

Ochoa Mine Project Environmental Impact Statement



Bulletin #2

What is the Ochoa Mine Project EIS?

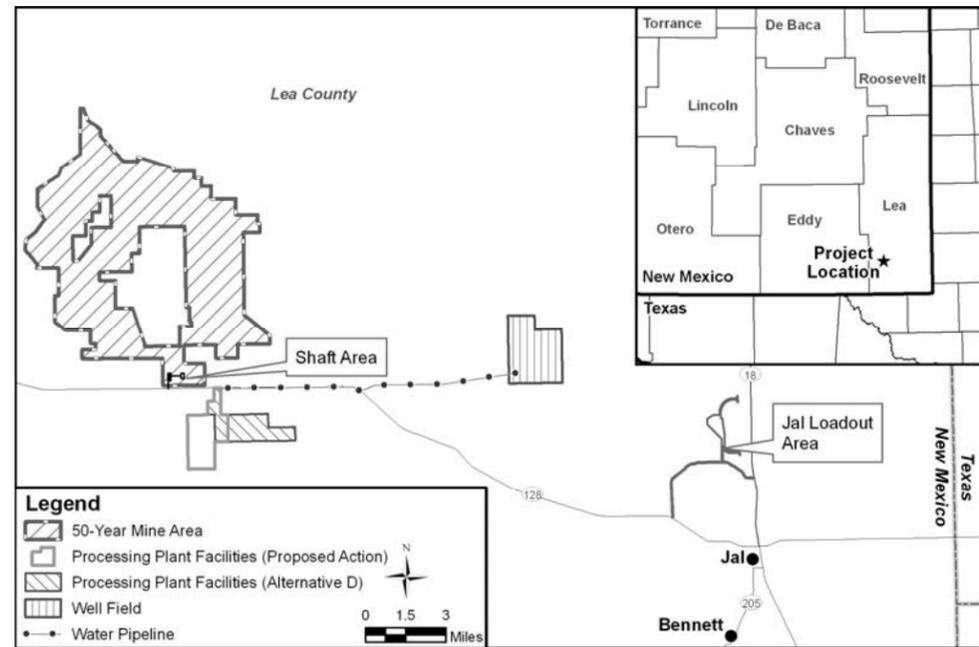
Intercontinental Potash USA (ICP) proposes to develop a new mine in southern Lea County, New Mexico, to extract polyhalite ore for the production of sulfate of potash (SOP) for use as fertilizer. A portion of the proposed project is located on land managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM Carlsbad Field Office determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required. A Draft EIS was prepared under the guidance of the BLM Carlsbad Field Office to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. The BLM is the lead agency and decision maker.

There are two primary operations to get the ore to a finished fertilizer product. The first operation is to mine raw polyhalite approximately 1,500 feet underground in the Rustler Formation. Once mined, the polyhalite is hoisted to the surface and transported to the processing facilities where it is crushed, calcined, leached, and granulated to produce SOP, the saleable product. The final product would be moved by truck to a facility near Jal, New Mexico, to be loaded on trains and shipped. The total water demand for the Ochoa Project is projected to be approximately 4,000 gallons per minute supplied by deep, non-potable, brackish water from the Capitan Aquifer. The source of the water would be approximately 8 wells in the well field shown on the map below.

The EIS is a disclosure document that assists the BLM in their decision-making process. It provides a comprehensive analysis of potential environmental impacts that could result from project development based on available data and modeling, a review of applicable mitigation measures to minimize identified impacts, and a rigorous examination of reasonable alternatives. The decisions to be made by the BLM are whether to approve ICP's Ochoa Mine Operation and Closure Plan, requested rights-of-way, and preference right leases, and if so, under what terms and conditions.

Return to:

BLM Carlsbad Field Office
620 East Greene Street
Carlsbad, NM 88220



Where is the BLM in the EIS process?

The Ochoa Mine Project Draft EIS will soon be available for public review. A Notice of Availability will be published in the *Federal Register* on August 9, 2013, notifying the public that the Draft EIS is available for review and comment. On that date, the Draft EIS will be available for downloading from the project website : <http://www.nm.blm.gov/cfo/ochoaMine/>.

The BLM encourages your participation and comments on the adequacy of the environmental analyses during the 45-day public comment period. The BLM will be hosting three public meetings to receive your comments during the Draft EIS public comment period. (See other information in this Bulletin for details on the public meetings and how to submit comments.)

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS

Need more information?

Ochoa Mine DEIS Project Manager
BLM Carlsbad Field Office
620 East Greene St.
Carlsbad, NM 88220
(575) 234-2229 or (575) 234-5924
Email: dherrell@blm.gov or sachet@blm.gov
Website: <http://www.nm.blm.gov/cfo/ochoaMine/>

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Public Comment Meetings

Location: National Cave and Karst Research Institute
400-1 Cascades Avenue
Carlsbad, NM 88220

Date: August 27, 2013 **Time:** 4:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Woolworth Community Library
100 E Utah Ave
Jal, NM 88252

Date: August 28, 2013 **Time:** 10:00 – 12:00p.m.

