



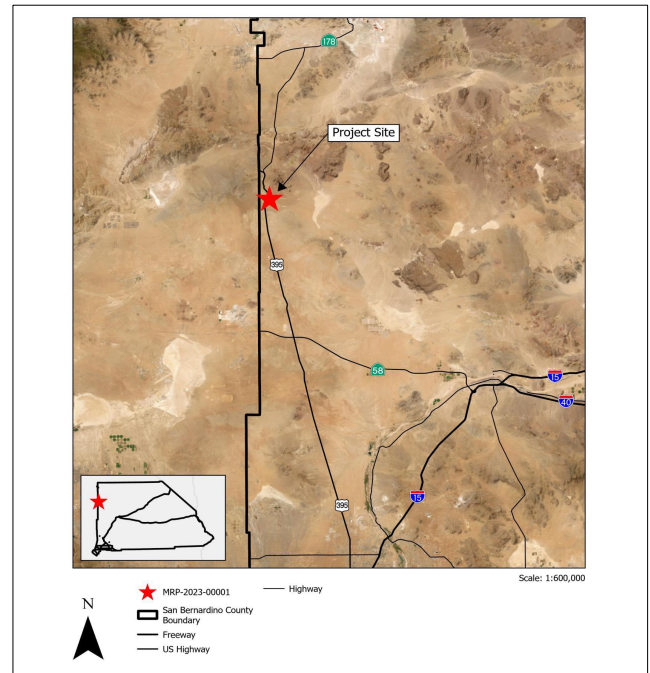
LAND USE SERVICES DEPARTMENT PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

HEARING DATE: September 18, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 2

Project Description

APN: 0503-341-01 & 0503-081-13
Applicant: Gold Discovery Group LLC
Community: Red Mountain
Project No: MRP-2023-00001
Location: Located adjacent to U. S Route 395 (eastern side) approximately 3.6 miles south of Red Mountain and approximately 0.6 miles south of the historical township of Atolia
Staff: Derek Newland, Planner II
Rep: Sean Tucker
Proposal: Reclamation Plan MRP-2023-00001 for the reclamation of the Persistence Mine covering 126 acres across two non-contiguous pits, the Eastern Pit (41 acre) and Western Pit (85 acres), within a property area of 267 acres.



Public Hearing Notices published by: September 08, 2025

Report Prepared By: Derek Newland, Planner II

SITE INFORMATION:

Quarry Parcel Size: Approximately 126 acres
 Total Mining Operations Parcel Size (which includes the quarry): 267 acres

TABLE 1 – SITE AND SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING:

AREA	EXISTING LAND USE	LAND USE CATEGORY	LAND USE ZONING DISTRICT
SITE	Vacant Desert	Resource Land Management (RLM)	Resource Conservation (RC)
North	Inactive Mine	Resource Land Management (RLM)	Resource Conservation (RC)
South	Vacant Desert	Resource Land Management (RLM)	Resource Conservation (RC)
East	Vacant Desert	Resource Land Management (RLM)	Resource Conservation (RC)
West	Vacant Desert	Resource Land Management (RLM)	Resource Conservation (RC)

City Sphere of Influence:	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Water Service:	Red Mountain	N/A
Sewer Service:	Rand Communities Water District	Will Serve
	Portable Toilets	N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: That the Planning Commission **ADOPT** the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; **ADOPT** the findings in support of Reclamation Plan MRP-2023-00001; **APPROVE** Reclamation Plan MRP-2023-00001, subject to the Conditions of Approval; and **DIRECT** the Land Use Services Department to file a Notice of Determination in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act¹.

1. In accordance with Section 86.08.010 of the Development Code, the Planning Commission's action may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors

