



Nevada Irrigation District

VIA EMAIL: Idaho.MMEIR@co.nevada.ca.us

March 25, 2022

Mr. Matt Kelly, Senior Planner
Nevada County Planning Department
950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 170
Nevada City, CA 95959-7902

**Re: Nevada Irrigation District Comments for the Idaho Maryland Mine Project
Draft Environmental Impact Report**

Dear Mr. Kelly:

Nevada Irrigation District (NID) is in receipt of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Idaho Maryland Mine Project. This letter conveys recommendations and concerns regarding the project that are germane to NID's statutory responsibilities. The comments are categorized by type.

East Bennet Road Potable Waterline

The DEIR proposes the installation of a NID potable water line along East Bennett Road to provide an alternate source of water should existing ground water wells be depleted from mine dewatering. The DEIR depicts the pipeline as being contained within the existing right-of-way along East Bennett Road; however, NID will require the pipeline to interconnect with NID's existing water distribution system in the Whispering Pines Lane area. The connection to existing NID infrastructure will necessitate the crossing of multiple parcels that do not contain an existing roadway/right-of-way. Additionally, connection to NID will occur near Clydesdale Court, which will require a short section of alignment within the right-of-way along Whispering Pines Lane. The Draft EIR does not contemplate this cross-country extension nor the short run up Whispering Pines Lane. NID expects the complete alignment of the East Bennett potable water line including the interconnection

on Whispering Pines Lane be included in the final EIR and be identified in the conditions of approval for the project. In addition, all easements necessary for construction and ongoing maintenance of the new pipeline shall be acquired by the Applicant and conveyed to NID prior to acceptance of the new potable line. All costs for the above must be borne by the Applicant.

The DEIR makes multiple references to the construction of the East Bennet potable water line being constructed to County guidelines. However, NID is the responsible agency for potable water infrastructure; therefore, all construction involving, or connecting to NID infrastructure must be constructed to NID standards. This correction as it relates to potable water infrastructure is necessary throughout the document.

East Bennet Road NID Potable Water Connection Mitigations

The DEIR requires connection of 30 properties along East Bennett Road (4.8-29(c)) that are currently supplied water via wells. Properties that connect to NID's potable water line and keep their existing wells will require a Double Check Valve (DCV) to prevent any potential backflow into NID's system. DCV installation will increase initial installation costs and require a monthly fee on the consumptive water bill. NID considers the additional installation and ongoing DCV costs as a necessary part of mitigation and should be paid for by the Applicant for the duration of dewatering and mine operations.

The Applicant proposed to cover the connection and consumptive costs of NID potable water usage for parcels along East Bennet Road. The mitigation includes paying for all connection costs as well as covering the consumptive rate for up to 400 gallons per day. 400 GPD does not match the amount of water proposed within the Final Idaho Maryland Mine Water Supply Assessment provided to NID. The Water Supply Assessment estimates the average consumption of the 31 parcels to be .4 gallons per minute per dwelling. This equates to a total daily usage of 576 gallons per day and should be the amount of consumptive use the Applicant will pay as a mitigation for any connection along the East Bennett corridor. During the WSA hearing, NID's Board of Directors expressed serious concerns that the number of impacted wells could far exceed the 30 estimated by the DEIR. NID proposes the Applicant conduct a more extensive and robust well and ground water monitoring effort prior to and during any dewatering.

Should the number of private wells impacted exceed the 30 that the Applicant estimates, NID believes the Applicant should guarantee and include in its proposed mitigation potable water for each well that is impacted.

The DEIR includes a mitigation measure to pay for consumptive water use for parcels along East Bennet Road that connect to NID until the property is sold by the owner, or until the property is annexed into the City of Grass Valley. NID believes the Applicant

should cover cost of consumptive use for each impacted well in the volume stated above (regardless of ownership or annexation) for as long as the project is operating and for a period of 24 months after project is complete or abandoned. This includes initial mine dewatering as well as continued mine operations

In order to establish a baseline of the number and quality of wells outside of the East Bennett area, NID suggests the Applicant undertake advance sampling of both water quality and production for the wells located in the Woodrose, Greenhorn and Beaver Lane areas.

The estimates within the GHG emissions modeling (page 351) assumes 26 residences would be switched from well water to NID potable water. Other portions of the DEIR require connection of 30 parcels to NID's potable water system. This discrepancy should be corrected, and the total amount of water use should match the WSA document of .4 gallons per minute per dwelling unit.

Area of Ground Water Depletion

During the WSA hearing, NID's Board of Directors expressed serious concerns that the number of impacted wells could far exceed the 30 estimated by the DEIR. NID proposes the Applicant conduct a more extensive and robust well and ground water monitoring effort prior to, and during any dewatering. Should the number of private wells impacted exceed the 30 estimated by the Applicant, NID believes the Applicant should guarantee and include in its proposed mitigation potable water for each well that is impacted.

