

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOR

MINING OF PROPOSED PUKHRORA SOAPSTONE MINE

AT

VILLAGE: PUKHRORA, TEHSIL: DIDIHAT,
DISTRICT: PITHORAGARH, STATE: UTTARAKHAND
AREA: 8.30 HA, PROPOSED CAPACITY: 25,724 TPA (MAXIMUM)

PROJECT PROPONENT

SHRI. HARISH CHANDRA JOSHI (OWNER)
VILLAGE & POST: AICHOLI, PITHORAGARH
DISTT- PITHORAGARH (UTTRAKHAND)

PREPARED BY

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For EIA studies as 'A' Category Consultant

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Report

Mr. Harish Chandra Joshi proposes the Soapstone Mine extending over an area of 8.30 ha (25,724 TPA (maximum) of Soapstone) in Village- Pukhrora, Tehsil- Didihat, District-Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand. The proposal for TOR was considered in its meeting dated 23rd October 2019 and since the project is greater than 5 ha, therefore comprehensive EIA report shall be prepared. The draft Environmental Impact Assessment report has been prepared to comply with the Terms of Reference (ToR) No. 127/SEAC dated 18th November, 2019 issued from SEAC, under EIA notification of the MoEF&CC dated 14th September, 2006 and amended thereof, for seeking environmental clearance for mining of soapstone in the applied mining lease area.

1.2 Identification of Project & Project Proponent

1.2.1 Identification of Project

The Proposed Soapstone mine is executed over an area of 8.30 ha in Village - Pukhrora, Tehsil - Didihat of District-Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand. The maximum production rate is of 25,724 TPA of soapstone production.

The cost of the project is Rs. 25 lakhs.

1.2.2 Project Proponent

The owner of this proposed soapstone mine is Mr. Harish Chandra Joshi. The proposed Soapstone Mine having an area of 8.30 Ha (25,724 TPA (maximum) of Soapstone) is in Village - Pukhrora, Tehsil - Didihat of District - Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand. The LOI of proposed Soapstone Mine was granted in favour of Mr. Harish Chandra Joshi for period of 20 years by the Govt. of Uttarakhand. The proposed rate of production is 25,724 TPA (maximum) of soapstone. The estimated project cost is Rs 25 lakhs. The expected life of mine is 20 years.

Address of the applicant

Mr. Harish Chandra Joshi

Village & Post- Aicholi, Pithoragarh

Dist – Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand

2.0 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

2.1 Nature of the Project

The proposed Soapstone Mine, project will adopt opencast semi mechanized mine method. The mine is executed over a lease area of about 8.30 ha, for the production of 25,724 TPA of soapstone.

Therefore as per the EIA Notification dated 15th January, 2016 and 1st July, 2016, the project comes under “**B1**” Category since the area is greater than 5 ha.

2.2 Size of the Project

The proposed Soapstone mining project extends over an area of 8.30 ha with the target maximum production capacity of mine is about 25,724 TPA of Soapstone.

2.3 Anticipated Life of Project and Cost of the Project

The projected life of the mine is 20 years. The cost of the project is about Rs. 25 lakhs.

2.4 Location of the Project

The proposed Soapstone Mine lease comes under Village- Pukhrora, Tehsil- Didihat, District- Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand. Geo-graphically the ML area extends from North Latitude 29°45'16.90" N to 29°45'16.85" N and East Longitude 79°56'8.91" E to 79°56'9.9634" E with an elevation of about 1760 m (highest) Reduced level (RL). The area falls in Survey of India toposheet No. 62 C/2.

2.5 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.5.1 Salient Features of Mine Lease

The salient features of mine lease are given in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: Salient Features of mine lease area