FIGURE 1 - REGIONAL LOCATION MAP

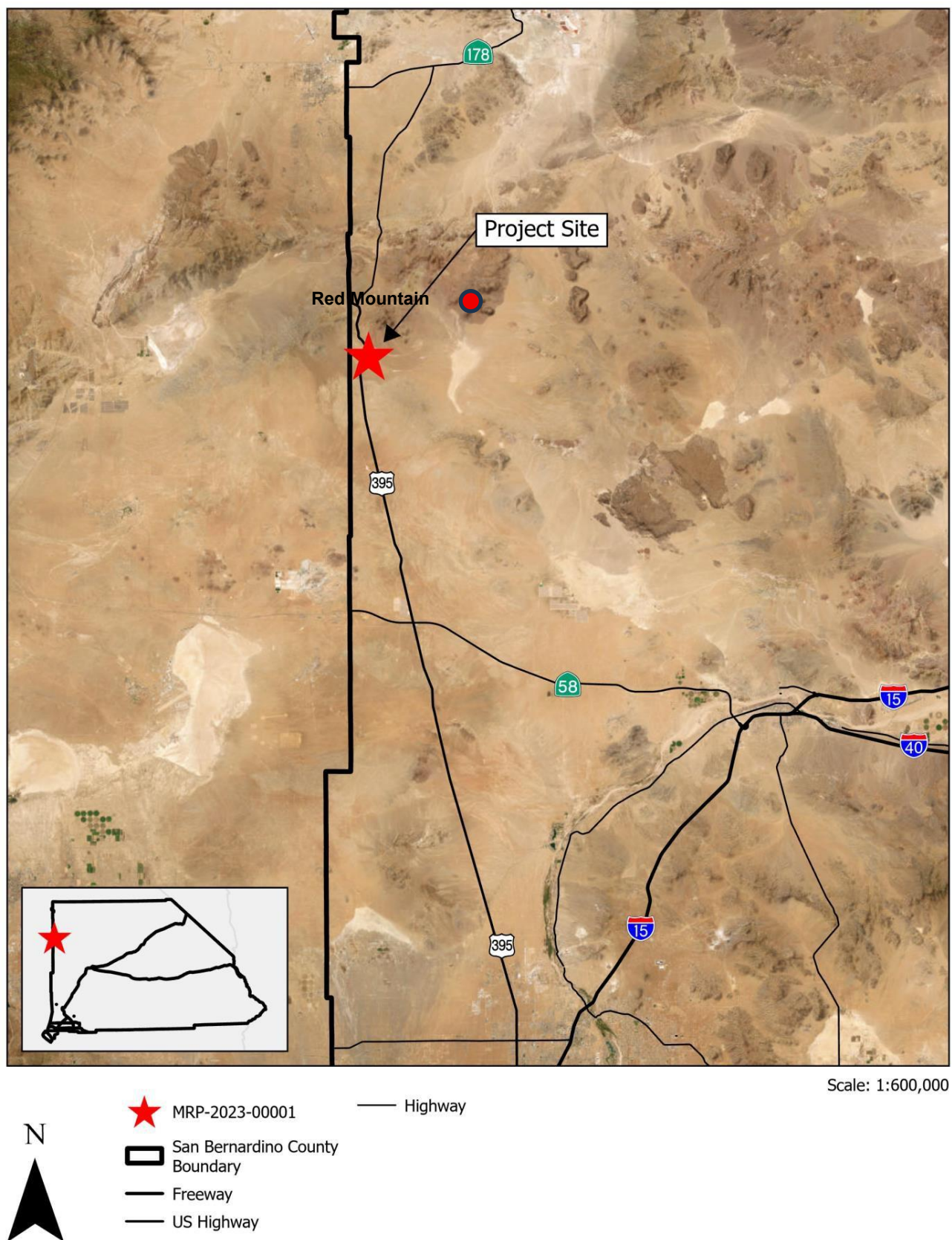


FIGURE 2 - VICINITY