MINUTE ITEM

This Calendar Item No. 28 was approved as Minute Item No. 28 by the State Lands Commission by a vote of 3 to 0 at its 2/22/79 meeting.

CALENDAR ITEM

28.

2/79
W 7314
Smith

CERTIFICATION OF NEGATIVE DECLARATION
FOR PROSPECTING PERMIT

APPLICANT: Vinnell Mining and Mineral Corporation
1145 Westminister Avenue
Alhambra, California 91083

TYPE OF LAND: School land.

AREA AND LOCATION:
Section 16, T17N, R13E, SBB&M, Clark Mountain Area, San Bernardino County (approximately 90 miles east of Barstow).

PROPOSAL: To evaluate the potential for mineral values other than oil, gas and geothermal resources of the subject State lands. The primary exploratory objectives is to determine if fluorspar ore exists in commercial quantities, and, if so, propose a plan for its extraction. Major industrial demand for flourspar is in the steel industry where it is used as a flux in open hearth steel furnaces. There is no fluorspar mined in California.

METHOD OF EXPLORATION:
The exploration program has been defined in 3 phases. Phase I consists of surface geological mapping, taking 2 men 60 days to complete; Phase II will include the construction of shallow trenches. The trenches will be approximately 20' to 30' long, 2 wide and 1' deep with all trenches being filled when sampling is complete. Phase III will consist of an estimated 30 core holes to be drilled to a depth of 100 to 125 feet.

PREREQUISITE TERMS:

1. The State Lands Commission's staff, in accordance with Article 10, Section 2905(b) of the Cal. Adm. Code, has conducted an initial study and has concluded that the project will not

A 34

S 16

have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, in compliance with subsection(c) of Section 2905, a negative declaration was prepared and filed with the State Clearinghouse.

2. The State Clearinghouse acknowledged receipt of the negative declaration and has completed the required review.

3. In accordance with Chapter 1200, Statutes of 1977, the State Lands Commission must complete and certify a negative declaration within 105 days following receipt of a completed application and approve or deny the project within 1 year. This application was certified complete as of November 20, 1978.

EXHIBITS: A. Location Map. B. Negative Declaration.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

1. DETERMINE THAT AN EIR HAS NOT BEEN PREPARED FOR THIS PROJECT BUT THAT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION HAS BEEN PREPARED BY THE COMMISSION'S STAFF.

2. CERTIFY THAT NEGATIVE DECLARATION #236 HAS BEEN COMPLETED IN COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA OF 1970, AS AMENDED, AND THAT THE STATE GUIDELINES; AND THAT THE COMMISSION HAS REVIEWED AND CONSIDERED THE INFORMATION CONTAINED THEREIN.

3. DETERMINE THAT THE PROPOSED PROJECT WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

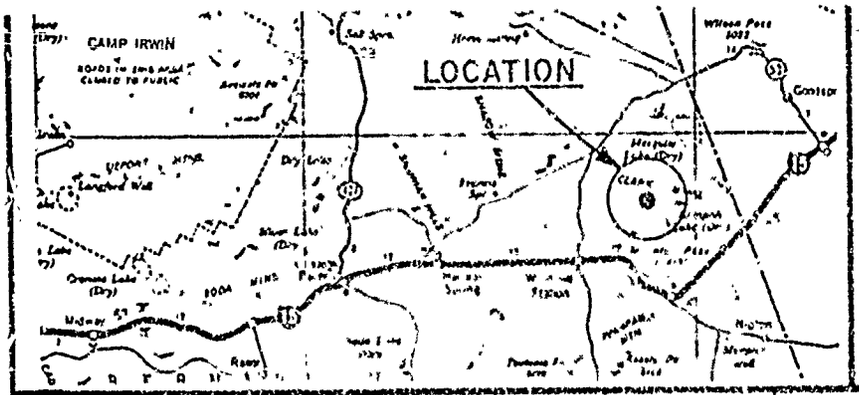

EXHIBIT "A"

W 7314

STATE LANDS COMMISSION

Application for Prospecting Permit

Section 16, T. 17 N., R. 13 E., S.B.B.&M.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

