

**APPENDIX C**

**CEQA Initial Study**

FILE  
POWER LINE

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY  
INITIAL STUDY ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

This form and the descriptive information in the application package constitute the contents of an Initial Study Pursuant to County Guidelines under Ordinance 3040 and CEQA Guidelines §15063.

**I. Background**

DATES ID	:745DSN88004413 SAMR01/04413RM	USGS Quad: <u>Crescent Park</u> T14N,R17E,Sec 1,11,14 T15N,R17E,Sec 25,36
COMMUNITY	:Needles	T, R, Section: <u>T15N,R18E,Sec 19</u>
FILE/INDX	:SAMR/88-003/DN 585-1145N	Thomas Bros: <u>Pg. 703/K8 &amp; 9 (1991)</u>
APPLICANT	:VICEROY GOLD CORPORATION	Planning Area: <u>Baker Subregional</u>
PROPOSAL	:AMENDMENTS TO CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (No.SAMR88-003- DN 585-1145N) AND RECLAMATION TO ESTABLISH A 22.1 MILE 69KV POWER LINE	OLUD: <u>Resource Conservation</u>
LOCATION	:HART MINE ROAD, NORTH SIDE, APPROXIMATELY 6.8 MILES TO CA/NV STATE LINE	Improvement Level: <u>5</u>
REP ('S)	:N/A	

This initial study is based, in part, on the environmental evaluations previously completed for the Castle Mountain Mine project, for which the County completed jointly with the USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM) , an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse No. 88062708). An Environmental Assessment (EA) has also been completed by the BLM specifically on the power line project and is incorporated by reference.

**PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS:** The proposed transmission line project encompasses construction and operation of a 22.1 mile power line capable of delivering electrical power at 69,000 volts (69 kV) to the Castle Mountain Mine, located in northern Lanfair Valley. The power line will serve the mine for its projected 10-year life, and also supply power for reclamation activities, as needed, for up to 10 years following mine closure. If the expected mine life is extended, the planned life of the power line would also be extended. The power line will then be removed and surface disturbances reclaimed.

The Castle Mountain Mine project was approved by the County in late 1990 and authorized to provide power by use of five onsite generators fired with propane fuel trucked to the site. The Applicant's preferred method of providing power by public utility had been determined infeasible in the Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report, primarily due to legal impediments preventing delivery of utility power from Nevada to California. In early 1991, the legal obstacles for delivery of utility power were resolved. The Applicant has therefore submitted an application to the County for an amendment to a condition of approval for onsite power generation, and to amend the reclamation plan to encompass removal and reclamation of the power line. County approval is therefore related to amending the mine reclamation plan to accommodate removal and reclamation of the power line. Incorporation of the power line into the Castle Mountain Mine should not alter previous County approval for use of private lands located within the mine site.

The power line will consist of single wood poles, typically spaced 300 to 600 feet apart, each supporting three conductors. As shown in Figure 1, the alignment would extend from an existing substation located at Searchlight, Nevada, westerly to the Walking Box Ranch, then southerly to the California/Nevada state line and continue to the Castle Mountain Mine. The project will replace an existing power line in a 40-foot right-of-way (ROW) for 5.9 miles between Searchlight and the Walking Box Ranch, and construct a new line following the mine access road in a 60-foot ROW for 16.2 miles between the Walking Box Ranch and the mine. Approximately 6.8 miles of the alignment, between the state line and the mine, will be located in San Bernardino County, and are located on public lands administered by BLM.

Power transmission will be privately owned, operated, and maintained by the Applicant. Provision of power to users other than the mine project will not be permitted.