MAP/MINING CLAIMS

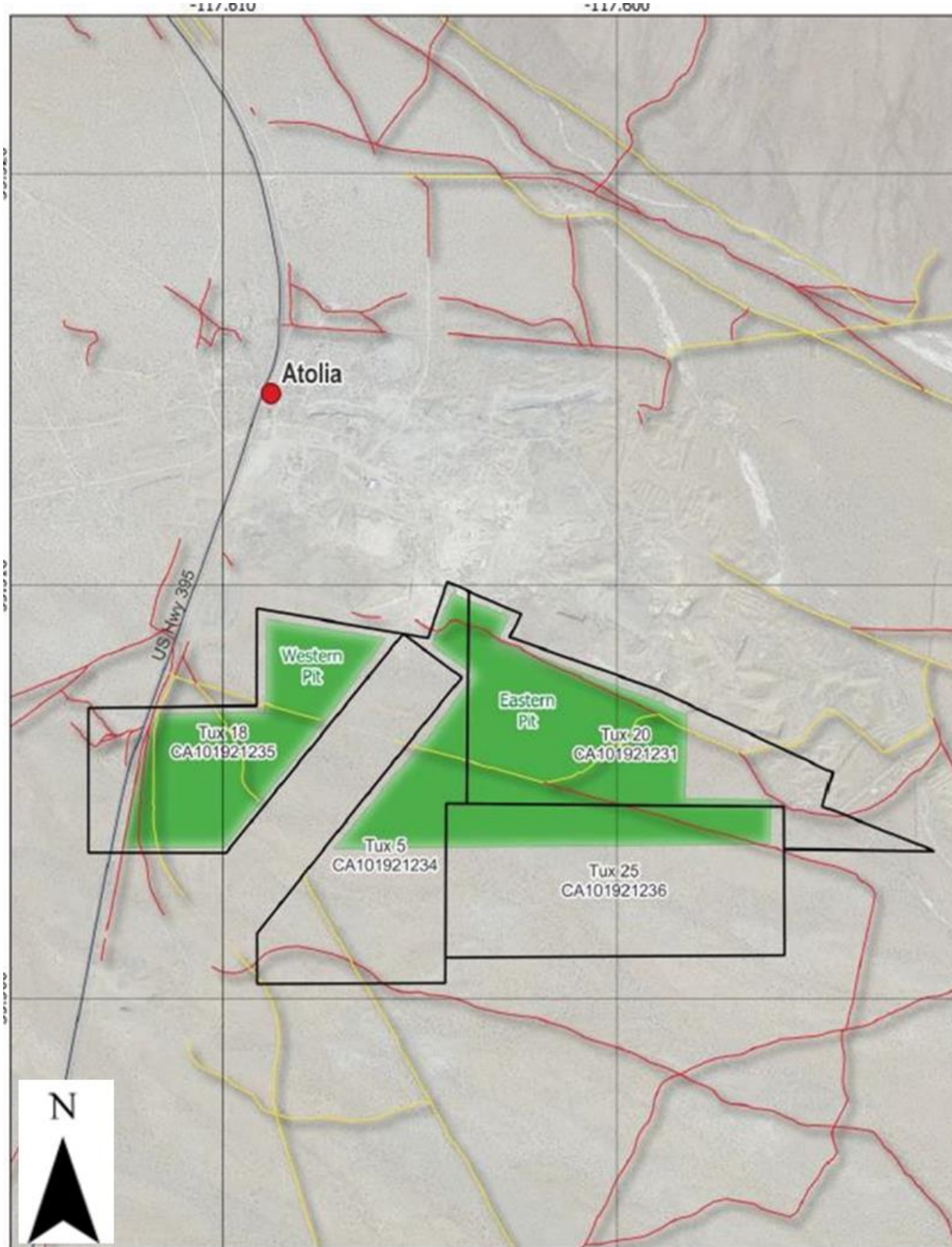
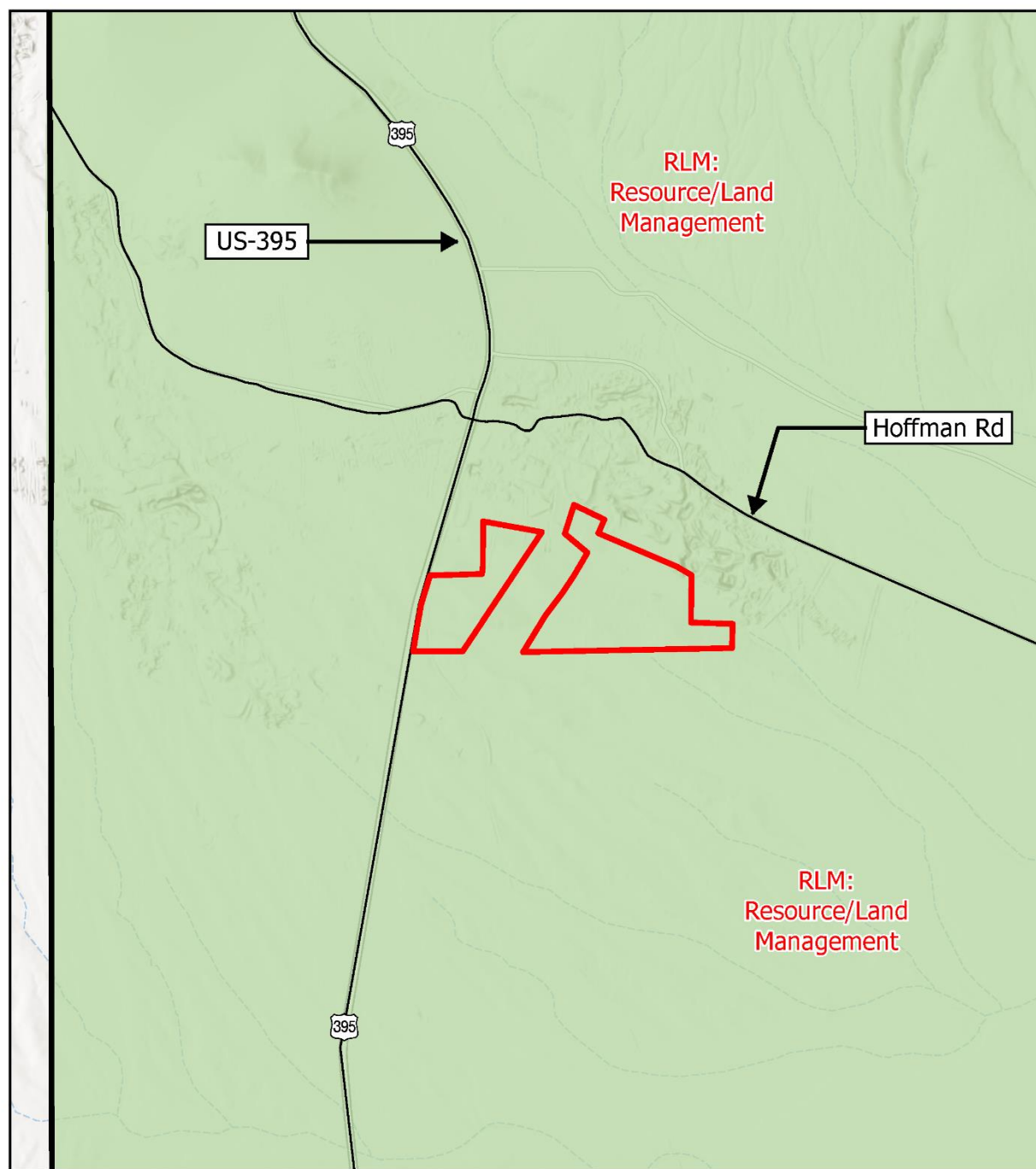


