

# Southern Empire Updates Permitting Status for its Oro Cruz Project in California

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TSX-V: SMP  
OTC: SMPEF  
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VANCOUVER, Jan. 16, 2024 - [Southern Empire Resources Corp.](#) (Southern Empire) (TSXV: SMP) announces that subsequent to approval by the Imperial County Planning Commission (ICPC) at a hearing held on January 10, 2024, its subsidiary, SMP Gold Corp., has received a Notice of Determination approving the Reclamation Plan for the Oro Cruz Project Exploration Plan of Operations (the Plan) that governs the proposed exploration drill program at its wholly-owned Oro Cruz Project located in Imperial County, California.

"Having previously received federal approvals from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act on September 1, 2023, the recent approval of the Oro Cruz Project Reclamation Plan by the Imperial County Planning Commission, the lead agency for permitting related to the California Environmental Quality Act, is a major step forward for Southern Empire. We look forward to drilling the high-grade, oxide gold zone of the Oro Cruz Cross Mine from which gold was last produced in 1996. I would like to especially thank our staff and consultants for their commitment to the Oro Cruz Project permitting process and our shareholders for their continued patience" commented Dale Wallster, Southern Empire's CEO.

The Plan proposes that SMP Gold Corp. conduct mineral exploration drilling activities (the Proposed Action) requiring up to 8.31 hectares (ha; 20.54 acres) of surface disturbance on, primarily, previously mined and disturbed land administered and managed by the United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The proposed temporary drill pads, operational staging site and access routes occur within an encompassing 253 ha (626 acre) Project Area (as defined in the Plan) located in the southwest corner of the 184,000-acre Picacho Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the latter designated to include important biological habitats, indigenous peoples' cultural sites and the historic Cargo Muchacho - Tumco Mining District. The Proposed Action is within areas previously disturbed by the historical American Girl Mining Joint Venture operations, which concluded in 1996 as gold prices declined and ultimately bottomed at US \$251.70 in August of 1999.

Highlights of the Plan include:

- Establishment of up to 65 drill pads in seven drill target areas
- Reverse Circulation (RC) and/or core drilling of up to 65 drill holes
- Improvement and construction of temporary access roads
- Creation of a staging area at the Cross Mine underground portal for infrastructure required to support future underground drill programs.

At the January 10, 2024 hearing, the ICPC made the following determinations regarding the Proposed Action and the Reclamation Plan:

1. The Oro Cruz Project will not have a significant effect on the environment.
2. A Negative Declaration was prepared for the Oro Cruz Project pursuant to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
3. Mitigation measures were made a condition of the approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan was adopted for the project.
5. A statement of Overriding Considerations was not adopted for the project.
6. Findings were made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

The Plan is designed in accordance with performance standards in 43 CFR 3809.420 and other Federal and

state laws related to environmental protection and protection of cultural resources and to attain the stated level of protection and reclamation required by specific laws in the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The BLM's Decision Record and signed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), the Environmental Assessment/Mitigated Negative Declaration and other associated documents were posted for public review on September 1, 2023, online at the BLM NEPA Register. The 2,895 pages of documentation supporting the Proposed Action and the Reclamation Plan are available at: Imperial County Planning and Development Services website and the Imperial County Notice of Determination is at: ICPC - Reclamation Plan #21-0001 Notice of Determination. Although Oro Cruz Project approvals have now been received from both the BLM and Imperial County, these are being appealed by parties opposing mining in Imperial County. The outcome of these appeals is yet to be determined.

Southern Empire's ongoing environmental and permitting efforts are coordinated by Del Fortner Consulting of Tucson, Arizona. Our broader environmental assessment and permitting team includes:

- Sespe Consulting, Inc., specialists on SMARA and CEQA baseline environmental analysis, permitting and reclamation plan requirements, that assist in document preparation for the CEQA analysis.
- Stantec Consulting Services Inc., an international firm that liaises directly with both the BLM and the ICPD to prepare National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation for the BLM and coordinate the CEQA environmental review process with the ICPD.
- WestLand Resources, Inc., specialists in environmental engineering, permitting and planning, have completed the Oro Cruz Project baseline environmental and cultural studies and have provided services necessary to comply with both the NEPA and CEQA permitting requirements.

#### Qualified Person (QP)

The scientific and technical information contained in this news release has been prepared, reviewed and approved by David Tupper, P.Geo. (British Columbia), Southern Empire's VP Exploration and a Qualified Person within the context of Canadian Securities Administrators' National Instrument 43-101; Standards of Disclosure for Mineral Projects (NI 43-101).

#### About Southern Empire Resources Corp.

Southern Empire is engaged in the acquisition, exploration and development of metals and minerals deposits in the American southwest and northern México and is particularly focused on those that are naturally oxidized and amenable to lower-cost metal extraction methodologies such as heap leaching. To achieve its goals, Southern Empire has assembled a board of directors, all veterans in mine and corporate finance, exploration, permitting, development, and operations that will guide the future growth of the company.

