



Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: ARRA: Vulcan Iron Mine-AML Safety Installations
Project ID: 09-moja-040/PEPC 26737

Project Description: Mojave National Preserve is receiving funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to construct safety installations at abandoned mine lands (AML) throughout the park. One of these projects is at the Vulcan Iron Mine, which is a popular destination for visitors but which also has a number of safety hazards.

The Vulcan Iron mine dates back to World War II. It consists of a large open pit, three prospect pits, and an adit/explosive locker, as well as many historic building and equipment foundations and other historic features. The open pit is approximately 2,700 feet around and 200 plus feet deep from the top of the pit wall.

This site has been an popular destination for park visitors both for its history and for family camping. The history of the Vulcan Iron Mine is intimately tied to the Kelso Depot, the Preserve's main visitor center. Although vehicle access has been blocked, visitors climb around and access the top of the pit.

ARRA funds will be used to install 4,131 linear foot chain-link fence around the pit with a gate on the access road to the bottom. The location of the fence keeps activity in previously disturbed areas, keeps vehicles off of road segments that are revegetating, and limits access to dangerous slopes and pit walls and keeps workers from steep terrain. The selected contractor will provide all labor, materials, and other expenses.

Project Locations:

Location

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|----------|----|
| County: | San Bernardino | State: | CA |
| District: | Kelso | Section: | |
| Geo. Marker: | N386508 E630921 (GIS Point) | Other: | |

Mitigation(s):

- To minimize visual intrusions, the fence needs to be camouflaged in such a way that it will blend in with the surrounding environment. One option would be to spray it with a non-toxic, environmentally friendly treatment such as "Permeon" that will dull the finish of the fence to a brown color.
- Project leader has requested increased patrols of the Vulcan Mine site during construction, because of the contractor's staging area and storage of materials.
- No sign of bighorn sheep use at the Vulcan Mine at present. If bighorn use of the area is confirmed, the fence design will need to be modified to allow wildlife passage.
- The fence, as designed, does not ensure visitor safety. Therefore, the design must be altered so that the gate is locked at all times to prevent visitor access. Signs should also be installed to provide directions and interpretive information, and to indicate danger. They should be placed at strategic points to discourage visitors from climbing over or going under the fence.

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Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

C.17 Construction of fencing enclosures or boundary fencing posing no effect on wildlife migrations.

Mojave National Preserve staff has completed an interdisciplinary review of the proposed action. Several concerns were expressed with regard to visual impacts, placement of the fence line, effectiveness of the fence design in ensuring visitor safety, wildlife use of and access to the water-filled pit, and the need for appropriate signage for danger warnings, directions, and interpretive purposes. The mitigations listed in this categorical exclusion address these concerns.

In summary, the fence design must be adjusted to reduce visual intrusion, maximize visitor safety, and allow for wildlife access, as necessary. The project leader needs to pursue signage options with the relevant park program managers – e.g., chief of interpretation for interpretive signage, and the chief ranger and/or chief of maintenance for warning and directional signage. The gate on the fence must be kept locked at all times, thereby preventing visitor access to the mine site and its associated dangers. The project leader needs to coordinate with the chief ranger increased patrols at and around the Vulcan Mine site during fence construction.

These mitigations should adequately address the impacts identified during the environmental review process. There are no other significant adverse impacts to the natural or cultural resources of Mojave National Preserve. Impairment is not expected to result from the construction of the proposed enclosure fence. Therefore, with the abovelisted mitigations incorporated into the project, Mojave National Preserve may proceed with this fencing installation at the Vulcan Mine.

On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances (e.g. all boxes in the ESF are marked "no") or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.

Park Superintendent / Date:

DENNIS SCHRAMM/

Lawrence J. Whalen 8/5/09

NPS Contact Person:

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Title:

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