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**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Kremmling Field Office  
P.O. Box 68  
Kremmling, CO 80459**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-120-2010-0014-EA

PROJECT NAME: Soap Creek Well Pipeline Extension

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T. 7 N., R 79 W. Sec. 33, 6<sup>th</sup> P.M.

APPLICANT: BLM and Evans Livestock

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION: During the land health assessment in 2006, it was determined that BLM grazing allotment 07150 had land health concerns due to livestock grazing along portions of Soap Creek and livestock distribution problems throughout the whole allotment. To help solve these problems, the BLM proposed a sagebrush treatment, new well and pasture fence. All these projects have been completed. To further improve livestock distribution, vegetation vigor and riparian health, a pipeline from the Soap Creek well is needed to provide water in both pastures.

### DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: The BLM proposes to install approximately 900' of buried 1-1/2' black poly-pipe to two livestock tanks installed at the same location. (See Map). The water would be piped from an existing livestock tank located at the Soap Creek Well to two water troughs in the McFarlane pasture. This additional water source would allow livestock to water away from portions of Soap Creek and McFarlane Reservoir. The project would be constructed by the BLM Zone engineering crew in late August 2010 or 2011. The new tanks would include wildlife ramps to provide escape routes for small mammals and birds that may access the tanks for water and a drainage system for winterization. The tanks would be anchored and protected by a wood post and rail structure. Generally, the well would be producing water during the summer months but would only provide water to livestock during the grazing season (mid July through mid August). Water would be left in the tanks until late fall when the permittee would drain the tanks and pipeline before winter.

During construction a 3' deep trench would be dug using a tracked backhoe and may be left open for 1-5 days. This should have no impact on livestock use within the area as livestock would not be in the allotment during construction. The trench would also have minimal impact on wildlife

because the depth and width of the trench should allow wildlife to escape if they fall into the trench. This trench would also present a minimal hazard to the public as this is not the preferred motorized vehicle route to access McFarlane Reservoir.

A programmatic biological opinion was completed on June 16, 2006, that covers new depletions. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed by the BLM and the USFWS on February 26, 2010, to offset new federal depletions through the cooperative actions of Jackson County Water Conservancy District and the South Platte Water-Related Activities Program (SPWRAP) in exchange for federal payment. These offsets are consistent with Colorado's Depletion Plan, as required by the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program. The BLM will submit all proposed 2010 new federal depletions to the USFWS by May 30th, 2010 and adhere to the terms of the agreement.

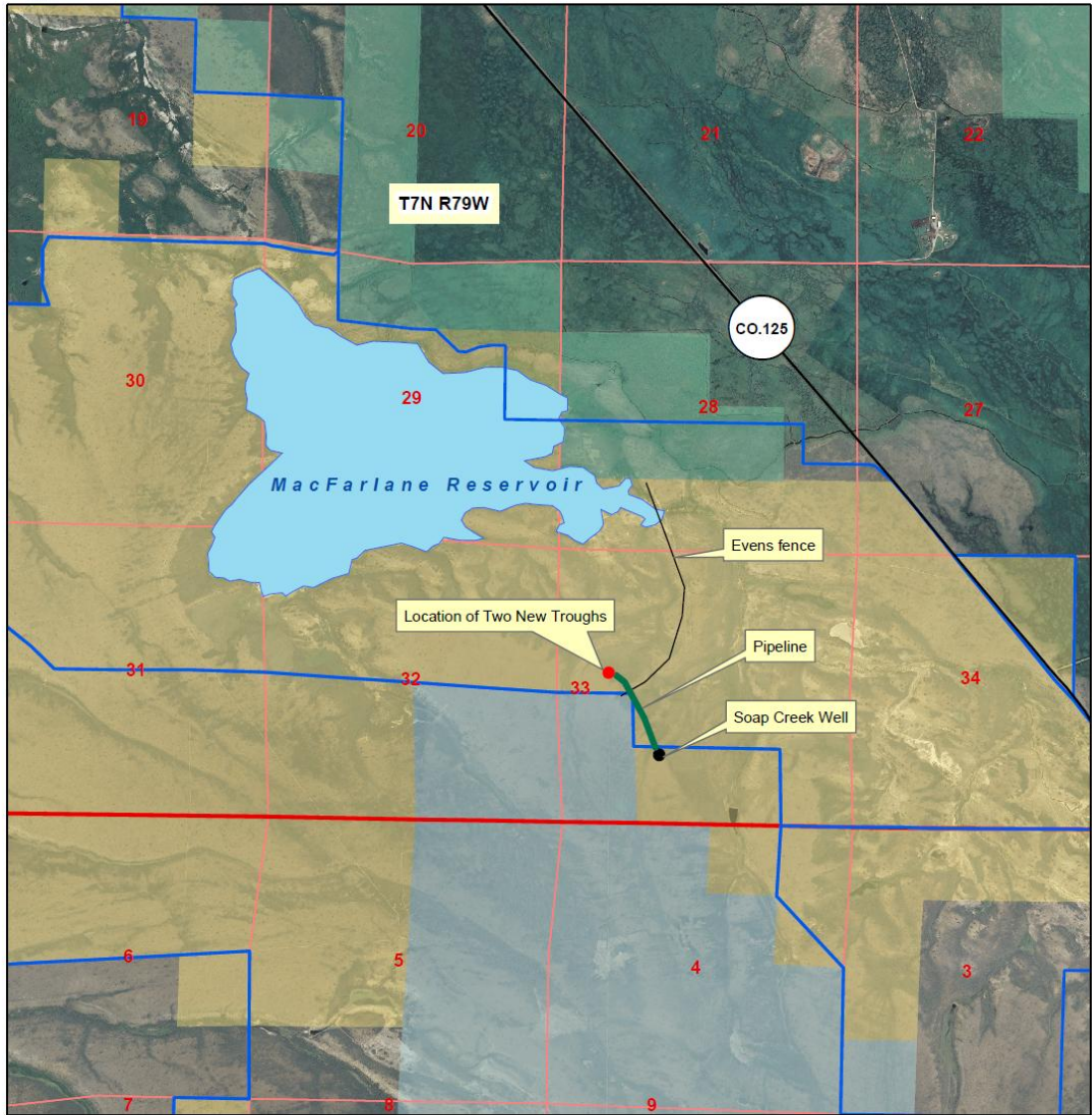
The project is anticipated to disturb less than an acre of land.

