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

The Notice of Availability for the Final EIS will be published in the Federal Register on February 28, 2014. The project website will be updated with links to the Final EIS at that time.

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS

Need more information
Ochoa Mine Project EIS Project Lead
BLM Carlsbad Field Office
620 East Greene St.
Carlsbad, NM 88220
(575) 234-5972
Email: blm_nm_cfo_comments@blm.gov
Website: <http://www.nm.blm.gov/cfo/ochoaMine/>

Ochoa Mine Project Environmental Impact Statement

Bulletin #3

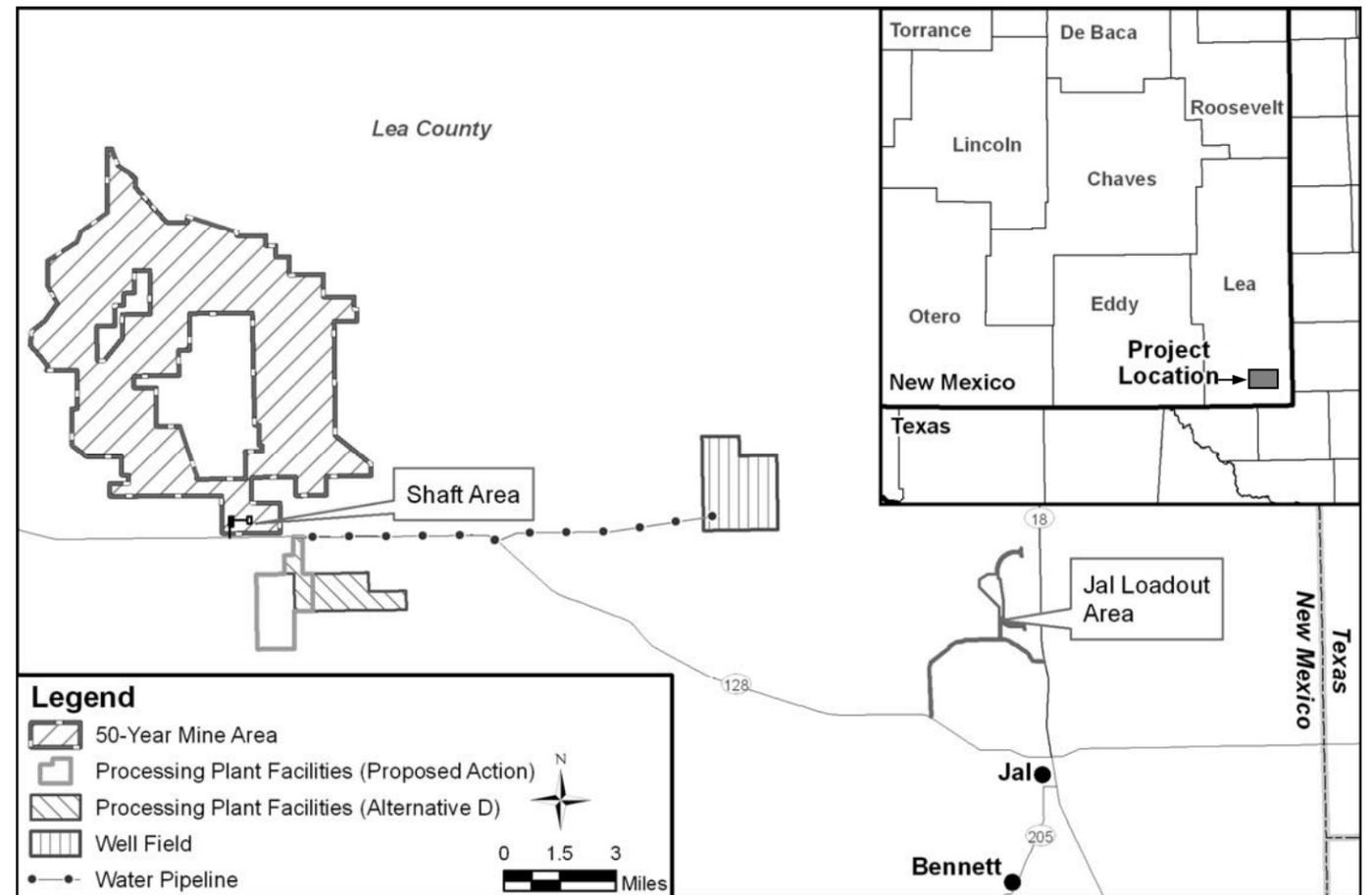


About the Ochoa Mine Project EIS

Intercontinental Potash, Corporation (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) and sulfate of potash magnesia (SPOM) for use as fertilizer. See figure below for the project location and boundaries. ICP currently holds 28 BLM prospecting permits (61,983 acres) and 18 New Mexico State Trust Land potash mining leases (27,804 acres).

