



Montana Department of Environmental Quality

PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Date: December 19, 2013

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Golden Sunlight Mine's proposed amendment for its operating permit (00065) prepared by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). You can obtain an electronic version of the final EIS on DEQ's web site:
<http://deq.mt.gov/eis.mcp.x>.

The Golden Sunlight Mine is an existing open pit gold mine located near Whitehall, Montana. The state of Montana issued Operating Permit No. 00065 to the mine in 1972. DEQ has previously approved fourteen amendments to the operating permit, several of which have allowed expansion of the mine. In September of 2012, DEQ received GSM's application for Amendment 15, which would allow further expansion of the Mineral Hill Pit and the mining of a new pit located to the north of the Mineral Hill Pit. On April 30, 2013, DEQ determined the company's application for Amendment 15 was complete and compliant and issued a draft permit for the proposed expansion, pursuant to Section 82-4-337, MCA.

DEQ issued a draft EIS on September 17, 2013 that included a detailed statement on the environmental impacts of a No Action Alternative, a Proposed Action Alternative (the company's proposal), an Agency-Modified Alternative, and a North Area Pit Backfill Alternative.

DEQ has chosen the Agency-Modified Alternative as the preferred alternative because it is more protective of water quality. In the analysis, DEQ concludes that if the North Area pit were backfilled the mine would not be able to implement a secondary water capture system if pump back wells were to fail. The Agency-Modified Alternative is the same as the Proposed Action Alternative, except it requires the mine to implement closure and geodetic and ground-movement monitoring for the North Area Pit and the East Waste Rock Dump expansion area to ensure safe access and to keep reclamation cover systems working. In addition, the Agency-Modified Alternative requires the preparation of a detailed bat and raptor reclamation plan for the North Area Pit highwall to ensure some utility to wildlife.

DEQ's decision on a preferred alternative was made after reviewing public comments on the draft EIS and completing additional environmental analysis in response to those comments. DEQ will set forth its final decision in a record of decision (ROD) in no less than 15 days from the transmittal of this final EIS to the public, Environmental Quality Council, and office of the Governor, per ARM 17.4.620.

DEQ appreciates the public's involvement in preparing the final EIS. Additional copies are available from DEQ (contact Kristi Ponozzo, 406-444-2813), or on the DEQ web site. A copy of the ROD will be sent to everybody who receives the final EIS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tracy Stone-Manning".

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality