DECISION NOTICE AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
2017 QUARTZ NOMINATIONS PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
CADDO-WOMBLE RANGER DISTRICT
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, ARKANSAS

DECISION

Based upon my review of the 2017 Quartz Nominations Project Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement the Proposed Action, which includes allowing quartz operations on four tracts of land consisting of 56 acres in Montgomery County, Arkansas. A narrative description of the selected alternative, and associated project design criteria are provided on pages 1-4 of the EA.

DECISION RATIONALE

The purpose of this action is to allow the extraction of quartz as required by 36 CFR 228C and FSM 2850 Supplement: R8-2800-2002-2. This action is needed because the nomination fees for four separate tracts have been submitted to the Caddo-Womble Ranger District office, and I have determined that quartz contracts should be issued for OQC-275, OQC-277, OQC-280 and OQC-281.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Ouachita National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Revised Forest Plan). It follows Management Area (MA) 16 design criteria 16.06; mineral operations may be conducted where they are not visible from the lake and will not have more than two acres of unreclaimed surface impact during active mining. Impact area must be reclaimed during inactive operating period that will exceed 30 days. (Revised Forest Plan, p. 110).

The 2017 Quartz Nominations Project EA documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A Project Announcement Letter (PAL) or "scoping letter" was mailed to interested publics on March 29, 2018, and again on June 6, 2018, requesting input on the proposed actions. The project was also published in the Ouachita National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions. Two comments were received from Alexa Springs Water Company and the Caddo Nation in response to this solicitation.

The EA was released for public review and comment on September 30, 2018; a legal notice of the 30-day comment period was published in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. No comments were received.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the Ouachita National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with the Vision, Strategy, and Design Criteria direction.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR 1508.27)

Context

The 2017 Quartz Nomination Project is located in T1S, R24W and T2S, R23&24W, in Montgomery County, Arkansas. The project area is approximately 56 acres in size.

Intensity

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.** Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action. Both beneficial and adverse effects were considered. (See EA Chapter 3)
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety**. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety. (See EA page 12)
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area. There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, roadless areas, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas to be affected. The effects on historic or cultural resources are disclosed in the EA. (See EA page 13)
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. (See EA Chapter 3)
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Agency has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (See EA Chapter 3)
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects

because it is similar to projects that have previously been implemented and it is consistent with the direction of the Revised Forest Plan. (See EA Chapter 3)

7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The cumulative impacts are not significant. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have been assessed, and any resulting cumulative effects are disclosed in the EA. (See EA page 14)

8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. (See EA page 12) A letter of concurrence was received from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on August 13, 2018.

9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The Biological Assessment (BA) prepared for this project determined that the action is "likely to adversely affect" the Northern long-eared bat; however, there are no effects beyond those previously disclosed in the programmatic biological opinion on implementing the final 4(d) rule dated January 5, 2016, signed by Lynn Lewis. Any taking that may occur incidental to this project is not prohibited under the final 4(d) rule (50 CFR §17.40(o)). This project is consistent with the forest plan, the description of the proposed action in the programmatic biological opinion, and activities that do not require special exemption from taking prohibitions applicable to the northern long-eared bat; therefore, the programmatic biological opinion satisfies the Forest Service's responsibilities under ESA section 7 (a)(2) relative to the northern long-eared bat for this project (BA, p. 8). A letter of concurrence was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on February 12, 2019.

10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment**. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. The action is consistent with the Ouachita National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. (See EA page 16)

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

OBJECTION OPPORTUNITIES

This decision was subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218; no objection was received.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

As per 36 CFR 218.12, this decision may be signed and implemented on, but not before, the fifth business day following the close of the objection filing period.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Chip Stokes, 1523 Hwy 270 East, Mount Ida, AR 71957, (870) 867-2101.

Shalonda Guy 12/10/2019

SHALONDA L. GUY Date
District Ranger

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