Sr. No.	Parameter	Description
1.	Name of the Mine	Proposed Pukhrora Soapstone Mining Project at Village Pukhrora, Tehsil Didihat, District: Pithoragarh
2.	Mining Capacity	25,724 (maximum) TPA of Soapstone
3.	Longitude Latitude	29°41'20.12" N to 29°41'21.81" N and 80°13'48.76"E to 80°13'52.41"E
4.	Method of mining	Opencast semi mechanized method
5.	Total ML area	8.30 Ha
6.	Extent of mechanization	Excavator shall be deployed for extraction of top soil, interburden and mineral. No drilling and blasting will be done.
7.	Bench height & width	3m
8.	Bench Slope	70°
9.	Slope of track	1:8 to 1:20
10.	Transportation of Material	The mineral will be supplied in the local market by trucks/tippers.
11.	Manpower	50 persons
12.	Water Requirement	7.0 KLD
13.	Source of Water	Seasonal Nallah/ Spring water.
14.	Greenbelt development / Plantation (Mine life end)	0.830 ha
15.	No. of trees proposed in the 5 years	3000

2.5.2 Mine Development and Production

The mining will be done semi-mechanized way in open cast method in quite a systematic manner by forming 6m high benches. However, there may be minor variation in the width and height which the lessee will keep on mending. The top soil and interburden to be scrapped with the help of JCB machine, dozer, shovels, pickaxe, spade & crowbar and will be stacked separately in dump yard located near the working pit. The developmental working will be done by construction of road/track to different working benches, removal of top soil and interburden. The soil will be filled into the bags, loaded on mules and unload into stockyard.

Year wise Production details are given in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Year wise Production of Soapstone Mine

Year	Saleable soapstone (Tonnes)
2017-18	Lapse period/Gap year
2018-19	10501
2019-20	18446
2020-21 (up to November 2020)	25724
Total	54671

The quantity of soil, interburden from pit to be generated during next five years is given in **Table 3** below:

Table 3: Quantity of Top Soil and interburden of Soapstone Mine

Years	Top Soil (cum)	Interburden (cum)
2017-18	Lapse period/Gap year	
2018-19	1903	9919
2019-20	1920	17425
2020-21	2840	24300
Total	6663	51644

2.5.3 Method of Mining

The salient points of proposed method of mining are given below:-

- Mining shall be carried out in one mining pit.
- It will be open cast semi-mechanized.
- Average thickness of soil has been considered as 0.50m & it shall be stacked separately.
- All the top soil, overburden & interburden shall be removed by the means of excavators.
- Both height & width of benches shall be kept 3m.
- Face slope of benches shall be 70° with 45° overall pit slope.
- The interburden and top soil will be temporarily dump separately towards the slope of working pit and shall be used for backfilling from third year onwards. Interburden shall be filled into mined out pit and later on thin soil shall be carped over it to restore maximum original topography of the area.
- Due to past mining it has been revealed that no mineral rejects is being generated. Small quantities of soapstone interlocked with magnesite and are inseparable and treated as interburden 5% of total exploitation of soapstone has been considered as mining losses.

2.5.4 Impact on Land Use, Reclamation of Mined Out Areas and Afforestation Programme

Impact on land use & reclamation of mined out areas

Opencast mining activities may alter the landscape of the lease area and also cause some disturbance to the surface features of the surrounding areas. Mining will be done after leaving 7.5 m safety barrier.

Plantation will be developed in consultation with district administration/ local authority, wherever feasible. The Existing land use pattern is agricultural land.

The impact on land form or physiography will be land use on the hilly terrain will undergo radical changes due to the open cast mining. During the next five years mining, 0.617 ha land will be degraded due to mining & allied activities.

Plantation will be raised in 7.5m barrier zone along the boundaries of the mining lease area by planting the native species around ML area, backfilled and reclaimed area, around water body, roads etc. in consultation with the local DFO/Agriculture department. The details of the year wise plantation have been shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Year wise Afforestation scheduled

Year	Area (ha)	No of saplings
First year		Lapse period
Second year	0.277	50
Third year	0.277	50
Fourth year	0.276	50
Total	0.830	150*

***Besides these 2850 nos. of more samplings will be done all along the periphery of the mine lease area/in the nearby van panchayat land**

2.6 LAND USE PATTERN

Presently (pre-mining), the land covered under the mine lease area is non-forest agricultural land.

3.0 BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

3.1 Soil Quality

Eight soil samples were collected in and around the mine lease area to assess the present soil quality of the region. In the study area, variations in the pH of the soil were found to be slightly basic (7.42 to 7.68). Electrical conductivity (EC) is a measure of the soluble salts and ionic activity in the soil. In the collected soil samples the conductivity ranged from 262 - 420 µmhos/cm.