SCALE: 1:62500

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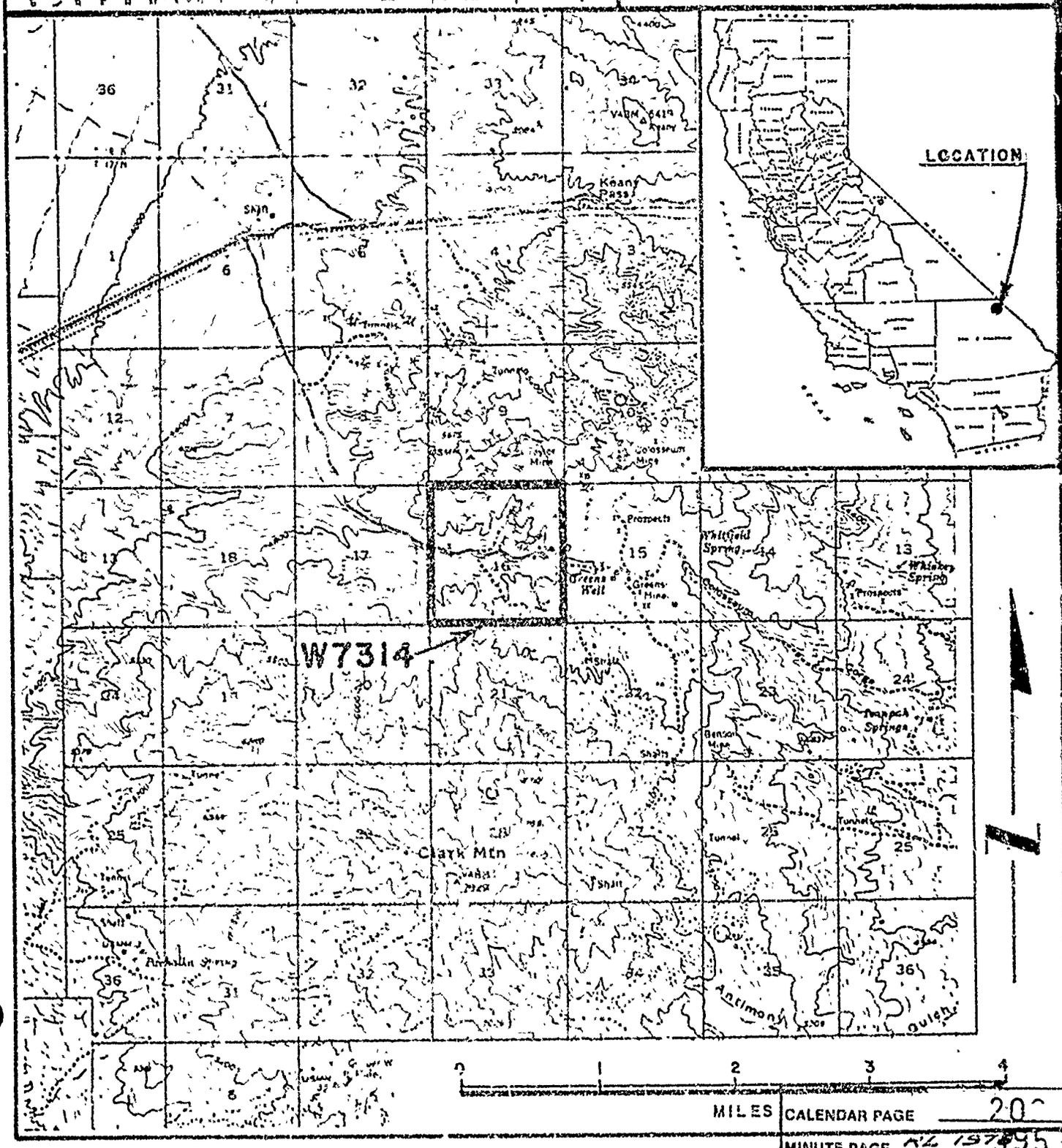

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EXHIBIT B

NEGATIVE DECLARATION
Vinnell Mining & Minerals Corporation
W-7314

This Negative Declaration is prepared by the State Lands Commission in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

The Vinnell Mining and Minerals Corporation proposes to conduct a mineral exploration program within the Clark Mountain area of San Bernardino County More specifically within Section 16, T.17N., R.13E., S.B.M. (See attached Exhibit A). Of primary interest is the potential occurrence of an economic deposit of fluorspar.

