



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Glenwood Springs Area Wildlife Office
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Glenwood Springs, CO 81601
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May 12, 2020

Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety
Attn: Stephanie Mitchell
101 S. 3rd St.
Suite 301
Grand Junction, CO 81501

RE: Rincon Materials Permit #M2020018

Dear Ms. Mitchell,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed gravel mining permit #M2020018 for Rincon Materials in Eagle County. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has a statutory responsibility to manage all wildlife species in Colorado; this responsibility is embraced and fulfilled through CPW's mission to protect, preserve, enhance and manage the wildlife of Colorado for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the people of the State and its visitors. CPW encourages the Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety and the applicant to afford the highest protections for Colorado's wildlife species and their habitats. CPW commends Rincon Materials on the quality of this application, which takes into consideration CPW's original comment letter on this property (submitted to the Town of Gypsum in 2016).

CPW understands that the proposal is to mine aggregate materials over the course of the next 10 years. The full reclamation, utilizing Colorado Parks & Wildlife recommended seed mixes, will occur in years 11 & 12. No blasting, refuse, or toxic materials are expected during the course of the project. The overall permit area is 106.7 acres and the overall disturbed area for Rincon Materials is 69.5 acres for the mining pits, road, conveyor route, facilities area, and sediment ponds. Mining, crushing, and screening will be on-demand year-round, but these activities will usually occur for no more than 7 months annually (with no night operation planned). The site will be reclaimed to native rangeland on the slopes and irrigated fields on the flats. The mining and reclamation activities will include 3 pits. Each pit will disturb 5-10 acres with only one active pit at a time. Interim reclamations will occur with each pit completion. Maximum disturbance at one time is reported in the application as 5-10 total acres of mining plus 9 acres for facilities.

The project area is mapped by CPW as the following wildlife uses: elk overall range, mule deer winter range, mule deer summer range, mule deer highway crossing, moose river corridor, peregrine falcon potential nesting habitat, bighorn sheep winter range, bighorn sheep summer range, and bighorn sheep summer concentration area. Of particular note is the alteration in use of this area by bighorn sheep in the past three years. This location has now become an important bighorn sheep production area. Considering the use of this landscape by wildlife, the following Best Management Practices (BMPs) are recommended.

Terrestrial Wildlife BMPs

The following measures are fully addressed in the proposal to minimize impacts on terrestrial wildlife species and their habitats. CPW would like to stress the importance of adhering to the described BMPs and supports the following practices.

- Adhere to the application guidelines of dust suppression. Minimizing dust coatings on adjacent vegetation will be important for reducing indirect impacts on wildlife habitats.
- Implementation of the weed monitoring and control plan will be imperative to minimize noxious weed infestations both during and after mining operations.
- Consulting with CPW during the reclamation phase.

Although elk and mule deer do utilize the proposed project site, bighorn sheep can be particularly sensitive to disturbance from large machinery or close human proximity. Bighorn sheep have been observed utilizing the proposed project area as well as the bordering public lands year-round (with an increase of use over the past three years being documented by CPW). Considering that Rincon Materials plans on mining and crushing materials for only 7 months out of the year, CPW recommends the following additional BMPs to accommodate new uses of the landscape by wildlife.

- Bighorn sheep production timing limitation on mining, crushing, and screening materials from April 15 - June 30.
- Peregrine nesting timing limitation on mining, crushing, and screening materials from March 15 to July 31.
- Exclusionary wildlife fencing should be implemented at strategic locations on the property. CPW does not recommend perimeter fencing around the entire property, only around the portions that are active and hazardous to wildlife (ie. the facility, the currently active pit, and any ponds). If the fencing is wildlife permeable, CPW recommends further consultation regarding slope ratios of pit walls and escape ramp designs for trapped wildlife.

Aquatic Habitats

The primary concern to aquatic habitats and fish species is potential sediment contributions through erosion and stormwater runoff events. In places, the proposed pits appear to be within 300 feet from the Colorado River which contains important habitat for trout and native fish species including bluehead suckers, flannelmouth suckers, roundtail chub, mottled sculpin and speckled dace. CPW recommends following the stormwater control and sediment containment measures found within the application to minimize sediment transport into the Colorado River. Following the application's intent of immediately seeding of the berms between the pit and the river should also be utilized to reduce erosion and unnecessary sediment transport into the river. CPW recommends using straw wattles, silt fencing, or other appropriate measures that were found in the application to reduce erosion and sediment transport until the new vegetation is established.

Additionally, CPW supports secondary containment measures for all fuel and hazardous materials storage facilities, as outlined in the application. If water is drawn from the Colorado River to fill water trucks or for other operation uses, CPW recommends that all hoses be screened with a foot valve and also be disinfected prior to their use.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to review and submit comments for this project. If there are any questions or needs for additional information, don't hesitate to contact NW Land Use Specialist, Danielle Neumann, at (970) 366-1223 or District Wildlife Manager, Brian Wodrich, at (970) 948-9166.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Matt Yamashita', with a stylized, cursive script.

Matt Yamashita, Area Wildlife Manager

Cc: Brian Wodrich, District Wildlife Manager
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