



October 8, 2013

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**LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL  
POLICY OFFICE**

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Dear Interested Party:

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the Butte Highlands Joint Venture's (BHJV) proposed underground gold mine in the Highland Mountains south of Butte. An electronic copy of the Draft EIS is posted on DEQ's web site (<http://deq.mt.gov/eis.mcpix>). DEQ will hold a public meeting and accept verbal and written comments on the Draft EIS on Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup> from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the Anselmo/Badger Room at the Copper King Convention Center, 4655 Harrison Ave, Butte Montana.

BHJV submitted an application for an operating permit in May of 2010. An electronic copy of BHJV's application is posted at <http://deq.mt.gov/hardrock/default.mcpix>. Pursuant to Section 82-4-337, MCA, DEQ determined that the application was complete and compliant. Pursuant to Section 82-4-337, MCA, DEQ issued Draft Operating Permit No. 00178 in December of 2012. Issuance of this draft operating permit as a final operating permit is the proposed state action that is subject to an environmental review under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).

The Draft EIS prepared by DEQ under MEPA for the proposed underground mine analyzes in detail a No Action Alternative, a Proposed Action Alternative (the mine operation described in BHJV's operating permit application), an Agency-Mitigated Mine Alternative, and two haul route alternatives. ARM 17.4.617 requires DEQ to identify in an environmental impact statement the agency's preferred alternative, if there is one, and the reasons for the preference. DEQ's preferred mine alternative is the Agency-Mitigated Alternative. The Agency-Mitigated Alternative expands the groundwater monitoring plan to include more sampling and monitoring points and moves the water treatment facility from within the underground mine to the surface to enhance maintenance of the treatment facility and provide flexibility in the type of treatment facility that may be used. DEQ does not have a preferred alternative in regard to the haul routes.

The Draft EIS is not a final decision. The preferred alternative could change in response to public comment on the Draft EIS, new information, or new analysis that might be needed in preparing the Final EIS.

Comments on the Draft EIS may be submitted electronically using the following e-mail address [buttehighlandscomments@mt.gov](mailto:buttehighlandscomments@mt.gov). Written comments, and any questions regarding the environmental review, may also be submitted to the following address:

Jeffrey Frank Herrick  
Department of Environmental Quality  
P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59601  
406-444-3276

Comments on the Draft EIS must be submitted to DEQ no later than November 9, 2013.

The DEQ will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who wish to participate in the meeting. If you require an accommodation, please contact Lisa Peterson at 406-444-2929 or [lpeterson@mt.gov](mailto:lpeterson@mt.gov).

I welcome and look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracy Stone-Manning", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