The Initial Study upon which this Negative Declaration is based, was prepared by the State Lands Commission's staff incorporating data submitted by the applicant.

The Initial Study was circulated for review as a means of fulfilling the consultation requirements of Sections 15066, 15080, and 15083 of the State EIR Guidelines. Responses to comments received during this consultation process have been attached at the end of the Initial Study. A list of those persons contacted is attached for your information.

Based upon such Initial Study, the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

INITIAL STUDY

Prospecting Permit - W 7314

San Bernardino County

1. Project and Its Location.

An application has been [illegible]ived from Vinnell Mining and Minerals Corporation to prospect [illegible] fluorspar on Section 16, T. 17 N., R. 13 E., S.B.B.& M. Se[illegible]n 16 is located on the north side of Clark Mountain, approx[illegible]ately 17 miles northeast of Windmill Station Junction, which is adjacent to Highway 91, some 88 miles east of Barstow.

2. Statement of the Objectives Sought by the Proposed Project:

It is the intent of the proposed prospecting program to evaluate the total mineral potential of all of the section with the primary target being the area of the Fluorspar outcrop.

3. General Description of the Project:

The exploration program is anticipated to be conducted in four progressive phases with the results of each preceding phase determining the need and scope of the successive phases. The first phase will be geological mapping and will be detailed in the area of the present Fluorspar exposures with less detail in the balance of the section. It is estimated it will take 2 men 60 days including drafting to complete the first phase. The second phase involves trenching and will also require 2 men 60 days, this includes lab work. The trenches will be approximately 2 feet wide by one foot deep and will vary in length from 20 to 30 feet across the mineralized zone, providing access for sampling. Total length of the trenching program will be approximately 500 feet and all trenches will be filled when the sampling is completed.

The third phase, which may overlap the second phase, will consist of exploratory drilling and involve a crew of 4 to 6 men for a period of 6 months. It is estimated that about 30 core holes will be drilled to a depth of 100 to 125 feet to delineate the potential ore deposit [illegible]tional holes will be drilled if indications warrant. A p[illegible]ussion type air-drill will be used, the hole diameters will [illegible] inches. Each hole will be cemented and capped with a marker after completion.

The fourth phase would be metallurgical testing and a feasibility study to determine the ore reserves, amendability to concentration, and production costs.

It may be necessary [illegible] approximately 1,000 feet of access road for the [illegible] however, the need could be considerably less and [illegible] determined as the exploration program progresses [illegible] on of roads must be approved by the State [illegible]

4. Description [illegible] ting:

Section 16 [illegible] ern Mojave Desert. The biota and ecology [illegible] of high desert areas with the major physic[illegible] mon to the great basin providence. Clark Mount[illegible] physical feature in the area, rising to [illegible] level, three miles south of Section 16

The land fe[illegible] are typical of the Mojave Desert area. They [illegible] topography with rounded hills, broad valleys and [illegible] The drainage through Section 16 is defined by [illegible] canyon running westerly into a large basin [illegible] through the Kingston Wash and eventually draining [illegible] north of Baker. This drainage course throug[illegible] intersects the Clark Mountain Range. The area und[illegible] is an isolated desert slope adjoining high mo[illegible] surrounded by lower desert basins. The severe [illegible] places extreme demands on plant and animal life [illegible] with great temperature variations, sand storms, [illegible] with only occasional precipitation capable of [illegible] to any degree; yet, over 600 species of plan[illegible] classified and found to exist in these high [illegible]

Grasses are [illegible] and wet seasons are short lived. The lack of [illegible] encourages growth of herbs. Common brush and gra[illegible] area are Sagebrush, Greasewood, Rabbitbrush, [illegible] wood, Desert Sunflower, Needlebush, Indian Gras[illegible] Bayonet. Although the area may be classi[illegible] pine belt, there are very few trees on S[illegible] do exist are Utah Juniper, up to 10 feet [illegible] mahogany, Tamarisk in the washes, and Apache Pin[illegible] in the higher areas.