In the Cargo Muchacho mountains of Imperial County, California, Southern Empire's wholly owned Oro Cruz Project has the potential to re-establish gold production from an oxide gold deposit located approximately 22.5 kilometres (14 miles) southeast of the operating Mesquite gold mine of Equinox Gold Corp., which has now produced more than five million ounces. At Oro Cruz, extensive historical drilling and large-scale open-pit and underground mining of the American Girl, Padre y Madre, Queen and Cross oxide gold deposits by the American Girl Mining Joint Venture (AGMJV; being MK Gold Company and [Hecla Mining Company](#)) occurred between 1987 and 1996. During that time, gold was recovered by heap leaching of lower-grade ores and milling of higher-grade ores. Following significant definition drilling and underground development, the Cross open-pit and underground mines operated successfully for only one year, producing about 61,000 ounces of gold, until AGMJV operations ceased in late 1996 as collapsing gold prices caused their entire operations to be shuttered and decommissioned. This left the Oro Cruz property with many gold exploration targets in addition to the Cross oxide gold deposit having a historical inferred resource estimate, as reported in 2011 by Lincoln Mining Corp., totalling 341,800 ounces gold based on 4,386,000 tonnes averaging 2.2 grams gold per tonne at a cut-off grade of 0.68 g/t Au (4,835,000 tons at 0.07 ounce gold per ton; please refer to the Cautionary Notice Regarding the Oro Cruz Property Historical Resource Estimate below). Although no surface facilities remain, the underground infrastructure at Oro Cruz (including a 2.4 kilometre haulage ramp, sublevels and draw points) remains in excellent condition and the open pit was abandoned just after stripping was completed prior to the start of its Stage II expansion.

Southern Empire has received a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact regarding federal BLM permitting of the Oro Cruz Project and a Notice of Determination regarding the Oro Cruz Project Reclamation Plan from Imperial County, the lead State of California agency responsible for permitting.

Southern Empire continues to finalize ancillary Oro Cruz Project state and county permitting that will allow for up to 65 exploration, confirmation and metallurgical drill hole sites at Oro Cruz to support a new resource estimate, and to also test the potential of waste rock and decommissioned heap leach piles to yield residual gold production.

In northern México (Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango), Southern Empire has a leachable copper prospect and three gold projects having bulk-tonnage potential. Our Mexican projects are the:

- Suaqui Verde Copper Project, Suaqui Grande, Sonora;
- Centauro Gold Project, Escalón, Chihuahua;
- Pedro Gold Project, Mapimí, Durango; and,
- La Loma Gold Project, Nazas, Durango;

The three gold projects are located along what Southern Empire is calling the Mapimí Gold Corridor, a 150-kilometre, southeast-trending Oligocene tectonostratigraphic belt, the regional geological setting of which, together with numerous coincident geological, mineralogical and geochemical characteristics as observed at Centauro, Pedro and La Loma, strongly supports the proposition that the Mapimí Gold Corridor has significant potential to host bulk-mineable, low sulfidation epithermal and/or Carlin-style gold deposits.

For more information on Southern Empire, its people and its projects, please visit our website: [www.smp.gold](http://www.smp.gold).

On behalf of the Board of Directors of [Southern Empire Resources Corp.](http://www.smp.gold),  
Dale Wallster, CEO and Director

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#### Cautionary Notice on Forward-Looking Information and Forward-Looking Statements

Information provided in this news release may contain forward-looking information or forward-looking statements that are based on assumptions as of the date of this news release. Such information or statements reflect management's current estimates, beliefs, intentions and expectations and are not guarantees of future performance. Southern Empire cautions that all forward-looking statements are inherently uncertain and that actual performance may be affected by a number of material factors, many of which are beyond its respective control. Such factors include, among other things: risks and uncertainties relating to Southern Empire's limited operating history, the need to comply with environmental and governmental regulations, results of exploration programs on its projects and those risks and uncertainties identified in its annual and interim financial statements and management discussion and analysis. Accordingly, actual and future events, conditions and results may differ materially from the estimates, beliefs, intentions and expectations expressed or implied in the forward-looking information. Except as required under applicable securities legislation, Southern Empire undertakes no obligation to publicly update or revise forward-looking information.

#### Cautionary Notice Regarding the Oro Cruz Project Historical Resource Estimate

The historical mineral resource estimate outlined above is disclosed in a technical report dated April 29, 2011, prepared for Lincoln Mining Corp. by Tetra Tech, Inc. and filed on the Canadian Securities Administrators' System for Electronic Document Analysis and Retrieval (SEDAR+). It is termed an inferred mineral resource, which is a category set out in NI 43-101 and was based on historical reverse circulation and core drill hole sample, underground channel sample, and blasthole sample assay results and calculated using ordinary kriging to estimate gold grades in 10-foot-by-10-foot-by-five-foot blocks. Accordingly, Southern Empire considers this historical estimate reliable as well as relevant as it presents key targets for future exploration work. However, a QP has not done sufficient work to verify or classify the historical estimate as a current mineral resource and Southern Empire is not treating this historical mineral resource estimate as current mineral resources.

SOURCE [Southern Empire Resources Corp.](http://www.smp.gold)

**Contact**

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