



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mojave NPres
Date: 05/11/2010

Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: **Stabilization of the Bighorn Mine Residence**

Project Number: **10-moja-040/PEPC 31177**

Project Description:

Although funded as a Condition Assessment and Treatment Plan, environmental factors have affected this property in such a manner as to necessitate emergency stabilization of the structure. Approval has been granted to use the funds to this end. Half of the building at this point has collapsed with the remaining standing structure in eminent danger of collapsing as well.

Original description follows: This residence is located at the southeastern base of the Hidden Hills and is part of the Hidden Hill Mining District in the south central portion of Mojave National Preserve. Although little is known at present about the history of the mine and residence, it is known that the house was built prior to 1933. At that time, a W.E. Wilson was the Bighorn Mine operator and primary investors Herbert and Anna von Wagenheim were living on site at the mine to keep watch over their interests. It is also known that the Bighorn Mine operation was one of the customers to which the historic 7IL Ranch cattle operation (under the proprietorship of Mark and Mary Pettit at the time) delivered beef.

The "Hilltop House" residence at the Bighorn Mine is known to have been a gathering place for local miners, ranchers, and homesteaders for holidays and other celebrations. It is the long-term goal of the Park to preserve this structure and an NRHP nomination for the mine and residence will be prepared shortly. No study of this structure's present condition and integrity, or of potential threats has, however, been conducted by a qualified historic preservation specialist. The "Hilltop House" residence is one of the most substantially built and uniquely designed residences still standing in-situ on the historic mining landscape of the East Mojave Desert and is of considerable historic significance. It is the intent of the present proposal to provide suitable planning to assure the long-term preservation of the existing residence at the mine site before further deterioration or vandalism makes stabilization impossible. Upon last observation, severe deterioration of structural elements make this resource one of limited life expectancy in its present state of affairs although, as stated above, no studies of the condition of the structure nor of the threats to it have been conducted by a qualified preservation specialist or structural engineer. Although little is known at present about the ongoing rate of environmental deterioration of the residence it has been observed that concerned anonymous visitors to the property have levered beams up underneath split and broken roof beams in an effort to support a caving roof infrastructure. Outer walls and some porch supports were also noted as missing or deteriorated due to exposure to the elements with no past preservation efforts to arrest this deterioration. A cursory internal and external inspection of this structure warns of immediate threat of collapse of the roof (which has holes in it allowing rain and winds in) with other dependent structural elements soon to follow in suit. This structure was last visited over a year ago. No formal evaluation has ever been made concerning the condition of the structure or of potential threats to it.

Project Location:

Location

County: San Bernardino

State: CA

District: Hidden Hills

Section: Hidden Hills Mining District

Geo. Marker:

Other:

Mitigation(s):

- **No mitigations identified**

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.4 Routine maintenance and repairs to cultural resource sites, structures, utilities and grounds under an approved Historic Structures Preservation Guide or Cyclic Maintenance Guide; or if the action would not adversely affect the cultural resource.

Mojave National Preserve staff has completed an interdisciplinary review of the proposed action. This action falls within Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Streamlined Review under the 2008 Service-wide Programmatic Agreement, 1) Preservation Maintenance and Repair of Historic Properties. It can proceed without further review or consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer. The reviewers did not identify potential adverse impacts to the natural resources or other cultural resources of Mojave National Preserve. It is, therefore, concluded that impairment will not result from the implementation of the proposed action. Mojave National Preserve staff may proceed with stabilization treatments of the Bighorn Mine residence.

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 or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.

Park Superintendent/

DENNIS SCHRAMM/

Date:

5/24/10

NPS Contact Person:

DANETTE WOO/

Title:

Environmental Compliance Specialist

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