

# HARD-ROCK MINING IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

BLACK BUTTE COPPER PROJECT  
MEAGHER COUNTY, MONTANA



TINTINA MONTANA INC.  
DBA SANDFIRE RESOURCES AMERICA INC.

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, MONTANA

May 1st, 2024

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montana's Hard-Rock Mining Impact Act requires developers of hard-rock mines with more than seventy-five employees to work with local governments to assess and finance infrastructure and services required to facilitate mine development and operation. The purpose of the Act is to mitigate fiscal impacts of mining projects. Projected mine-related costs are reported in a Mining Impact Plan, which also describes the mine developer's responsibilities in providing support to cover necessary capital and operating needs. Local governments are consulted annually to monitor community impacts and update the Impact Plan if necessary.

Tintina Montana, Inc. worked with Meagher County public schools, the county government, and the city of White Sulphur Springs to develop a Hard-Rock Mining Impact Plan in 2018 for the company's Black Butte Copper Project. The plan is filed with the Montana Hard-Rock Mining Impact Board and submitted to the local governments.

This report fulfills the annual monitoring required by the Hard-Rock Mining Impact Act. The report includes information on the mineral development timeline and employment data for the Black Butte Copper Project. Employment data and the mineral development timeline are shared with the State of Montana and local governments to identify new or changing community impacts.

### Summary Findings

The projected mineral development timeline for the Black Butte Copper Project, established in the Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan (2019), has lengthened due to impacts on the project from the Covid-19 pandemic and litigation surrounding the Mine Operating Permit. According to the original timeline, Tintina Montana, Inc. expected to commence mining operations after a three-year construction period triggered by the issuance of a Final Mine Operating Permit. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issued a Final Mine Operating Permit for the Black Butte Copper Project on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Tintina has completed partial initial surface earthworks for the project, with further construction not yet initiated.

The 2024 monitoring effort included consultation with local government and discussion of the changes to the mineral development timeline. The delays to the project mean that the timing and amounts of payments identified in the Impact Plan may not match the actual fiscal impacts realized by local government in the affected area: Meagher County, the City of White Sulphur Springs, and White Sulphur Springs School District #8. After consultation with the local government entitite, the 2024 Annual Monitoring Report recommends no immediate adjustments or amendments to the Impact Plan. It also acknowledges that future adjustments or amendments may be necessary<sup>1</sup> after establishing clarity the project timeline.

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<sup>1</sup>Adjustments to an Impact Plan are contingent on mutual written consent between the developer and an affected unit of local government. Amendments are submitted via a petition from the county commissioners. For more information on the conditions and mechanisms for adjustments and amendments, see Tintina Montana, *Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan – Black Butte Copper Project*. (2019).

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tintina Montana, Inc. (Tintina) received a Final Permit for the Black Butte Copper Project from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The issuance of the Final Permit allowed Tintina to begin construction on the project and served as the official commencement of Year 1 of the development timeline.

As a part of the permitting process, Tintina prepared and submitted a Hard-Rock Mining Impact Plan (Impact Plan) to the Montana Hard-Rock Mining Impact Board and affected local government units per the Hard-Rock Mining Impact Act (HRMIA).

The HRMIA is designed to mitigate fiscal impacts to local governments affected by new large-scale mineral development projects, including mining, related industrial processing, and transportation activities. To assess and mitigate community impacts associated with mineral development, the HRMIP requires the Impact Plan to project infrastructure and services necessary to facilitate development. The Impact Plan requires that the developer cover the costs of these impacts through tax prepayments or other financing mechanisms. In addition to the Impact Plan, the HRMIP requires annual monitoring in consultation with local governments and outlines stipulations for Plan adjustments and amendments as required.

This report fulfills the requirement to conduct annual monitoring of the Impact Plan in consultation with local governments. The purpose of annual monitoring is to reassess the mineral development timeline and changes in employment associated with mining activities, to communicate these changes (if any) to affected local governments, and to consult with the local governments to identify changes in infrastructure or services costs (if any) that would trigger new tax prepayments or other funding assistance from the developer.

This report begins with background from the existing Impact Plan, including contact information for affected local government units, a review of existing local government impact cost estimates, and important definitions. Next, this report describes the process for updating the mineral development employment projections with an internal survey of company employees and contractors and updates the mineral development timeline as necessary. Finally, this report includes a summary of engagement with affected local governments and recommended changes to community impact cost estimates, if any.

Note: A related program included in the HRMIA allocates twenty-five percent of annual metal mines license tax collections to be used by counties and communities to diversify and strengthen their local economies while the mine is still operating and to finance economic, workforce, and fiscal impacts after mine closure. These longer-term planning and economic development resources are separate from the direct mining impacts that are the subject of the Impact Plan and are beyond the scope of this monitoring report.