Common an[illegible] by day, but emerge at night to forage fo[illegible] evident in the area are a limited nu[illegible] Cottontails, Porcupine, Desert Mous[illegible] Squirrel, Coyote. Fox,

Skunk, and Bat. Birds are not common, but do exist in the form of Hawk, Quail, Dove, Swallow, Roadrunner, Jay, Owl, and Sparrow. The only reptiles observed on Section 16 were the Western Rattlesnake and the Desert Horned Toad, but the area is conducive to the development of the Gopher Snake, Sidewinders in the lower areas, and Lizards.

In 1971, Mr. Richard A. Weaver and Mr. John M. Hall of the State Department of Fish and Game made a study of the bighorn sheep in the Clark, Kingston and Nopah Mountain Ranges, San Bernardino and Inyo Counties. Using aerial and ground surveys their investigation reported siting 23 bighorn sheep spread over three sites in the Clark Mountain area, while the estimated population for the total region was 40. The sites in the Clark mountain area are the West Ridge of Clark Mountain, Pachalka Spring and the Benson Mine Site. The Benson Mine is approximately 1-½ miles miles from the S.E. corner of Section 16, Pachalka Spring is approximately 3.3 miles southwest of the SW corner of Section 16.

The report states that most bighorn sheep are found above 3,500 feet elevation. Primarily because of the better grass especially in areas where there are stands of perennial grasses and because of the more suitable topography. For these reasons in the Clark Mountain area, the bighorn sheep are confined to either side of Keaney Pass (which is 2.4 miles north of the north section line of Section 16) and extend eastward into Nevada, with the subject section lying between these two areas.

The bighorn sheep are usually in competition with livestock but since grazing in the Clark Mountain area is primarily limited to the lower elevations, the competition is believed to be mainly in the nature of displacement at water holes. Droughts, depletion of food supply by domestic livestock, diseases from invading livestock, increased use of the land by man and the appropriation of water sources and poaching have retarded the advance of the number of bighorn sheep.

Two different populations of bighorn sheep exists in the Clark Range and some movement and exchange of these animals occur. Occasionally rams have been seen in the lower open desert, but this is the exception. While portions of the Clark Range areas are considered excellent for the bighorn, there is a lack of permanent water.

In their report Weaver and Hall proposed the acquisition of certain school sections within the Clark Mountain area that

they considered valuable to bighorn habitat. The subject section was not one of them. Since the subject section lies between the existing bighorn habitats of the Clark Range it would be natural to assume they may cross the section if migrating from one area to the other. However, this would not be the only avenue of migration across Keaney Pass and if prospecting activities were being conducted on the section the bighorn would probably avoid the area. No bighorn have been observed in the area, probably due to the elevation and the lack of food and water.

Water is practically nonexistent, with no surface water evident except during thunderstorms. The total rainfall will vary greatly from year to year. There are no springs or wells on Section 16. About 1-½ miles to the east, in Section 14, is the Whitfield Spring, but it is apparently of little consequence as a source of water, Green Wells another water source located in Section 15, about one-half mile from the east line of Section 16 is actually an old mine shaft 250 feet deep with water standing at 104 feet. It has been reported that pumping produces three gallons per minute from this shaft; however, there is no available data on the chemical analysis of water, making its value in the mining operation questionable if it could be acquired for such use.

The three main stratigraphic units recognized in the general area are the pre-Cambrian granite and gneiss, the Goodsprings Dolomite and the Prospect Mountain Quartzite both of Cambrian age.