Based on the results, it is evident that the soils are not contaminated by any polluting sources.

3.2 Meteorology

Meteorological data at the site was monitored during 1st March 2019 to 31th May 2019 representing winter season.

3.3 Ambient Air Quality

Ambient Air Quality Monitoring (AAQM) has been carried out at five locations during pre-monsoon season from March to May 2019. The minimum and maximum level of PM₁₀ recorded within the study area was in the range of 42.4 µg/m³ to 60.2 µg/m³ with the 98th percentile ranging between 50.6 µg/m³ to 58.5 µg/m³. The minimum and maximum level of PM_{2.5} recorded within the study area was in the range of 16.4 µg/m³ to 26.8 µg/m³ with the 98th percentile ranging between 18.5 µg/m³ to 22.5 µg/m³. The minimum and maximum concentration of SO₂ recorded within the study area was <5.00 to 5.8 µg/m³ with the 98th percentile ranging between 5.0 µg/m³ to 5.5 µg/m³. The minimum and maximum level of NO₂ recorded within the study area was in the range of 7.5 µg/m³ to 14.1 µg/m³ with the 98th percentile ranging between 12.2 µg/m³ to 14 µg/m³. The results thus obtained indicate that the concentrations of PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, SO₂ and NO₂ in the Ambient Air are well within the National Ambient Air Quality (NAAQ) standards for Industrial, Residential, Rural and other areas.

3.4 Water Quality

To assess the physical and chemical properties of water in the region, water samples from 8 locations were collected from various water sources around the mine lease area.

The pH was varying for ground water from 7.47 to 7.62 and the surface water are 7.46 to 7.53. The total dissolved solids in ground water are varying from 254 mg/l to 272 mg/l whereas in surface water varying from 253 mg/l to 273 mg/l. The chloride level in the ground water samples collected in the study area were ranging from 15 mg/l to a maximum of 21 mg/l, in surface water samples 15 mg/l to 20 mg/l. The hardness is varying from 172 mg/l to 190 mg/l, in surface water samples 165 mg/l to 188 mg/l.

The results indicate groundwater is generally in conformity with the drinking water standards (IS: 10500) and surface water is in conformity with IS-2296 standards.

3.5 Noise Levels

Ambient noise levels were measured at Five locations around the proposed mine site. The hourly night time noise levels ranges between 36.5 to 41.7 dB (A) and the hourly daytime Leq (Ld) varies from 41.6 to 51.7 dB (A). The daytime and nighttime noise levels in all the locations were observed to be within the permissible limits.

3.6 Ecological Environment

Based on the field studies and review of published literature, it is observed that there are two Schedule-I species present in the study area of the mine lease area i.e. Indian Leopard and Asiatic Black Bear. There are no wildlife sanctuaries and National Parks within the study area of 10-km radius. However, the nearest RF from the mine lease is Lori Reserve Forest at a distance of 4 km.

3.7 Social Environment

According to the 2011 census of India, Pithoragarh has a population of 48,34,39 whereas project tehsil Didihat is having population of 80,411. The total SC population in Pithoragarh district is 1,20,378 which is 24.90% of the total population, while ST population is 19,535 which is 4.04% of the total population. Similarly, the SC population of Project area is 26.75% (21,507)

and ST population of Project area is 1.36% (1094). The literate population in Pithoragarh district is 3,45,550, out of which male & female are 1,89,623 and 1,55,927 respectively. The male literates represent 54.88% while female represent 45.12% of the total population. The literate population of the project tehsil is 58,479 out of which 32,147 (93.84%) are male and 26,332 (72.43%) are female.

4.0 ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

4.1 Impact on Air Quality

Soapstone mine where PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ will be the main pollutants generated in mining activities. The emissions of Sulphur dioxide (SO_2), Nitrogen Oxide (NO_2) contributed by diesel operated equipment and vehicles movement were considered marginal as branded make and vehicles with PUC certificate will be operated only. Fugitive dust and particulates are major pollutants occurred in the mining activities. Fugitive emissions will be settled by 70- 80% by use of multiple water sprinklers. Prediction of impacts on air environment will be made with proposed production and net increase in PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions at the proposed site and at the 10 km radius of study area due to mining activities.