## 1.1 Affected Local Government Units

Local government units affected by the Black Butte Copper Project are identified in the Impact Plan. They are Meagher County, the City of White Sulphur Springs, and White Sulphur Springs School District #8. Contact information for each local government is below.

Meagher County—County Commissioners

15 W. Main Street

White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645

Rod Brewer, Chair

(406) 547-3612 EXT

[jdeems@meagherco.net](mailto:jdeems@meagherco.net)

City of White Sulphur Springs

105 West Hampton

White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645

Rick Nelson, Mayor

(406) 547-3911

[wss@itstriangle.com](mailto:wss@itstriangle.com)

School District #8

405 S. Central Ave

White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645

Justin Barnes, Superintendent

406-547-3351 EXT 205

[jbarnes@whitesulphur.k12.mt.us](mailto:jbarnes@whitesulphur.k12.mt.us)

## 1.2 Existing Community Impact Cost Projections

Through consultation with affected local governments, the Impact Plan projected net impact costs related to the development of the Black Butte Copper Project as follows:

For Meagher County, the plan projects net impact costs of \$338,700 which has been mitigated and paid by tax prepayments over the three year designated increment. No payments were requested in the prior year. Going forward, impacts are now reviewed on a yearly basis.

For the City of White Sulphur Springs, the plan projects net impact costs of \$98,300 which has been mitigated and paid over the three year designated increment with tax prepayments. No payments were requested in the prior year. Going forward, impacts are now reviewed on a yearly basis.

For School District #8, the plan projected no net impact costs. If net impact costs do occur, they will be mitigated with grants through the adjustment procedures outlined in the Impact Plan and will be reviewed yearly. No payments were requested in the prior year.

### 1.3 Definitions

Important definitions included in the Impact Plan for the Black Butte Copper Project that are relevant for this annual monitoring report include:

"Affected Local Government Unit"—a local government unit within which a large-scale mineral development is located or that will experience a need to increase services or facilities as a result of the commencement of large-scale mineral development in accordance with an adopted impact plan.

"Mineral Development Employee"—a person who resides within the jurisdiction of an affected local government unit as a result of employment with a large-scale mineral development or its contractors or subcontractors.

"Mineral Development Student"—a student whose parent or guardian resides within the jurisdiction of an affected local government unit as a result of employment with a large-scale mineral developer, its contractors, or subcontractors.

"Non-resident Mineral Development Employee"—a Mineral Development Employee who is not originally from the impact area and moves into an affected local government jurisdiction within one year prior to or any time after obtaining employment resulting from the mineral development.

"Resident Mineral Development Employee"—a Mineral Development Employee that has resided within an affected local government jurisdiction, as identified in an impact plan, for at least one year prior to the date of hire.

## 2.0 ANNUAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The HRMIA requires that the Impact Plan project community impacts associated with mining and related activities. These impacts are projected using information on the number of mineral development employees and students living in and relocating to the region where the mine is located, along with an updated mineral development timeline.

### 2.1 Mineral Development Employment Survey

The Impact Plan for the Black Butte Copper Project requires the following information on mineral development employment be gathered and reported annually:<sup>1</sup>

Total number of Mineral Development Employees	20
Total number of Mineral Development Employees in Meagher County	17
Total number of Mineral Development Employees in White Sulphur Springs	10
Total number of Mineral Development Contractors & Subcontractors in 2021	55
Total number of Mineral Development Contractors & Subcontractors in 2022	40
Total number of Mineral Development Contractors & Subcontractors in 2023	40
Total number of Mineral Development Contractors & Subcontractors in 2024	27
Total number of Residential Mineral Development Employees	11
Total number of Non-Residential Mineral Development Employees	6
Total number of Commuting Mineral Development Employees	3
School-age dependents in School District #8	4
School-age dependents of Residential Mineral Development Employees in School District #8	4

Figure 1: 2024 Tintina Montana, Inc. Employee and Contractor Survey Data<sup>2</sup>

For comparison, Figure 2 shows the year-over-year results of the employee and contractor survey data.