Two major faults traverse the area, the Clark Mountain Fault, which parallels the east line of Section 16 placing the Goodsprings Dolomite in contact with the pre-Cambrian granitics, and the Mesquite thrust fault about two miles to the west, which places the Prospect Mountain quartzite over the Goodsprings Dolomite. The fluorspar deposits of Clark Mountain represent local replacement bodies occurring along fissures within the Goodsprings Dolomite. It is in these areas of mineralization that the immediate interest lies. The Clark Mountain Fault is a pre-mineral fault that has attracted a great deal of prospecting in the past, as evidenced by the numerous mine shaft and adits along the fault zone. Mining and exploration have been the major interest of the area, with an intermittent mining history dating back to 1869 when copper was produced from the Copper World Mine west of Clark Mountain and culminating in the discovery and development of the rare earth deposit at Mountain Pass in 1949.

Presently there is no obvious use of the land by man except by a very limited few who may enjoy the remoteness and isolation

of the area. There are no known landmarks of historical interest or of archaeological importance. The closest population center is Mountain Pass, approximately 6-½ miles to the southeast on Highway 91. There are no recreational facilities near or within the vicinity of the section. None of the "Rock Hound: or gem stone guide books indicate this area as one of interest to collectors, however, the area could be of interest to serious prospectors. There is insufficient animal life to interest hunters, either in the immediate vicinity of or in the section,

5. & 6. Assessment of Impact:

The proposed operation and its impact upon the environment would be only slightly evident as a result of the exploration. Exploration by drilling would cause very little disturbance. With the use of a percussion type air drill, no fluids will be introduced into the drill hole, thus eliminating any possible contamination. Certain exhaust fumes, noise and dust will be emitted from the diesel power plant, however, because of the remoteness of the area, they will be insignificant and last only during the drilling phase. Sparse vegetation in the mineralized areas will be temporarily effected by the movement of equipment on the access roads, and excavation of narrow, shallow trenches for sampling. However, after back filling of the trenches and cementing of the core holes, at the termination of the exploration, the overall effect on the topography will be negligible and after a season of rain, barely perceptible. Wildlife will temporarily leave the immediate area and migrate to adjacent areas away from the activity.

7. Any Significant Environmental Effects Which Cannot be Avoided if the Proposal is Implemented:

Any adverse effects, such as noise, dust or fumes, which may result from the exploratory phase are unavoidable but will be of short duration (6 to 8 months, daylight operating only). All equipment used during the exploration phase will be removed upon the completion of the exploration work.

8. Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize the Impact:

Under permit restrictions and rules and regulations of the State Lands Commission, the applicant agrees to perform exploratory operations in a manner which will be least detrimental to the environment. Any construction of access roads on State lands involving cut and/or fill must first be approved by the State Lands Commission in accordance with the terms of the permit. Dust would be suppressed on all roads in the vicinity and the

immediate area of exploration would be closed to any outside recreational activity for security and safety of the operation.

9. Alternatives to the Proposed Action:

The most obvious alternative to the granting of this prospecting permit is its denial in order to retain the subject property as undisturbed desert property. However, by virtue of its mining history, the area bears scars of early prospecting of such an extent that the proposed exploration would be unnoticeable. For example, in the center of the section, the concrete foundations of a mill that was operated in Trespass in the 1950's still remain.

10. Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity:

The prospecting phase of the proposed operation will be of short duration. This short term exploratory program could result in long-term benefits to man if a commercial discovery is made.

There are no existing structures on the section and none are planned for the initial phase of exploration; however, should the deposit prove to be commercially valuable, consideration shall be given to the construction of a beneficiating plant that may or may not be built on Section 16, depending on the size of the ore reserves and availability of a water supply. If commercial reserves are proven it would permit the orderly development of a mineral that is much needed by several major industries, but one that has limited known domestic reserves. Such commercial operations will be discussed in a separate Environmental Impact Report covering that phase.

11. Any Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes Which Would be Involved in the Proposed Action Should it be Implemented:

The project should not cause any irreversible environmental changes during this prospecting phase.

12. The Growth-Inducing Impact of the Proposed Action:

The exploration for fluorspar in the Clark Mountain area would have a negligible impact on growth because of its short duration and the limited number of people involved.

13. Energy Conservation:

None for the exploration phase.

14. Organizations and Person Consulted

This study was prepared by the staff of the State Lands Commission using their expertise and information supplied by the applicant.