Air pollution sources in the operating mine was classified into two categories:

- i. Loading and unloading of mineral and OB, IB
- ii. Transportation on the haul road

4.2 Impact on Water Resources

Surface Water Resources

The topography of the area will not be largely changed in view of the proposed concurrent reclamation. During the mining activity period, there is a possibility of mixing of freshly disturbed material with the rain water. To take care of such happenings, retaining walls have been provided along the backfilled pits and along the soil and interburden dumps.

Groundwater Resources

The water table in hills is usually very deep and does not have any relevance with mining activities. However, concurrent restoration to original topography will not be disturbing the percolating water.

4.3 Impact on Water Quality

The impact on water quality will be confined to increased suspended solids during rain. The dumps will be secured with toe walls and rainy water will not carry significant suspended material.

4.4 Impact on Noise Levels and Ground Vibrations

With the mining operations, due to the deployment of machinery, operation for mine development, excavation and transportation of soapstone and men, it is imperative that noise levels would increase. Assessment of the hourly night time noise levels ranges between 36.5 to 41.7 dB (A) and the hourly daytime Leq (L_d) varies from 41.6 to 51.7 dB (A) within the study

area. It is also observed that these incremental noise levels will not significantly affect the existing ambient noise levels.

4.5 Impact on Soil

The environmental impacts of the mining activities on topsoil are based on the quantity of removal of topsoil and its dumping. In the present project as it is proposed to temporarily store the topsoil and use it for plantation schemes, no impact of dozing of topsoil is envisaged.

The soil erosion from overburden and interburden dumps is not envisaged in the present project, as sufficient measures as detailed in the EMP would be undertaken.

4.6 Impact on Flora and Fauna

There is no forest area in the core zone area of the lease. As the mining activity is restricted to core zone, no significant impact on the flora of the buffer zone due to the proposed mining of Soapstone is anticipated.

It is proposed to include *Alternanthera paronychioides*, *Cassia tora* and *Holoptelea integrifolia* in the plantation program as they serve as sinks for gaseous emissions. Extensive plantation comprising of pollutant resistant trees will be undertaken, which will serve not only as pollution sink but also as a noise barrier.

The incremental dust generations due to the mining operations, at the boundary of the mine lease are insignificant and it is also expected that with the adoption of mitigatory measures as suggested in EMP, the impact due to operation of the mine will be minimal on the terrestrial ecosystem and also on the adjacent forest area.

The impact on the fauna of the buffer zone due to the mining activity will be marginal. The proposed progressive plantation over a period of time will reduce the impact, if any, on the fauna.

4.7 Impact on Land Use Pattern

The proposed opencast mine will result in change the land use pattern of the ML area. The land degradation is expected during mining activities like excavation, overburden dumping, soil extraction etc. Land requirement for the project has been assessed considering functional needs.

4.8 Impact on Socio - Economic Aspects

The mine area does not cover any habitation. Hence the mining activity does not involve any displacement of human settlement. No public buildings, places, monuments etc exist within the lease area or in the vicinity. The mining operation will not disturb/ relocate any village or need resettlement. Thus no adverse impact is anticipated.

The impact of mining activity in the area is positive on the socio-economic environment of the region. The proposed Pukhrora Soapstone Mine will be providing employment to local population and it will be give preference to the local people whenever there is requirement of man power.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The summary of environmental mitigation measures are given in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Proposed Environmental Mitigation Measures

Impact Predicted	Suggestive measure
Disturbance of free movement / living of wild fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness camps will be conducted for labours to make them aware about sensitivity/importance of forest life. • No tract or new road for movement of labours or vehicles be laid in reserve forest area, this will prevent forest fragmentation, encroachment and human – animal encounter. • Care will be taken that noise produced during vehicles movement for carrying ore materials are within the permissible noise level. Higher noise level in the forest area will lead to restless and failure in detection of calls of mates and young ones. • Care will be taken that no hunting of animals carried out by labours. • If wild animals are noticed crossing the core zone, it will not be disturbed at all. • Labours will not be allowed to discards food, plastic etc., which can attract animals near the core site. • Only low polluting vehicle will be allowed for carrying ore materials. All vehicles allowed in the project site area will have to provide pollution under control certificate at the end of three months. • No honk will be allowed in the forest area, noise level will be within permissible limit (silent zone-50dB during day time) as per noise pollution (regulation and control), rules, 2000, CPCB norms.
Harvesting of forest flora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No tree cutting, chopping, lumbering, uprooting of shrubs and herbs should be allowed. • No pilling of ore material should in the reserve forest area. • Collections of economically important plants will be fully restricted.