Location: New Mexico Junior College
Training and Outreach Building
5317 N Lovington Hwy
Hobbs, New Mexico 88240

Date: August 28, 2013 **Time:** 4:00 – 6:30 p.m.

How was the EIS prepared?

BLM conducted public scoping for the Ochoa Mine Project in January 2012. Public scoping meetings were held on January 23 and 24, 2012 in Carlsbad, Jal, and Hobbs, New Mexico. During the 30-day public scoping period, BLM received 125 separate comments from 21 individuals. A majority of the comments received were related to the potential impacts associated with the mining process, including potential impacts to groundwater, oil and gas operations, as well as socioeconomics.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that a reasonable range of alternatives for the proposed project be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated (40 CFR 1502.14). Based on the initial project description and scoping input, the BLM evaluated many alternatives of which five were identified to be analyzed in detail in the EIS. The five alternatives analyzed in detail are briefly described in the following table. **At the current time, the BLM has not selected a preferred alternative and is seeking input from the public before making a selection in the Final EIS.**

No Action	Deny approval of the proposed project and would not grant the requested rights-of-way and preference right leases. Current land and resource uses would continue under the current conditions and existing permits.
Alternative A—Proposed Action	Approve ICP's mine operation and closure plan; grant new rights-of-way, new water supply, new processing facilities and loadout facility, approve preference right leases, establish guidelines for mineral co-development
Alternative B—Reduced Tailings Stockpile	Approve the Proposed Action (Alternative A), but reduce the volume or height of the tailings stockpile to minimize visual impacts.
Alternative C—Concurrent Mineral Development Guidance	Approve the Proposed Action (Alternative A), but establish further guidance for managing co-development of potash and fluid minerals.
Alternative D—Alternative Location for Evaporation Ponds and Tailings Stockpile	Approve the Proposed Action (Alternative A), but move the location of the evaporation ponds and tailings stockpile to the east.

What are the key environmental impacts identified in the Draft EIS?

The Draft EIS evaluated and compared the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the individual resources (biological, cultural, human, etc.) for each of the alternatives. All of the action alternatives would use non-potable water from the Capitan Aquifer for processing, but would not affect shallow groundwater. Alternative A would result in visual impacts from project processing facilities and the tailings stockpile that would be reduced under Alternative B. Selected key impacts identified under the action alternatives (Alternatives A, B, C, and D) in the Ochoa Mine Project Draft EIS include the following:

Resource	Proposed Action (A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Water	Pumping of 4,000 gpm would result in max. groundwater draw-down of 650 ft.	Same as Proposed Action.	Same as Proposed Action.	Same as Proposed Action.
Subsidence	Potential for ground subsidence with a maximum of 0.6 foot.			
Solid Minerals	Potash (polyhalite) reserves would be recovered.			
Oil and Gas	Oil and gas resources in the project area would not be affected as the project includes management of co-development.			
Wildlife	Impacts from surface disturbance, habitat disruption, and fragmentation would be minor.	Same as Proposed Action.	Same as Proposed Action.	Same as Proposed Action, except an additional vegetation community (playa) would be modified.
Visual	Processing components would form a strong contrast against the existing landscape.	Slightly less impact than the Proposed Action.	Same as Proposed Action.	Less visual impacts to nearby landowners, but increased visibility of facilities from NM 128.
Socioeconomics	Direct employment increase of 1,400 short-term workers for construction; 496 long-term workers.			
	Projected increase in population, housing demands, mineral royalties, and taxes .			

Guidelines for Providing Effective Comments on a Draft EIS

- ✓ Become familiar with the contents of the Draft EIS, including the project's purpose and need.
- ✓ Understand the responsibilities of the federal lead agency.
- ✓ Recognize that potential impacts to resources may be described in more than one section because there are often interrelationships between the resources.
- ✓ Be specific; refer to page numbers, paragraphs, and section numbers in the Draft EIS.
- ✓ Support your statements with explanations, details, facts, and references, as appropriate.
- ✓ Submit comments if you find:
 - An error in the analysis that could affect a conclusion or the final decision.
 - New information that could change the analysis or outcome.
 - There is a need for clarification.
 - A substantially different alternative that meets the project's purpose and need, but was not considered in the Draft EIS.

How do I submit comments on the Draft EIS?

Your participation and comments on the Draft EIS are a vital part of the BLM's decision-making process. Comments should focus on whether the Draft EIS has sufficiently identified and evaluated the proposed project's environmental impacts and whether it adequately addressed ways to avoid or mitigate those impacts. The most effective comments are those that are concise and relevant to the Ochoa Mine Project Draft EIS. Please see "Guidelines for Providing Effective Comments on a Draft EIS."

You can submit your comments in the following ways:

- At the public meetings
- By email: nmco_comment@blm.gov
- By fax: (575) 885-9264
- By mail:

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BLM Carlsbad Field Office
620 East Greene Street
Carlsbad, NM 88220

Ochoa Mine Project EIS Timeline
Gray boxes indicate public comment opportunities.

