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## STATE OF NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

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5 May 2026

Maille Gray, Permit Lead  
Mining Act Reclamation Program  
Mining and Minerals Division (MMD)  
1220 South St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

***RE: Minimal Impact Exploration Permit Application, Lordsburg Playa Lithium Exploration Project, Hidalgo County, NM, Permit No. HI025EM; NMDGF No. NMERT-5931.***

Dear Ms. Gray,

The New Mexico Department of Wildlife (Department) has reviewed the proposed lithium exploration project referenced above. Frank Bain (Operator) is proposing to drill 6 exploration bore holes, to a depth of approximately 500 feet, from a total of 6 drill pad sites. The project area is located on land administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Township 23S, Range 20W, Sections 7, 8, 9, 17, 18 and 20. The proposed exploration project is anticipated to disturb a total area of approximately 2.7 acres. Staff from the Department, MMD, and New Mexico Environment Department and the Operator conducted a site inspection on 30 April 2026.

The application states that a wildlife survey was performed for the permit area and references a comment letter the Department sent to MMD on 20 November 2017 (NMDGF No. 18073) as the wildlife survey document. The Department's 2017 comment letter is not a wildlife survey and should not have been referenced as one in the permit application.

The permit application states that the Operator will use mud/fluid drilling techniques. Mud pits create an entrapment hazard for both terrestrial and volant wildlife species and should be fenced and covered by solid metal, plywood, or netting to exclude birds and bats. If netting is used, the Department recommends extruded plastic, knit, or woven netting. Monofilament netting should never be used due to its tendency to ensnare wildlife, usually resulting in injury or death. Netting material must be held taught over a rigid and adequately supportive frame to prevent sagging into the mud pits. Mesh size for both fencing and netting should not be larger than three eighths of an inch to exclude smaller animals.

The Department also strongly recommends that the Operator consider using a closed-loop drilling system. Closed-loop systems eliminate the need to build fences, install netting, or use other materials to exclude wildlife from mud pits; reduce the amount of surface disturbance associated with the drill pad site; and consume significantly less water.

During drilling operations, it is also important to prevent wildlife from entering and becoming trapped in stockpiled drill pipes. Capping piping is the most effective way to prevent wildlife entry. At a minimum, the Department recommends that each section of pipe should be visually inspected prior to use to verify that wild animals are not inside.

The permit application does not provide a BLM-approved native reclamation seed mix for review. The Department recommends that only certified weed-free seeds be used to avoid inadvertently introducing non-native species to the reclamation site and that sterile seed sources not be used. Any alternative plant species, used to substitute for primary plant species that are unavailable at the time of reclamation, should also be native. When possible, the Department recommends using seeds that are sourced from the same region and habitat type as the reclamation site and suggests including seeds from a region that represents potential future climatic conditions at the site.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed exploration project. If you have any questions, please contact Ron Kellermueller, Mining and Energy Habitat Specialist, at (505) 270-6612 or [ronald.kellermueller@dof.nm.gov](mailto:ronald.kellermueller@dof.nm.gov).

Sincerely,

Virginia Seamster, Ph.D.  
Assistant Chief  
Wildlife Management Division  
Ecological and Environmental Planning Section

cc: USFWS NMES Field Office