The DEIR includes modeling analysis of anticipated effects to ground water levels after initial mine dewatering and long-term ground water levels related to general operations over the term of the project. The document specifies that the Applicant will implement a rigorous Ground Water Monitoring Plan (GWMP) to assess how the hydrogeologic system responds to mining. The GWMP is proposed to establish multiple monitoring wells to provide data analysis of groundwater throughout the project area. NID requests the monitoring wells be placed near locations with the greatest concentration of existing ground water wells, specifically the Greenhorn, Woodrose, and Beaver Lane areas. The strategic placement of monitoring wells will provide an early warning of any adverse effects of dewatering. The monitoring wells should mirror the average depth of the residential wells in the area and be in sufficient number and locations to provide for accurate data. Early awareness will allow the Applicant to halt dewatering and develop alternative water supply options for affected areas.

One of the potential outcomes of dewatering the mine includes the negative effect to local ground water well production beyond the wells that have already been identified to be impacted in the DEIR. As referenced in the DEIR, the Applicant will be required, at their

cost, to provide an alternate water supply for any well impacted. However, there is no financing mechanism to ensure any additional wells that are impacted beyond the 30 wells identified are able to connect to potable water. NID, as the sole surface water provider in the area, is concerned that the level of infrastructure necessary to extend water to affected wells beyond Bennet Road area would come at a substantial cost. NID estimates extending infrastructure and connecting customers in the Greenhorn, Woodrose, and Beaver area is estimated to be \$14 Million. These costs include both pipeline costs and connection fees. Additionally, construction of this magnitude will require a substantial amount of time to complete. NID requests that a mitigation measure and condition of approval require the Applicant to put forth bonds or other form of financial security to cover the costs of such infrastructure for a period of 5 years beyond the completion of initial dewatering of the mine. This will help ensure the communities surrounding mine operations will have some assurance of funding to complete an alternate water supply should it become necessary.

Wolf Creek Discharge

The DEIR proposes to dewater the underground workings of the Idaho Maryland Mine, via pumping, treatment, and discharge operations to the South Fork of Wolf Creek. NID is an authorized diverter of imported and natural flows in Wolf Creek. The location of NID's diversion will allow for the recapture of the treated ground water discharge from the Mine. To properly manage flows, promote water efficiency, and protect habitat in Wolf Creek, NID will need access to real-time discharge flows into Wolf Creek. NID recommends a publicly accessible web page that provides real time data along with flow trending over a one-week period. Additionally, any planned outage in the treatment process that would interrupt flows into Wolf Creek should be communicated to NID one week in advance. This information will allow NID to adjust imports into Wolf Creek to meet the needs of end users and maximize beneficial use.

As stated above, NID diverts a mixture of natural and imported flows from Wolf Creek to provide irrigation water to 715 customers. While NID does not have jurisdiction over water quality flowing into Wolf Creek, NID, along with Nevada County Environmental Health, need to be notified in the event of a spill or other contaminating event. Early notification allows NID to respond in a manner that will allow isolation of flows to protect our customer base, many of which utilize this water in home for incidental uses.

Preservation of Historic Storm Water Flow Volume in Wolf Creek

NID exercises the discharge of water from our canal systems during emergency, or storm related events. Many of these natural channels join or cross through the Brunswick site. The ability to continue utilizing these channels to spill water into Wolf Creek shall be preserved and maintained at the levels of historic use. NID has discharge records up to

11 CFS into the head waters of the South Fork of Wolf Creek on the Southeast end of the Brunswick Site. The second spill channel intersects the Brunswick property near Bennet Road on the Northwest edge of the Brunswick site. Flows into Wolf Creek at this location have been recorded up to 35 CFS. NID requests that a mitigation measure be included to ensure the volume of Mine discharge water to Wolf Creek will not limit storm flow capacity during storm events.

Potable Water Connection to Mine

Lastly, NID’s Rules and Regulations require a reduced pressure backflow prevention device on all commercial or industrial connections to our treated water systems. This will require a retrofit of any existing connections prior operations at both the Brunswick and or Centennial sites. Installation of backflow prevention devices will protect the community drinking water system from an over pressuring event within the mines water system. These devices, and the costs of installing them will need to be paid for by the Applicant.

Again, thank you for providing a copy of the Notice of Preparation for the Idaho Maryland Mine. The District looks forward to working collaboratively with the County and Rise Grass Valley. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact me at (530)-271-6882.

Respectfully Submitted,



Armon “Chip” Close
Water Operations Manager

cc: Chris Bierwagen, NID Board President, Division II
Karen Hull, NID Board Vice President, Division III
Ricki Heck, NID Director, Division I
Laura Peters, NID Director, Division IV
Rich Johansen, NID Director, Division V
Jennifer Hanson, NID General Manager
File