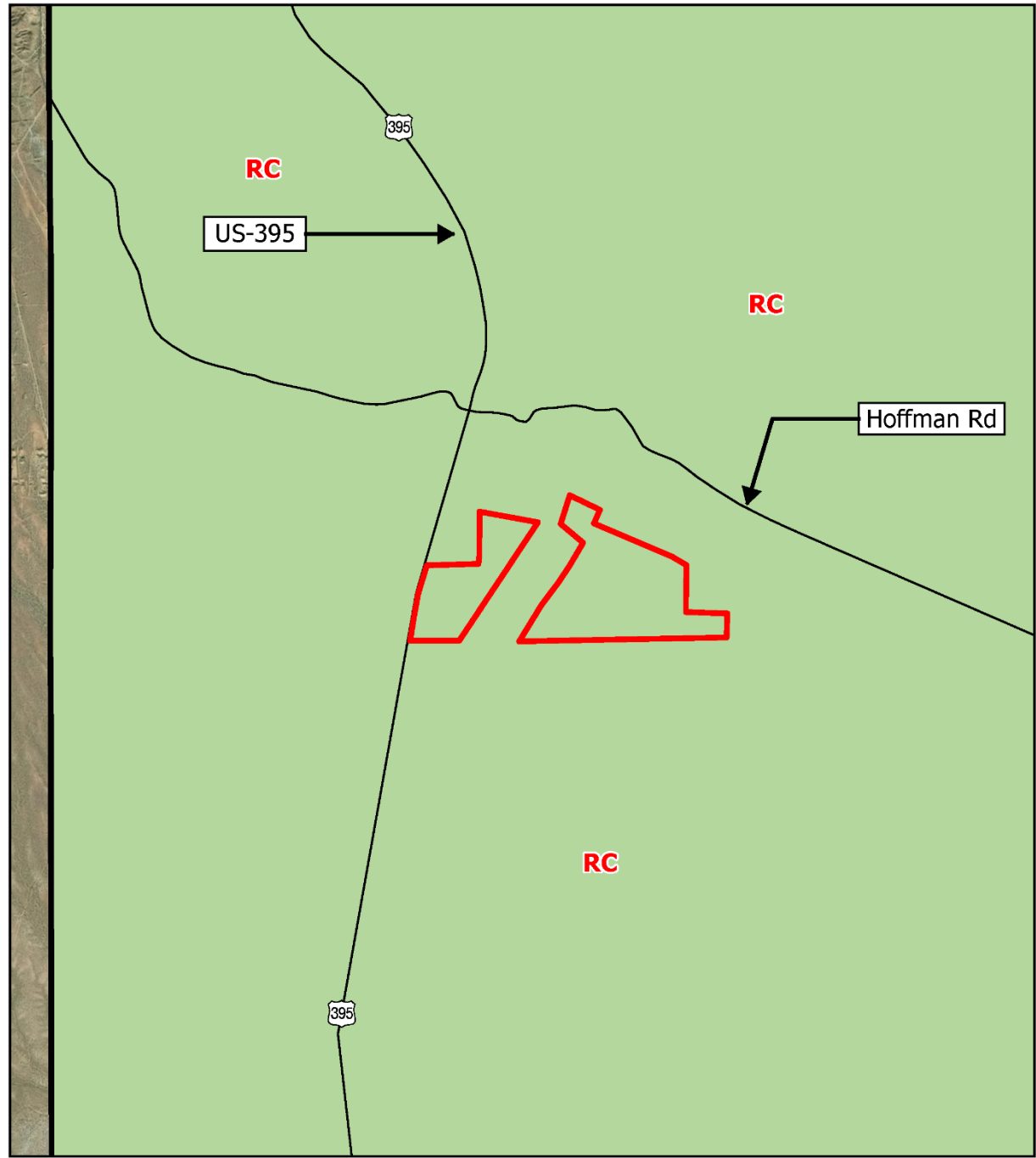
FIGURE 3 – LAND USE CATEGORY MAP



Scale: 1:24,000



FIGURE 4 – ZONING MAP



Scale: 1:24,000

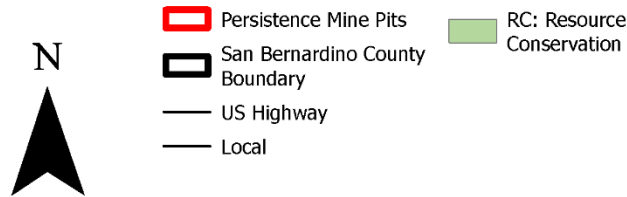


FIGURE 5 – PERSISTENCE MINE
QUARRY SITE NORTH ORIENTATION



FIGURE 6 – PERSISTENCE QUARRY SITE
NORTHWEST PORTION OF THE WEST
PIT LOOKING NORTHEAST TOWARDS
RED MOUNTAIN.



FIGURE 7 - PERSISTENCE QUARRY SITE
SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE WEST

PIT (RIGHT OF US HWY 395) FACING
EAST TOWARDS CUDDEBACK LAKE.



FIGURE 8 – EAST PIT



FIGURE 9 – PERSISTENCE MINING PLAN

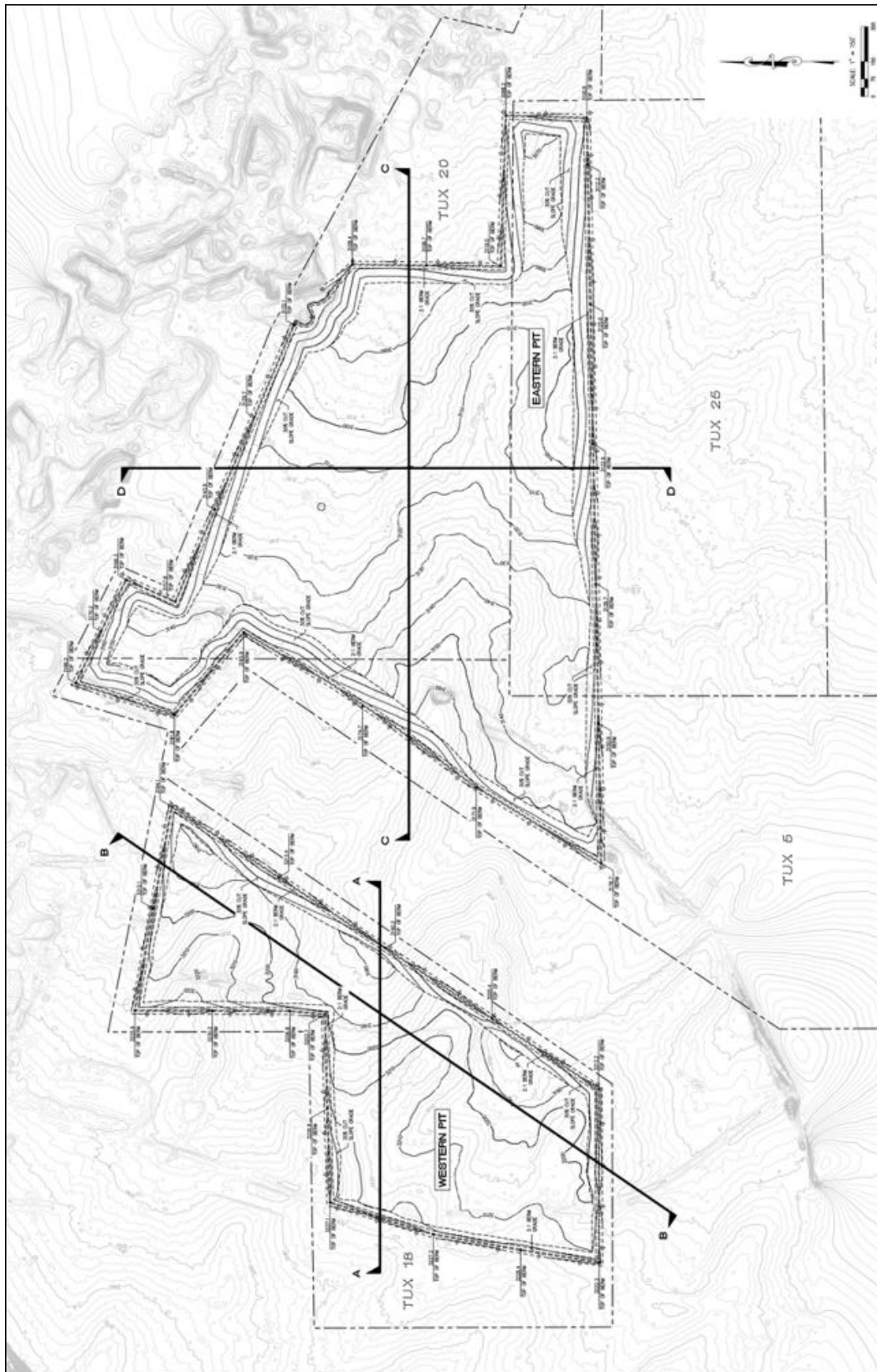
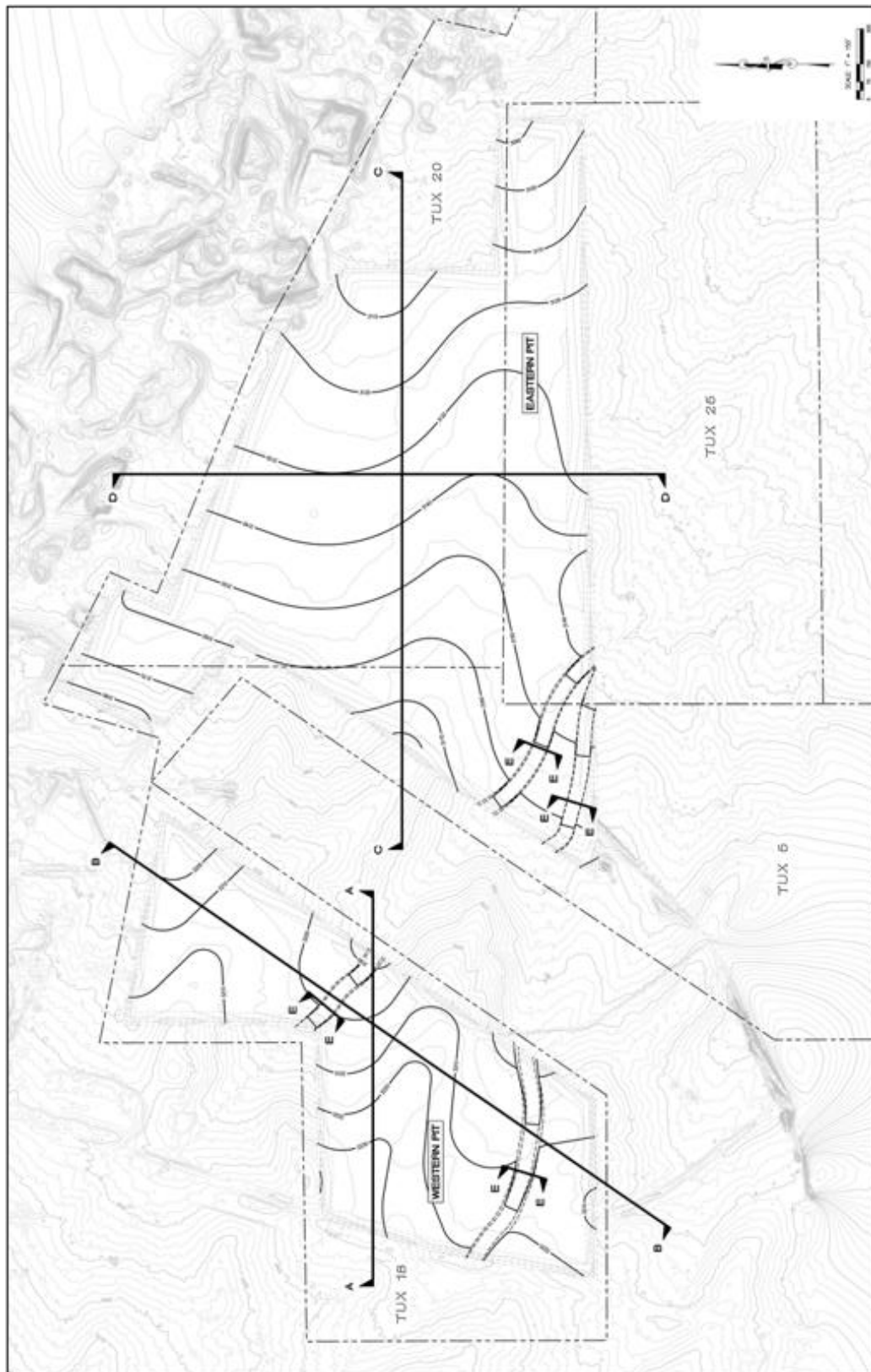


FIGURE 10 - PERSISTENCE MINE
RECLAMATION PLAN



PROJECT DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

Proposed Project

Gold Discovery Group LLC (GDG) is proposing to extract gold from semi to unconsolidated sands and silts (sediments) from placer mining claims in the Atolia area (see Figure 2). This operation is referred to as the Persistence Mine by GDG (Project). Persistence Mine will be separating gold ore through gravity separation and water wash plant. The Project site is zoned as Resource Conservation (RC) and is surrounded by parcels of the same zone as noted in Figure 4 (Zoning Map). There are no adjacent or nearby sensitive land uses -- the nearest residences located in Red Mountain (town) 4 miles to the north (see Figure 1).

The Reclamation Plan requires adoption a by the San Bernardino County Planning Commission. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for the permitting of the Plan of Operation, since the mine is located on Federal land.

The Persistence Mine is proposed to include the following:

- Excavation depth to 24 feet.
- Operate and mine two non-contiguous pits Eastern Pit (41 acre) and Western Pit (85 acres) shown in (Figure 10) situated within an area covering a property area of 267 acres.
- Mining capacity to support 96,000 cubic yards per month.
- Life of Mine (LOM) of 33 months.
- Reclamation Completion date of December 31, 2029 (pending approvals).
- No cyanide is proposed to be used for the extraction of gold as final gold product and will be refined on a water/gravity shaking table

The mines are estimated to contain approximately 1.17 million cubic yards of ore with no overburden. For start-up months 1 to 4, the site will be mined at an average rate of 25,000 cubic yards per month to establish a routine, plant performance, water usage, and optimal pit development. For month 5 through the Life-of-Mine, excavations and processing are planned at an average rate of approximately 75,000 cubic yards per month. Mining will be by surface pit extraction with a single excavator and wheel loader.

Compliance

The Reclamation Plan is consistent with Policy Plan goals LU-2.4 (Land Use Map Consistency), LU-2.6 (Coordination with Adjacent Entities), NR-6.1 (Mineral Resource Areas), and NR-6.2 (Mining Operations and Reclamation) as further detailed in the Project's findings enclosed within this report.

The Reclamation Plan complies with Section 82.03.040 of the Development Code which allows for Natural Resources Development (Mining) in the Resource Conservation (RC) Zoning District with an approved Mining Permit and/or Reclamation Plan. While approval of the mining operation permit will come from BLM via the Plan of Operation, the San Bernardino County Planning Commission shall take action to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the Reclamation Plan, and to approve the financial assurances in compliance with Public Resources Code § 2770.

Access

The Persistence Mine is located adjacent to U.S. Route 395 (eastern side) and is approximately 3.6 miles south of Red Mountain and approximately 0.6 miles south of the historical township of Atolia. The site is accessed from U.S. Route 395 via a proposed unpaved Persistence Mine access track which utilizes existing BLM managed roads. Currently the road is classified as closed by the BLM. GDG has been using this access road for the past two years as part of their approved Notice of Assessment field work programs. All access entry and exit points to the mine will be appropriately signed for public entry warning.

RECLAMATION AND REVEGETATION

The goal of reclamation for the Persistence Mine is to reclaim the site to a usable condition for post-mining end uses which will include Open Space. Final reclamation of the 126 acres East and West Pit will include the removal of all equipment, any structures, and debris from the site. Any remaining stockpiles will be backfilled into the pit and graded for positive drainage where possible. Compacted surfaces will be loosened by mechanical means and the entire site, onsite roads, stockpile areas, and the pit footprint, will be reseeded with stored mulch, scavenged seeds or native plant species. The pit will be backfilled, there will be no steep slopes remaining. If the pit is not completely backfilled, any perimeter slopes will be filled to 2H:1V. If needed, a protective berm will be maintained around the pit rim and shall be posted with warning signs of steep slope hazard. Access to the site will be controlled with locked gates, signage, and blocked secondary access roads. The reclaimed site will allow for future exploration and development of additional resources located on unpatented claims beneath and outside of the backfilled pits. The reclaimed site will not preclude or necessitate any future mining activities or surface modification.

Application of Operation Best Mining Practices

Hydrology/Streambed

The Land Use Services Department, Land Development Division, has conditioned the Project to provide adequate provisions for Tributary Drainage as Figure 11 shows to intercept and conduct the tributary off-site and on-site, 100-year drainage flows around and through the site in a manner that will not adversely affect adjacent or downstream properties at the time the site is developed. The Project site shall be designed in a manner that perpetuates the existing natural drainage patterns with respect to tributary drainage areas, outlet points and outlet conditions. The dry, ephemeral washes on the Project site lack downstream connection to a federal water of the United States. No federally protected jurisdictional features occur on the project site. All operations onsite will comply with a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to be updated periodically with mine site development and implementation of storm water BMPs. The mine will be cut down to bedrock and precipitation falling within the mine will be allowed to flow into the mine and percolate or evaporate during operations. After backfilling the pit, drainages will be re-established to flow through the site to natural drainages down gradient which are already established onsite. The diversion channel will be left in place.

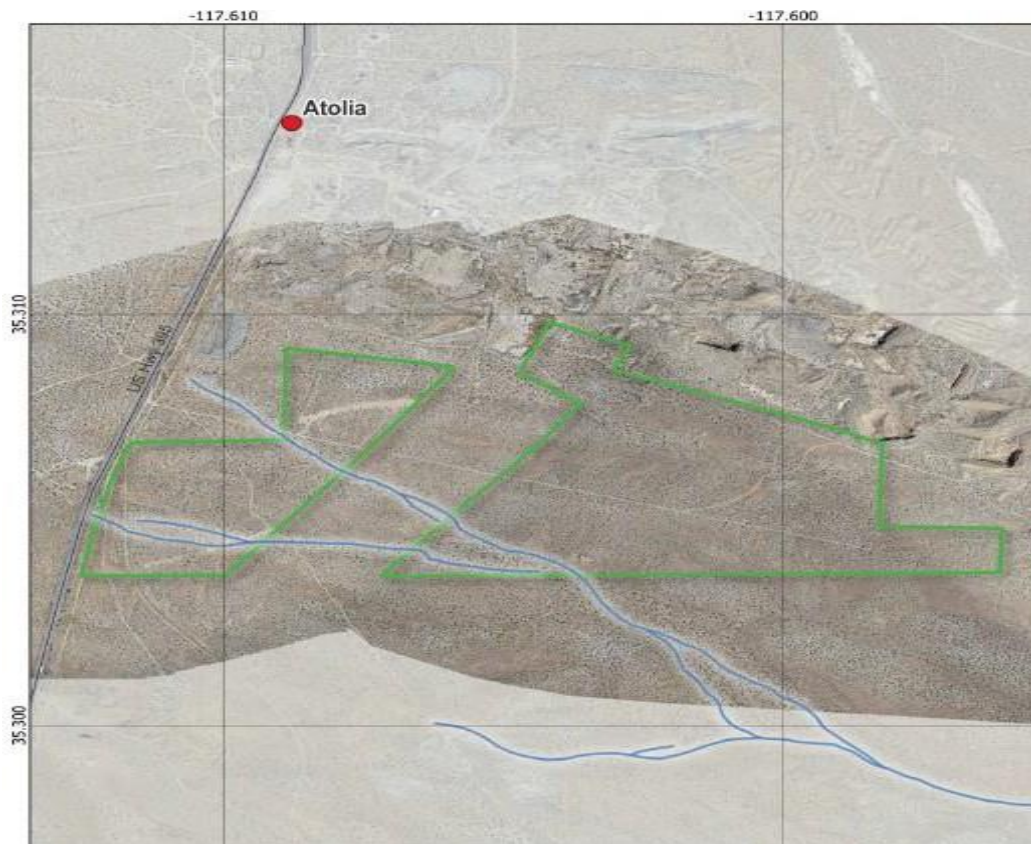
Spill Contingencies

All refuse generated at the Project would be disposed of off-site in an authorized off-site landfill facility, consistent with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations. The hazardous materials and petroleum products utilized at the Project are anticipated to include diesel fuel, gasoline, a liquid propane tank, and lubricating oils and grease,

and hydraulic oil stored in vehicles. Approximately 1,200 gallons of diesel fuel and 20 gallons of gasoline would be stored in fuel delivery systems on vehicles and mining equipment at any one time. All hazardous and non-hazardous containers would be properly labeled and managed in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws, regulations, and guidelines.

