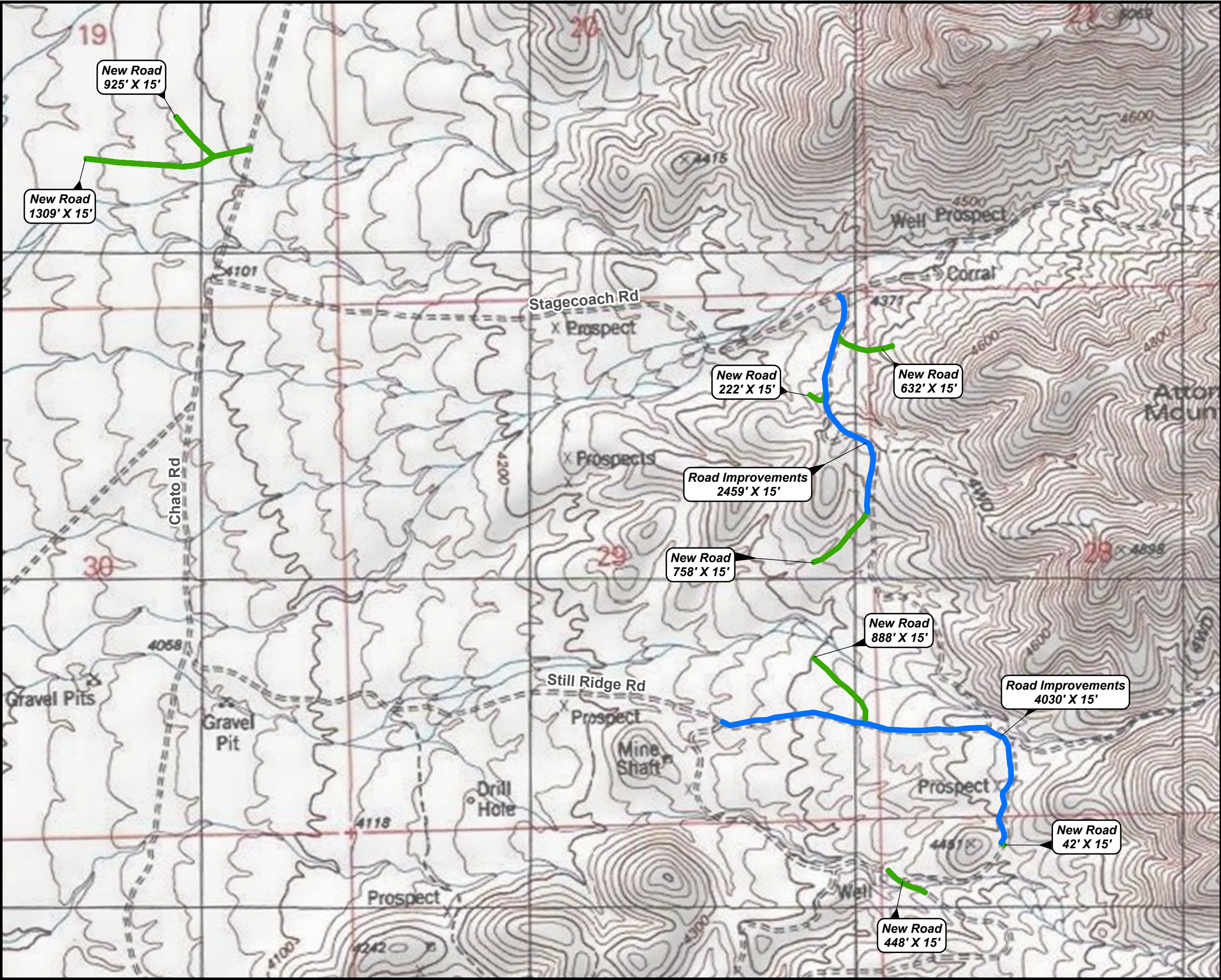
- Legend**
- New Road
 - Road Improvements



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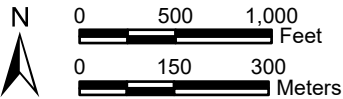
CURIOSITY EXPLORATION
Steins Exploratory Drilling Project
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Permit Application

EXISTING ROADS AND NEW ROADS
Figure 4



T24S, R21W, Portions of Sections 19, 28, 29, 32, and 33, Hidalgo County, New Mexico
Vanar USGS 7.5' Quadrangle
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