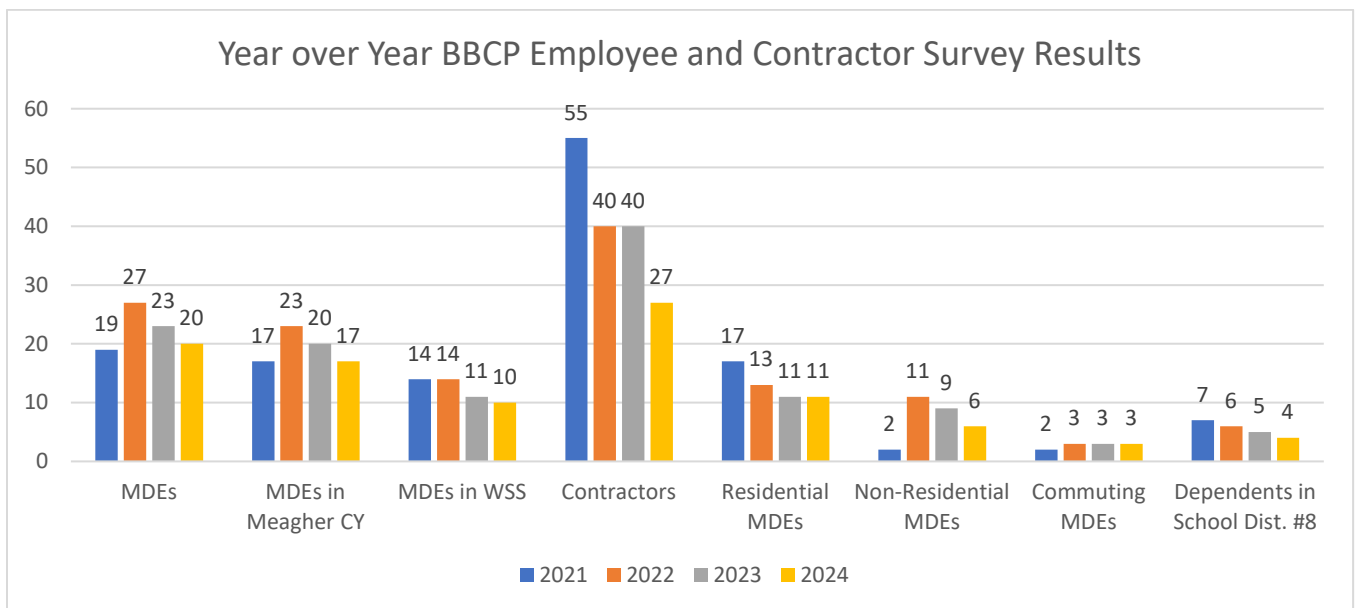


Figure 2: 2021-2024 Tintina Montana, Inc. Employee and Contractor Survey Data<sup>3</sup>

This information is intended to help affected local governments monitor actual fiscal impacts related to the Black Butte Copper Project and mitigate those impacts if there are discrepancies between the actual impacts and projections in the Impact Plan. Per the Impact Plan, any additional monitoring of fiscal impacts related to the Black Butte Copper Project is the responsibility of the affected local governments.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of the contractors in calendar year 2023-2024 reflects work on the drilling program for the Johnny Lee Lower Zone.

<sup>3</sup> MDE = Mineral Development Employee, Meagher CY = Meagher County, WSS= White Sulphur Springs

## 2.2 Mineral Development Timeline

The Impact Plan includes a timeline of mineral development activities, including permitting, construction, mining, and closure activities. The mineral development timeline helps affected communities understand the timing of different activities they can use to anticipate changes in services, maintenance, and infrastructure demands that may have a fiscal impact.

### Permitting Timeline

On April 9th, 2020, the DEQ released a positive Record of Decision regarding a Mine Operating Permit for the Black Butte Copper Project. The Record of Decision was followed by the issuance of a Final Permit on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

### Construction Timeline

Tintina began Phase 1 of construction on-site of the Black Butte Copper Project on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Phase 2 of construction, involving further on-site earthwork and initial construction of mining facilities, has not yet been initiated. The Montana Supreme Court decided in favor of Tintina's Mine Operating Permit on February 26, 2024. Prior to beginning Phase 2 of construction, the Company will complete trade off studies and a Feasibility Study, secure bonding, secure financing, and need approval for construction by its Board of Directors.

### Mining and Reclamation Timeline

The life of the development, including construction, operations, and reclamation, is estimated to last thirteen years.

## 3.0 CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

As required by the Impact Plan, in mid-April 2024 Tintina shared initial survey data and information on the mineral development timeline with affected local governments and consulted with them to identify any changes to the original projections for net impact costs in the Impact Plan.

Tintina's consultation included a meeting each local government unit to answer questions and solicit feedback on community impacts and costs associated with the Black Butte Copper Project.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The affected local governments each expressed that survey data contained in this report closely aligned with projections on fiscal impacts and other impacts identified in the Impact Plan. Local government officials were informed that changes in the mineral development timeline may materially impact the timing (if not the amount) of employment and development population projections. Tintina reinforced their commitment to work with local government and adjust or amend the plan if necessary. Finally, the consultation included an explanation of the

stipulations for plan adjustments and amendments if actual costs diverge from the projected costs in the Impact Plan.

Based on the third annual employee and contractor survey results and direct communication with affected local government units, the 2024 Annual Monitoring Report recommends no immediate changes to the existing Impact Plan for the Black Butte Copper Project.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on data required to be included in the survey, see the Hard-Rock Mining Impact Board's *Guide to the Implementation of the Hard-Rock Mining Impact Act and The Property Tax-Base Sharing Act* (2008).