Diesel refueling would be conducted from vehicle mounted fuel cells and/or a mobile refueling vehicles, which will have a spill kit on board for any diesel spills that may occur. Equipment maintenance would take place utilizing mobile maintenance trucks. No permanent storage of fuels is proposed for the Persistence Mine. Refueling of any equipment will only be conducted during daylight hours or within suitable lighting from light towers if at night. All site personnel that would be involved in fuel-handling would be trained in the operation and maintenance of equipment as per manufacturers specifications to prevent discharges.

FIGURE 11 - STREAMBEDS



California Environmental Quality Act Compliance

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an Initial Study (IS) was completed and routed to the State Clearinghouse for circulation (SCH# 2025070443) and posted on the County's environmental website for review (Exhibit A). Notices of Intent and Notices of Availability were also mailed to property owners and responsible agencies to inform them of the initiation of the environmental posting. The 30-day comment period commenced on July 17, 2025, and concluded on August 18, 2025. The Initial Study concludes that the Project will not have a significant

adverse impact on the environment with the implementation of specific mitigation measures associated with Conservation Management Actions (CMAs) that are part of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan prepared by BLM for the Project area. Mitigation measures to ensure compliance with the CMAs have been incorporated in the Project's Conditions of Approval and Project's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) attached as Exhibit B.

IS/MND Comment Letters

During the comment period the County received a comment letter from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) on August 15, 2025, and a joint comment letter from the Desert Tortoise Council, Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc., and Mohave Ground Squirrel Conservation Council on August 18, 2025. Both comment letters recommended changes to the proposed Mitigation Measures with CDFW proposing new mitigation for nesting birds, desert tortoise, and Crotch's bumble bee. The letter from the Desert Tortoise Council, Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc., and Mohave Ground Squirrel Conservation Council recommended changes to desert tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel. In response, GDG prepared a response to comment letter dated August 21, 2025 (Exhibit K) explaining why recommended changes to CMAs are not appropriate since the CMAs are established actions adopted by BLM. However, both GDG and the Land Use Services Department have agreed to add the recommended changes from CDFW as conditions of approval.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15073.5(c)(3) provides that adding conditions of approval that will not create new significant impacts and that are not necessary to mitigate significant impacts do not trigger recirculation. Since the recommended changes to mitigation by CDFW will not create a new significant impact and are determined by the County as not being necessary for mitigation given the CMAs, recirculation of the Initial Study is not warranted.

A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program has been prepared ensuring compliance with the applicable CMAs identified in the Initial Study and the conditions of approval will regulate the future reclamation of the site.

Public Comments

On January 3, 2025, Project Notices were mailed to the surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the project site, as required by Section 85.03.080. No public comments were received.

On September 1, 2025 a comment was received by San Bernardino County from a member of the public as an informational item on policies and requirements pertaining to CEQA, SMARA and Federal policies that the project is already complying with. No specific statement was made indicating support for or against the project.

On September 9, 2025 a comment supporting the project was received.

Division of Mine Reclamation

On August 13, 2024, the California Department of Conservation, Division of Mine Reclamation, accepted the Reclamation Plan submittal with no further comments on the contents of the Project's Reclamation Plan proposal.

Tribal Comments

In accordance with AB-52, the following Indian Tribes received Notices of Opportunity to Consult with the County Mining Division on June 6, 2024, concerning the proposed Persistence Mine:

- Colorado River Tribe
- Fort Mohave Tribe
- Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians
- Gabrieleno Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
- Morongo band of Mission Indians
- Yuhaaviatam San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
- Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
- Twenty- Nine Palms of Mission Indian

On December 30, 2024, Eunice Ambriz with the Yuhaaviatam San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (YSMN) contacted the Mining Division and informed mining staff that the proposed Project is located outside of Serrano ancestral territory and, as such, YSMN will not be requesting to receive consulting party status. No mitigation measures were submitted by YSMN. No additional Tribal comments were submitted.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Planning Commission:

- 1) **ADOPT** the Mitigated Negative Declaration (Exhibit A) and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (Exhibit B);
- 2) **ADOPT** the findings in support of Reclamation Plan MRP-2023-00001 (Exhibit C);
- 3) **APPROVE** Reclamation Plan MRP-2023-00001 for the reclamation of the Persistence Mine covering 126 acres across two non-contiguous pits, the Eastern Pit (41 acre) and Western Pit (85 acres), within a property area consisting of approximately 267 acres, subject to the Conditions of Approval (Exhibit D); and
- 4) **DIRECT** the Land Use Services Department to file the Notice of Determination in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

ATTACHMENTS:

- EXHIBIT A: Mitigated Negative Declaration
EXHIBIT B: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)
EXHIBIT C: Reclamation Findings for MRP-2023-00001
EXHIBIT D: Conditions of Approval MRP-2023-00001
EXHIBIT E: Persistence Reclamation and Site Plans
EXHIBIT F: Plan of Operations and Environmental Assessment
EXHIBIT G: Desert Tortoise Absence Survey
EXHIBIT H: Burrowing Owl Focused Survey
EXHIBIT I: Endangered Plant Survey
EXHIBIT J: California Department of Fish and Wildlife Letter dated August 15, 2025
EXHIBIT K: Desert Tortoise Council, Mohave Ground Squirrel Conservation Council, and Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee letter dated August 18, 2025
EXHIBIT L: Applicant response to comment letters
EXHIBIT M: Public Comments