**ENVIRONMENTAL/EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS:** The proposed power line alignment lies within northern Piute Valley, Nevada, and northern Lanfair Valley, California. Elevations along the alignment range from about 3,600 feet to 4,600 feet. The area is typical of valleys in the Mojave Desert, with alluvial flatlands surrounded by gently sloping bajadas and steep sloped mountains. The climate of the area is semi-arid; precipitation generally does not exceed 10 inches. Representative temperatures recorded at Searchlight have historically ranged from 8 to 109 degrees Fahrenheit, with an average annual temperature of 63 degrees Fahrenheit. Vegetation on the valley floor below about 3,700 feet is dominated by the creosote bush scrub community. Above this elevation, on upper alluvial fans, the Joshua tree woodland community occurs. Wildlife is typical of the Mojave desert habitat, consisting mostly of widely distributed species. Piute Valley supports a relatively high density desert tortoise population and areas below about 4,000 feet in elevation have been categorized by the BLM as Category 1 habitat. A portion of the power line replacement segment (between Searchlight and the Walking Box Ranch headquarters area) crosses Category 1 habitat with tortoise densities ranging from 20 to 50 tortoises per square mile. Land uses in the vicinity of the power line encompass a range of unrelated activities, such as off-highway vehicle use and other forms of recreation, livestock grazing, and mineral extraction. In California, the East Mojave National Scenic Area (EMNSA) extends over this portion of the County, and the southern 6.8 miles of the proposed power line alignment.

	EXISTING LAND USE	OFFICIAL LAND USE DISTRICT	IL
North	BLM OPEN SPACE	RESOURCE CONSERVATION	5
South	BLM OPEN SPACE	RESOURCE CONSERVATION	5
East	BLM OPEN SPACE	RESOURCE CONSERVATION	5
West	BLM OPEN SPACE	RESOURCE CONSERVATION	5

**II. Identification of maximum potential environmental effects of the proposed project.** The purpose is to identify any potentially significant impacts and discuss mitigation measures for identified impacts. Please substantiate your responses by summarizing your assessment of significant impacts and referencing documents used as research (e.g., Norton Air Force Base AICUZ study re: Noise). Include quantification of changes caused by the project's development at maximum potential buildout from existing status.

Circle or underline specific items of concern for "yes" or "maybe" answers if one item applies and others do not. If an impact that would be significant can be mitigated below a level of significance, indicate by checking "yes" or "maybe" with an "-->" to "no" and discuss mitigative measure(s) under substantiation. Substantiation is also necessary for "no" answers.

**NATURAL HAZARDS**

Yes    Maybe    No

1. **Geologic Hazards.** Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:

- |   |       |       |                      |
|---|-------|-------|----------------------|
| a. Unstable earth conditions or changes in geologic substructures?  | _____ | _____ | _____ <u>X</u> _____ |
| b. Change in topography or ground surface relief features?  | _____ | _____ | _____ <u>X</u> _____ |
| c. The destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?  | _____ | _____ | _____ <u>X</u> _____ |
| d. Exposure of people or property to geologic hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, ground failure, or similar hazards? | _____ | _____ | _____ <u>X</u> _____ |
| e. Exposure of people or property to water-related seismic hazards such as seiche?  | _____ | _____ | _____ <u>X</u> _____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (check \_\_\_\_\_ if project is located in the Geologic Hazards Overlay District): The project consists of constructing and operating a power transmission line which will require placement of wooden support poles. Power pole placement will follow existing roads and will involve little surface disturbance. Poles will be placed in holes drilled generally less than 10 feet deep. There is, therefore, little or no potential to cause unstable earth conditions, modify geologic substructures, or create other geologic hazards. No significant impacts are expected.

- |  | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|--|-------|-------|-------------|
| 2. <b>Flood Hazards.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:                         |       |       |             |
| a. Changes in currents, or the course of direction of water movements?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Changes in deposition, erosion, or siltation that may modify the channel of a river, stream, bay, inlet, or lake? | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Alterations to the course or flow of flood waters?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| d. Change in the amount of surface water in any water body?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| e. Changes in absorption rates, drainage patterns, or the rate and amount of surface runoff?                         | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| f. Exposure of people or property to water-related hazards such as flooding or dam inundation?                       | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (check \_\_\_\_\_ if project is located in the Flood Plain Safety Overlay District) \_\_\_\_\_ or Dam Inundation Overlay \_\_\_\_\_): Construction equipment will access the pole sites via existing roads, which will minimize additional surface compaction. Drill auger equipment will move off-road as necessary to place transmission poles; soils will not generally be graded or compacted. Total project surface disturbance is calculated at approximately 0.5 acres. The potential to alter surface absorption is therefore limited. No significant impacts to drainage patterns, erosion, siltation, or other conditions that could create flood hazards are expected.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe          | No          |
|---|-------|----------------|-------------|
| 3. <b>Fire Hazards.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to: |       |                |             |
| a. Exposure of people or property to wildland fires?  | _____ | _____X-->_____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (check \_\_\_\_\_ if project is located in the Fire Safety Overlay District): The project is located in a desert habitat with little history of wildfire. Clearance of vegetation at the base of each wooden transmission pole may be required by the Fire Warden to protect the structures in the event of a wildfire. No significant impacts are expected.