A portion of the proposed project is located on land and would extract minerals 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. The EIS has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The BLM is the lead agency and decision maker. The decisions to be made by the BLM are whether to approve ICP's Ochoa Mine Plan of Operations, grant the necessary ROWs and preference right leases, and if so, under what terms and conditions.

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.



Ochoa Mine Project Environmental Impact Statement



How was the EIS prepared?

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

Based on the initial project description and scoping input, the BLM evaluated many possible alternatives of which four were identified to be analyzed in detail in the EIS. The NEPA requires that a reasonable range of alternatives for the proposed project be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated (40 CFR 1502.14). The required No Action Alternative (deny approval of the proposed project) and four action alternatives (A through D) were analyzed in detail and presented in the Draft EIS made available for public review and comment on August 9, 2013. During the 45-day public comment period from August 9 through September 23, 2013, the BLM received 29 comment letters on the Draft EIS, which were separated and categorized into 490 comments for which the BLM prepared responses.

Following careful consideration of the public comments on the Draft EIS, the BLM evaluated the components and potential impacts of each alternative, and developed a Preferred Alternative as a mix of the best aspects of Alternatives A, B and C. The Preferred Alternative incorporates the same proposed mine area, mining methods, facilities in the shaft area, processing site location and methods, water demands, well field, and water pipeline as the Proposed Action. Compared to the Proposed Action, the Preferred Alternative includes a smaller tailings stockpile; additional reclamation requirements; a more formalized co-development coordination process with stakeholders including a dispute resolution process; and additional requirements for the monitoring of water, subsidence, and dust. Monitoring plans will be made available on the project website (<http://www.nm.blm.gov/cfo/ochoaMine/>) when the Final EIS is published.

The Final EIS describes the details of the Preferred Alternative and analyzes its potential impacts along with the other alternatives previously evaluated. The Final EIS also incorporates updated information on recent oil and gas development and potential future fluid mineral development in the project area, and presents some minor changes to ICP's proposal based on updated engineering designs and coordination with other industries in the project area.

What were the key environmental impacts identified in the Final EIS?

The Final EIS evaluated and compared the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the individual resources (e.g. biological, cultural, physical, economics, etc.) for each of the alternatives. Under all action alternatives, ICP would use non-potable water from the Capitan Aquifer for all water uses including ore processing, construct new ore processing facilities and mine access, construct the rail loadout in Jal, and mine and ultimately reclaim mine facilities and structures according to an approved Mine Plan of Operations. Selected key impacts identified under the action alternatives (Alternatives A, B, C, D, and Preferred Alternative) in the Ochoa Mine Project Final EIS include the following:

Resource	Proposed Action (A): approve ICP's mine operation plan; approve lease modifications.	Alternative B: reduce volume or height of the tailings stockpile	Alternative C: establish formal guidance for managing concurrent development of minerals	Alternative D: alternative location for processing plant facilities	Preferred Alternative: combine features of Alternatives A, B, C, plus additional monitoring/mitigation and co-development requirements
Water	Pumping of 4,000 gallons per minute would result in maximum groundwater drawdown of 650 ft. in the well field over 50 years. No adverse impacts to shallow groundwater projected.				
Subsidence	Increased potential for subsidence with a maximum of 4 feet within 1,500 feet beyond the edge of the mine workings .				
Solid Minerals	Additional potash reserves would be recovered.				
Oil and Gas	Access to oil and gas resources in the project area would not change. Management of concurrent development is important.				
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 a playa vegetation community and playa habitat would be adversely affected.	Same as Proposed Action.
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 impacts from NM 128.	Same as Alternative B.
Socioeconomics	Increase of 1,400 short-term workers for construction; 496 long-term workers				
	Projected increase in population, housing demands, mineral royalties, and taxes .				

Next Steps

- ⇒ Publication of Notice of Availability of Final EIS in Federal Register
- ⇒ 30-day availability period of Final EIS (to obtain a copy, see project website or contact the BLM using information on the next page)
- ⇒ Issuance of the BLM's Record of Decision
- ⇒ 30-day appeal period for Record of Decision
- ⇒ Potential issuance of preference right leases and beginning construction (pending BLM decision)

Ochoa Mine Project EIS Timeline

Gray boxes indicate public comment opportunities in timeline below.