6.0 ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

The Soapstone has been identified based on the result of geological investigations and exploration carried out by the Geological Survey of India (GSI). The mining projects are site specific as such alternate sites were not considered.

The mine is operated by opencast cum semi-mechanized method of mining. No other alternative technologies can be used because of the hard nature of the ore. Proposed mine is using eco-friendly measures to minimize the impact of mining on the surrounding environment.

7.0 COST ESTIMATES

The details of the cost to for the Environmental Management plan for next 3 years, the budget for Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) (per year) and year wise allocation of funds for the various activities proposed to be taken up under CSR programme has been given in **Table-6, Table 7 and Table 8** respectively.

Table 6: Budget for Environmental Management Plan for period of 3 years

S. No.	Measures	Cost (In Rs.)
1.	Water Sprinkling for dust suppression	2,16,000
2.	Environmental Monitoring : (i) Ambient Air Quality Monitoring (ii) Ambient Noise Monitoring (iii) Water Quality Sampling & Analysis (iv) Soil Quality Sampling & Analysis	1,00,000
3.	Plantation of 3000 trees along with their maintenance for green belt	3,00,000
4.	Cost for Retaining wall/Toe wall	46,000
Total		6,62,000

Table 7: Budget for Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) (per year)

S. No.	Measures	Cost (In Rs.) (per year)
1.	Sanitation facilities	5,000
2.	Skill Development for villagers	5,000
3.	Awareness to local farmers to increase yield of crop and fodder	5,000
4.	Plantation in the community areas/schools and on van panchayat land of nearby villages	10,000
Total		25,000

Table 8: Year wise allocation of funds for the various activities proposed to be taken up under CSR programme (per year)

S. No.	Activities	Allocation of Fund (Rs.)
1.	Health Camps	10,000
2.	Drinking Water Facilities	10,000
3.	Maintenance of foot track	20,000
4.	Donation for Temple Construction	5,000
5.	Donation for cultural activities in the surrounding areas	5,000
Total		50,000

8.0 ADDITIONAL STUDIES

8.1 Risk Assessment and Disaster Management Plan

The complete mining operation will be carried out under the management control and direction of a qualified mine manager holding Mines Manager's Certificate of Competency. Moreover, mining staff will be sent to refresher courses from time to time to keep them updated.

8.2 Disaster Management Plan

Emergency preparedness is an important aspect in the planning of Disaster Management. Personnel would be trained suitably and prepared mentally and physically in emergency response through carefully planned, simulated procedures. Similarly, the key personnel and essential personnel shall be trained in the operations.

9.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

9.1 Public Hearing

In consonance with the EIA notification dated 14th September 2006, vide section 1 (a) related to Public Hearing, the draft EIA/EMP report shall be submitted to the Uttarakhand Environment Protection & Pollution Control Board (UEPPCB) for public hearing

10.0 PROJECT BENEFITS

The impact on the civic amenities will be substantial after the commencement of mining activities. Medical facilities will be provided in the form of first-aid facility at the mine. These medical facilities will also be available to local people in the surrounding in case of emergencies.

- Generation of employment and improved standard of living;
 - Increased revenue to the State by way of royalty, taxes and duties; and
 - Superior communication and transport facilities etc.
- The employment of local people in primary and secondary sectors of project will upgrade the prosperity of the region.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

- The mining operations will meet the compliance requirements of MoEF&CC;
- Community impacts will be beneficial, as the project will generate significant economic benefits for the region;
- Adoption of Best Available Technology and Best Management Practices with more environmental friendly process; and
- With the effective implementation of the Environment Management Plan (EMP) during the mining activities, the proposed project can proceed without any significant negative impact on environment.