- |  |     |       |    |
|--|-----|-------|----|
|  | Yes | Maybe | No |
|--|-----|-------|----|
4. **Wind/Erosion.** Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:
- a. Any increase in wind or water erosion of soils, either on or off the site? \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

SUBSTANTIATION: Total surface disturbance is estimated at about 0.5 acres. No significant impacts to soils as a result of wind or water erosion are therefore expected.

**MANMADE HAZARDS**

- |  |     |       |    |
|--|-----|-------|----|
|  | Yes | Maybe | No |
|--|-----|-------|----|
5. **Noise.** Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:
- a. Increases in existing noise levels? \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Exposure of people to severe noise levels? \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

SUBSTANTIATION (check if the project is located in the Noise Hazard Overlay District \_\_\_\_\_ or is subject to severe noise levels according to the General Plan Noise Element \_\_\_\_\_): The project site is located in a remote area generally absent of sensitive noise receptors. Noise impacts associated with construction of the power line will be short-term. Impacts associated with power line operation and maintenance will be minimal. No significant impacts are expected.

- |  |     |       |    |
|--|-----|-------|----|
|  | Yes | Maybe | No |
|--|-----|-------|----|
6. **Aviation Safety.** Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:
- a. Exposure of people to risk from aircraft operations? \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

SUBSTANTIATION (check \_\_\_\_\_ if the project is located in the Airport Safety Overlay District): Power transmission poles will be erected to a maximum height of 45 to 50 feet above ground level. As such, the structures will not be expected to pose a significant hazard to aviation safety.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 7. <b>Hazardous/Radioactive Materials.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:  |       |       |             |
| a. A risk of an explosion or the release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to, oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or upset conditions? | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Possible interference with an emergency response plan or an emergency evacuation plan?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Creation of any health hazard or potential health hazard?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| d. Exposure of people to potential health hazard?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION: Neither construction nor operation of the power transmission line will involve the use, transport, or storage of hazardous or radioactive materials. No potential for release of hazardous substances or significant public health hazards are therefore expected

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

- |   | Yes   | Maybe          | No          |
|---|-------|----------------|-------------|
| 8. <b>Biological Resources.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:   |       |                |             |
| a. Loss, reduction, or deterioration of habitat and/or change in diversity of species of plants or animals?                                       | _____ | _____X-->_____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Reduction of the number of any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species of plants or animals?   | _____ | _____X-->_____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Introduction of exotic species of plant or animals into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment or migration of existing species? | _____ | _____          | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (check if project is located in the Biological Resources Overlay \_\_\_\_\_ or contains habitat for any species listed in the California Natural Diversity Database \_\_\_\_\_): Due to the limited activities associated with construction and maintenance of the power line, no substantial impacts to vegetation or wildlife are expected. The power line alignment has been inventoried and no threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species are expected to occur. However, the proposed power line will replace an existing line crossing 5.9 miles of Category 1 desert tortoise habitat where population densities are

very low (about 4 miles of less than 20 tortoises per square mile, and about 2 miles at densities of 20 to 50 tortoises per square mile). The portion of the power line alignment within the County does not fall within identified desert tortoise habitat. Pole construction sites in will be surveyed for potential tortoise burrows; if a burrow is present at a potential pole location, the pole site would be adjusted to avoid the burrow. Concern for enhancement of raven habitat has been expressed because ravens have preyed on tortoises for food. The power poles have therefore been designed as a single pole configuration (without cross arms) to reduce the potential for raven roosting or nesting. The USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will amend its previous Biological Opinion prepared on the mine to accommodate the power line and minimize the potential for habitat impacts and incidental take. No significant effects are expected.

