



STATE OF NEVADA

Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Jim Gibbons, Governor

Allen Biaggi, Director

Leo M. Drozdoff, P.E., Administrator

Notice of Proposed Action

The Administrator of the Division of Environmental Protection gives notice that an application for a renewal of a Water Pollution Control Permit for the Columbus Salt Marsh Project has been properly filed with the Division of Environmental Protection in Carson City. The applicant for renewal of Water Pollution Control Permit NEV0098104 is:

Ryan Brunson
Columbus Salt Marsh LLC
2441 West Horizon Ridge Parkway, Ste. #100
Henderson, NV 89052

The mine and process facility is located in Esmeralda County, Section 17, Township 3 North, Range 36 East, Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian, approximately 7 miles east of State Highway 95 between the town of Mina and Coaldale Junction.

The Columbus Salt Marsh Project is a mining and beneficiation operation with a maximum annual production rate of 792,000 tons of ore. Clay sediments are mined in a series of panels approximately 40 feet deep from the surface of the Columbus Salt Marsh and are either transported by truck to the Columbus process facility or slurried with water at the excavation site and conveyed to the process facility, where gravity and chemical separation methods are utilized to produce various grades of calcium carbonate and a precious metal concentrate. Clay tailings are returned to the excavation area where they are partially dried and then returned to the mined areas as backfill. Decant process water recovered during the drying process is recycled repeatedly back into the slurrification and beneficiation process. When the salinity of the recycled water increases to a concentration where it is no longer practical to recycle, the water is directed to a basin for evaporation and recovery of the salt product.

Process make-up water is obtained from a well located on the project site and is recycled back into the process when possible. Within the proposed sediment mining area a well has penetrated the artesian zone beneath the marsh. A protocol has been established to avoid operations within those areas where there is either surface water expression or a where artesian flow has been encountered. The Columbus Project is anticipated to disturb up to 380 acres of both public land and private fee land. Facilities are required to be designed, constructed, operated and closed without any discharge or release in excess of those standards established in the Permit or in regulation except for meteorological events which exceed the design storm event.

The Administrator is constrained to either issue the renewal Water Pollution Control Permit or to deny the application. The Administrator has made the tentative decision to issue the renewal permit.

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Persons wishing to comment upon the proposed Water Pollution Control Permit, to recommend terms and conditions for consideration of incorporation into the permit, or who request a public hearing pursuant to Nevada Administrative Code, NAC Chapter 445A, must submit their written comments, objections, or requests no later than 5:00 PM on the 30th day following the date of publication of this notice (publication date May 8, 2008) to:

Division of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Mining Regulation and Reclamation
901 South Stewart Street, Room 4001
Carson City, Nevada 89701-5249

All comments or objections received during the public notice period will be considered in the final determination regarding this Water Pollution Control Permit. If the Division determines written comments or requests indicate a significant degree of public interest in this matter, the Administrator shall schedule a public hearing in accordance with the requirements of NAC 445A.405.

The draft Water Pollution Control Permit and all application documents are on file at the Division and are available for public inspection and copying pursuant to NRS 445A.665. For more information, contact Rob Kuczynski, P.E. at (775) 687-9441, toll free in Nevada (800) 992-0900, extension 4670, or visit our website at <http://ndep.nv.gov/bmrr/bmrr01.htm>

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