

Ochoa Mine Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Carlsbad Field Office, New Mexico

August 2013

BLM/NM/PL-13-05-1610



BLM Mission Statement

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for stewardship of our public lands. The BLM is committed to manage, protect and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people. Management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our nation's resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology. These resources include recreation, rangelands, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife habitat, wilderness, air and scenic quality, as well as scientific and cultural values.



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Pecos District
Carlsbad Field Office
620 E. Greene
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88220-6292
www.blm.gov/nm

In Reply Refer To:

Dear Reader:

Attached is the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Ochoa Mine Project. The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared the DEIS to address the effects of allowing Intercontinental Potash Corporation USA (ICP) to develop and operate mining and processing operations partly on BLM-managed public land and minerals and partly on state and private lands. The proposed new mine in southern Lea County, New Mexico, approximately 40 miles southeast of Carlsbad, would extract polyhalite ore for the production of the sulfate of potash. As proposed by ICP, the project involves two separate operations: mining polyhalite ore from an underground formation and processing the raw polyhalite to produce marketable products. The final products would be transported by truck to a loadout facility near Jal, New Mexico, to be loaded on trains and shipped to markets. The proposed project would operate for 50 years.

The project area as proposed by ICP encompasses 31,134 acres of which approximately 2,400 acres would be disturbed. The new surface disturbance would include construction and operation of mining, office, and processing facilities, development of up to 8 brackish water wells, an 11-mile new water pipeline, and a railroad loadout facility near Jal, New Mexico. Processing would require pumping a maximum of 4,000 gallons per minute of groundwater from the Capitan Reef Aquifer. The surface land ownership consists of approximately 22 percent public lands managed by the BLM, 53 percent owned by the State of New Mexico, and 25 percent privately owned. Approximately 55 percent of the minerals within the proposed mine area is owned by the federal government.

The 45-day comment period begins with publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register. Actual dates will be published on the website listed below. The purpose of the comment period is to ensure that the Final EIS includes an appropriate range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action and that the effects analysis is complete, appropriately presenting and interpreting the available information. You will find that this DEIS analyzes the environmental effects of the Proposed Action, three action alternatives, and the No Action Alternative. Alternate tailings management, processing facilities siting, and co-development options are included in the analysis. We have not yet chosen a preferred alternative for this project and are seeking public comment. The final preferred alternative may combine aspects of the existing alternatives.

You may submit written comments on the DEIS by hand delivery, U.S. postal mail, facsimile, and electronic mail (Email). Only comments received during the 45-day period following the publication of the NOA will be considered prior to a decision on the proposed project. Only parties who offer comment during this period will be granted the right to appeal the decision.

Copies by postal mail should be sent to Ochoa Mines DEIS Project Manager, 620 E Greene St., Carlsbad, NM 88220. Hand delivery of written comments to the same address may occur between 7:45 am and 4:30 pm Monday through Friday excluding Federal holidays. Facsimiles may be sent to 575-234-9264, and email to blm_nm_cfo_comments@blm.gov. Envelopes and the subject line of emails and facsimiles should be identified as "Ochoa Mine Project DEIS"

Comments on the DEIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to pages, sections, and chapters of the DEIS. Comments may address the adequacy of specific analyses in the DEIS and the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the document (refer to Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR 1503.3).

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses, will be considered part of the public record on this DEIS and are available for public inspection. Comments, including names and addresses, may be published as part of the Final EIS. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review, or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), you must state this clearly at the beginning of your written comments. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request that submissions be withheld from public record by showing how the FOIA permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect confidential business information. The requester will be informed of the BLM decision regarding the request for confidentiality. Where the request is denied, the comments will be returned to the requester, and the requester will be notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Anonymous comments do not create standing or a record of participation. All submissions from organizations or businesses will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

For further information on this DEIS, please contact David Herrell, Project Manager, or Shiva Achet, Planning and Environmental Coordinator at the Carlsbad Field Office.

Phone: 575-234-2229 or 575-234-5924
Email: dherrell@blm.gov, sachet@blm.gov
Project Website: <http://www.nm.blm.gov/cfo/ochoaMine/>

Thank you for your interest in public land management. We look forward to receiving your comments on the DEIS.

Sincerely,



Jim Stovall
Field Manager

**Draft
Environmental Impact Statement
Ochoa Mine Project**

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Carlsbad Field Office

Cooperating Agencies: City of Eunice, New Mexico
City of Jal, New Mexico
New Mexico Environment Department
U.S. Department of Energy, Carlsbad Field Office

Project Location: Lea County, New Mexico

Correspondence on this EIS
Should be Directed to: Ochoa Mine Project EIS Project Lead
BLM Carlsbad Field Office
620 East Greene Street
Carlsbad, NM 88220

Date Draft EIS Notice of Availability
Published in Federal Register: August 9, 2013

Date by Which Comments Must
be Received by the BLM: September 23, 2013

ABSTRACT

Intercontinental Potash Corporation USA (ICP) is proposing to develop a new mine in southern Lea County, New Mexico, to extract polyhalite ore for the production of the sulfate of potash. Sulfate of potash production involves two separate operations. The first operation is to mine raw polyhalite approximately 1,500 feet underground in the Rustler formation. Once mined, the polyhalite would be hoisted to the surface and processed to produce saleable products. The final products would be moved by truck to a loadout facility near Jal, New Mexico, to be loaded on trains and shipped to markets.

The Proposed Action Alternative would require approximately 2,400 acres of new surface disturbance, construction and operation of office and processing facilities, development of up to 8 brackish water wells, an 11-mile new water pipeline, construction and operation of a railroad loadout facility near Jal, New Mexico, and the pumping of a maximum of 4,000 gallons per minute of groundwater from the Capitan Reef Aquifer. The proposed project would operate for 50 years.

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement analyzes the environmental effects of the Proposed Action, three action alternatives, and the No Action Alternative.

Responsible Official for the EIS: Jim Stovall
Field Manager
Carlsbad Field Office