	Yes	Maybe	No
9. <b>Cultural/Paleontologic Resources.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:			
a. The alteration or destruction of prehistoric or historic archaeological site?	_____	_____	_____X_____
b. Physical or aesthetic effects to a prehistoric or historic building, structure, or object?	_____	_____X-->_____	_____X_____
c. A physical change that would affect unique ethnic cultural values?	_____	_____	_____X_____
d. Restricting existing religious or sacred uses within the potential impact area?	_____	_____	_____X_____
e. An alteration or destruction or fossil remains?	_____	_____	_____X_____

SUBSTANTIATION (check if project is located in the Cultural \_\_\_\_\_ or Paleontologic \_\_\_\_\_ Resources overlay or cite results of cultural resource review): Intensive Class III cultural resource inventories have been completed for the entire power line corridor. Recordation of identified historic sites has reasonably exhausted their data potential. An application has been filed to list the residence built for Rex Bell and Clara Bow at the Walking Box Ranch headquarters in the National Register of Historic Places. The power line will be routed to avoid the defined boundaries of the Walking Box Ranch headquarters area to avoid aesthetic effects to this historic building. No significant effects are expected.

- |  | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|--|-------|-------|-------------|
| 10. <b>Air Quality.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:  |       |       |             |
| a. Substantial air emissions or deterioration of ambient air quality?                        | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. The creation of objectionable odors?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature, or any change locally or regionally? | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (discuss conformity with the South Coast Air Quality Management Plan, if applicable): The power line will deliver 69kV of utility power derived primarily from hydroelectric sources in Nevada. No significant adverse impacts to air quality are expected. The power transmission line project is proposed as an alternate to the approved source of power which would be derived from onsite generation at the mine. Impacts to air quality will therefore be beneficial.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 11. <b>Water Supply/Water Quality.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:  |       |       |             |
| a. Changes in the quantity of ground waters, either through direct additions or withdrawals, or through interception of an aquifer by cuts or excavations (onsite)? | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Substantial reduction in the amount of water otherwise available for public water supplies?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Alteration of the direction or rate of flow of ground waters?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| d. Pollution, contamination, or any change in the quality of ground water (toxics, nitrates, fluorides, salts, etc.)?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| e. Discharge in to surface waters, or any alteration of surface water quality, including, but not limited to, temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?          | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION: Neither construction nor operation of the power transmission line will involve activities that could effect ground water quantity or quality. No significant impacts are expected.

- |  | Yes   | Maybe     | No          |
|--|-------|-----------|-------------|
| 12. <b>Open Space/Recreation/Scenic.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to: |       |           |             |
| a. The quality or quantity of existing recreational opportunities?   | _____ | _____     | _____X_____ |
| b. The obstruction of any scenic vista or view open to the public?   | _____ | _____     | _____X_____ |
| c. The creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view?                                      | _____ | _____X--> | _____X_____ |
| d. New light or glare?   | _____ | _____     | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (check \_\_\_\_\_ if project is located within the viewshed or any Scenic Route listed in the General Plan): The power line alignment will be located in a remote area within existing power line and roadway rights-of-way. The portion of the power line alignment in the County is also within the area designated by the BLM as the EMNSA. Maintenance of scenic quality is, therefore, of special consideration. However, the addition of a power line to serve the previously permitted Castle Mountain Mine is not expected to result in a significant cumulative visual change. Travelers using the mine access road or other roads in the vicinity, including the East Mojave Heritage Trail, will note the line as an incremental addition of human development in the region. The power line will be constructed in a single pole configuration. The poles will be natural wood that will blend with the surrounding vegetation and soils. The variable terrain, and height and density of surrounding vegetation (mostly Joshua tree woodland) is expected to minimize the visibility of the facilities when viewed from distant locations. The planned alignment does not cross ridge lines where visibility would be high. Following completion of mining and reclamation activities, the power line will be removed. No significant impacts to recreation or scenic values are expected.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 13. <b>Soils/Agriculture.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to: |       |       |             |
| a. Disruptions, displacements, compaction, or overcovering of the soil?                           | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Loss of agricultural soils?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Reduction in acreage or any agricultural group?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (check \_\_\_\_\_ if project is located in the important Farmlands Overlay): The project site is located in an arid area that is not used or designated for use as agriculture. Although the area is used for livestock grazing, the area would not support intensive commercial agriculture. No significant impacts are expected.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 14. <b>Mineral Resources.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:   |       |       |             |
| a. The prohibition or restriction of development of any mineral resource rated as Classified or Designated by the State Mining and Geology Board? | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION (check \_\_\_\_\_ if project is located within the Mineral Resource Zone Overlay): The power transmission line project is proposed in support of mineral resource extraction. Construction and operation of the power line will not preclude development of other mineral resources. No significant impacts are expected.