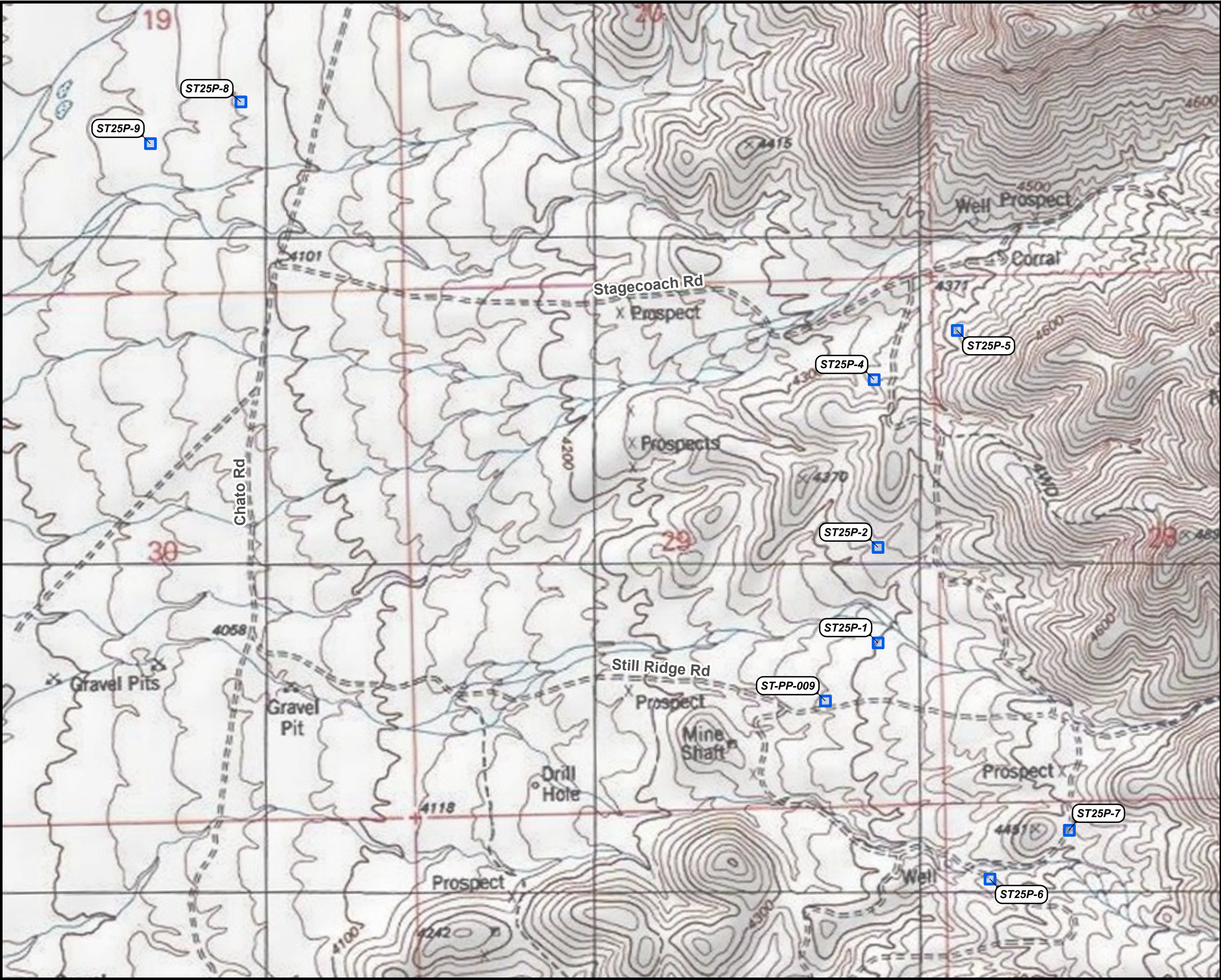
- Legend**
- New Road
 - Road Improvements



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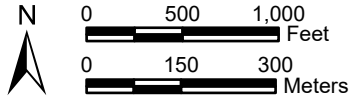
CURIOSITY EXPLORATION
Steins Exploratory Drilling Project
Minimal Impact Exploration Operation
Permit Application

AREAS OF ROAD IMPROVEMENT
Figure 5



T24S, R21W, Portions of Sections 19,
28, 29, 32, and 33,
Hidalgo County, New Mexico
Vanar USGS 7.5' Quadrangle
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

Legend
Drill Pad



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CURIOSITY EXPLORATION
Steins Exploratory Drilling Project
Minimal Impact Exploration Operation
Permit Application

DRILL PAD LOCATIONS
Figure 6