**MANMADE RESOURCES**

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 15/16. <b>Utilities/Infrastructure.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to a need for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities: |       |       |             |
| a. Power or natural gas?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Communications systems?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Water?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| d. Sewer?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| e. Stormwater drainage?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| f. Solid waste and disposal?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION: The power line project will be constructed, maintained and, upon completion of mining and reclamation, removed by the Applicant. The project is not expected to create a need for, or alteration to, other utility systems. It is a requirement of the Nevada Power and Southern California Edison utility companies that the Applicant own the power line and that no other customers be served. No significant impacts are expected.

- |  | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|--|-------|-------|-------------|
| 17. <b>Transportation/Circulation.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to: |       |       |             |
| a. Generation of substantial additional vehicular movement?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Effects on existing parking facilities, or demand for new parking?                                      | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Substantial effect upon existing transportation systems?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| d. Alterations to present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods?                      | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| e. Alterations to waterborne, rail, or air traffic?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| f. Increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists, equestrians, or pedestrians?                 | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION: Construction of the power line will be completed over an approximate two month period. Construction traffic will therefore be short-term and is expected to require fewer than 10 vehicles per day. Provision of utility power will enable the Applicant to eliminate two daily vehicle deliveries of propane that would be used for onsite power generation. No substantial vehicle traffic or significant impacts to transportation systems are expected.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 18. <b>Energy.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:                                  |       |       |             |
| a. An increase in the rate of consumption of any natural resource?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Use of substantial amounts of fuel or energy?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Substantial increase in demand upon existing sources of energy, or require the development of new sources of energy? | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION: While the facilities will deliver power to the Castle Mountain Mine, power use has previously been addressed in environmental impact documentation prepared for the mine. The power line would result in local fuel and energy savings by providing the mine with utility power, instead of using onsite generators burning propane fuel.

Construction and maintenance of the power line will not increase consumption of natural resources or require substantial amounts of fuel or energy. No significant impacts are expected.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 19. <b>Housing/Demographics/Socioeconomics.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to: |       |       |             |
| a. An effect on existing housing, or creation of a demand for additional housing?                                   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population on the area?           | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION: The power line will serve existing facilities, and provide a dedicated private source of utility power to the Castle Mountain Mine. No provisions will be made for delivery of power to other consumers. No significant impacts to housing or human population are therefore expected.

- |   | Yes   | Maybe | No          |
|---|-------|-------|-------------|
| 20. <b>Public Services.</b> Will the proposed project result in significant impact related to a need for new or altered governmental services in: |       |       |             |
| a. Fire protection?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| b. Police protection?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| c. Schools?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| d. Parks or other recreational facilities?  | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| e. Maintenance of public facilities, including roads?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |
| f. Other governmental services?   | _____ | _____ | _____X_____ |

SUBSTANTIATION: The power line project will not result in the need for new or additional public services. The Applicant will be responsible for power line maintenance. No significant impacts are expected.

**LAND USE**

Yes    Maybe    No

21. Will the proposed project result in significant impacts related to:

- a. A substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area? (Consider the Official Land Use Designation of the project site and surrounding property, as well as their Improvement Level designations on the General Plan Infrastructure Overlay and any relevant Resource Overlays.)

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_      X  

SUBSTANTIATION: The power line alignment and surrounding area are designated as Resource Conservation (RC) Land Use District and an Improvement Level 5 Overlay District. Mining is allowed within the RC district and an Improvement Level 5 overlay requires a minimal level of infrastructure improvement. The project is located in a remote, rural area, and conflicts with other land uses are not expected. The power line will support an approved mine and is not expected to significantly impact present or planned land uses in the area.

22. **MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Yes    Maybe    No

- a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?
- b. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definite period of time while long-term impacts will endure will into the future.)
- c. Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project may impact on two or more separate resources where the impact on each resource is relatively small, but where the effect of the total of those impacts on the environment is significant.)

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_      X  

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_      X  

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_      X

- d. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

\_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBSTANTIATION:** The Castle Mountain Mine 69 kV power transmission line is not expected to result in significant adverse impacts to humans. The power line will not result in impacts that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. Since power service will be restricted to the mining operation, no potential significant for growth inducing impacts will occur. The project will avoid the use of energy for onsite generation of power to the mine and the associated air quality impacts, resulting in advantageous environmental goals for both the short-term and the long-term. Use of the power line for the life of the mine, and removal of the line following reclamation will aid in achieving both short-term and long-term goals for development of the County's mineral resources, while ensuring that environmental concerns are addressed through proper reclamation.

### **III. Discussion of Environmental Evaluation:**

A detailed Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed power transmission line project has been prepared for the BLM and is incorporated by reference into this Initial Study. The primary environmental issues raised include:

- The potential visual resource impacts of the power transmission line in this remote area of the County within the EMNSA.
- Surface disturbances that will effect vegetation and wildlife habitat
- Construction and maintenance activities that could effect the desert tortoise
- Surface disturbances and aesthetic impacts to cultural resources

These potential impacts can be avoided or reduced below a level of significance through the implementation of mitigation measures identified below. The potential impacts of the project will not be significant and are not cumulatively considerable. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report is therefore not required.

### **IV. Mitigation Measures to be included in project Conditions of Approval/Mitigation Monitoring Program:**

To ensure that potential impacts will be reduced below a level of significance, the following mitigation measures will be included in the project conditions of approval:

1. The power line to the mine will be removed following mine operations and reclamation.

2. To limit vegetation disturbance and enhance recovery, vegetation at each power pole site will be crushed instead of removed through blading.
3. In Joshua tree woodland, intra-pole distance will be modified as feasible to minimize removal of Joshua trees.
4. As specified in the Castle Mountain Project EIS/EIR and FWS Biological Opinion:
  - Tortoise burrows within the mine road (and power line corridor) shall be located and flagged prior to initiating surface disturbing activities.
  - Burrows will be checked for tortoise occupancy.
  - Anti-perching devices will be added to the tops of the poles.
  - Flagged burrows should be avoided whenever possible.
  - If occupied burrows cannot be avoided, relocation of tortoises shall be coordinated with BLM and FWS, and completed as specified in the Biological Opinion.
5. Construction and maintenance personnel shall be informed of tortoise protected status and penalties for violation of the Endangered Species Act. Proper protocol shall be followed should tortoise be encountered in the construction area or during maintenance activity.
6. Power poles shall be constructed as planned to discourage raven nesting/roosting.

Initial Environmental Evaluation Prepared By:

July 12, 1991  
Date

*Andrew J. Rush*  
Signature Andrew J. Rush

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

The proposed project WOULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment (Mitigation Measures are included within the project's Conditions of Approval/Mitigation Monitoring Program), and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

The proposed project MAY have a significant adverse effect on the environment and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT should be required.

July 12, 1991  
Date

*Randy Scott*  
Signature Randy Scott

For The Planning Agency

**REFERENCES** (List author or agency, date, title)

Environmental Solutions, Inc. 1991. *Castle Mountain Mine 69 kV Power Transmission Line. Environmental Assessment.* July.

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