Design Features of the Proposed Action:

- The water troughs would be colored brown to minimize the visual impact to the area. A wildlife ramp would be installed in the water trough to provide an escape route for small mammals and birds that enter the trough to obtain water.
- Following installation, all disturbed areas would be leveled and seeded with a mixture of native and introduced grass and forb species by BLM staff.
- If invasive, non-native species become established or spread as a result of the Proposed Action, the BLM and Jackson County weed program would work together with the permittee on control strategies.
- Disturbed area should be signed as "No Motorized Vehicles" and "Restoration Area" once the disturbed area is leveled and seeded to prevent a new established route within a "Limited" area designation and to allow for the undisturbed establishment of native and introduced grass and forb species.



# Soap Creek Well Pipeline

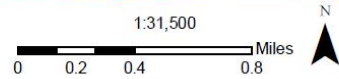


Reference Map  
NW Colorado



### Legend

- County Roads
- Major Roads
- allotment\_mfo polygon
- Reservoirs
- Major Streams
- Bureau of Land Mgt
- Division of Wildlife
- National Park
- US Forest Service
- National Wildlife Refuge
- Private
- State
- State Forest



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NAME - DATE  
FILE LOCATION

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative the project would not be constructed. This would result in poor livestock distribution, uneven use of vegetation and reduced land health throughout allotment 07150.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP), Record of Decision (ROD)

Date Approved: December 19, 1984; Updated February 1999

Decision Number/Page: Livestock Grazing, pages 6 through 8, as revised.

Decision Language: Investing in cost-effective range improvements (primarily through public investment) to implement grazing systems and meet the specific objectives of AMPs.

#### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

##### MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed trough and pipeline would be located in a sagebrush/grassland habitat type. Important migratory birds expected to inhabit the project sites include golden eagles, Northern Harriers, burrowing owls, short-eared owls, prairie falcons, Swainson's hawks, sage thrashers, Brewer's sparrows, sage-sparrows, and mountain bluebirds.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed trough and pipeline development would improve livestock grazing distribution and management in allotment # 07150. Better livestock management would result in better habitat for the species listed above. More cover would be available for ground nesting birds since the improvements would result in more vigorous grass productivity in the allotment. More cover would increase nesting success for birds. The proposed development would also provide an additional water source for birds.

The No Action alternative would not result in more intensive livestock management. Grass productivity would remain as it currently exists and cover for ground nesting birds would not increase. No additional water for migratory birds would be constructed in the pasture as a result of this alternative.

##### WETLANDS & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: Livestock tend to congregate along the Soap Creek drainage and the reservoir's shoreline. The MacFarlane Reservoir shoreline has small wetland areas that are

considered to be in proper functioning condition, but utilization levels are higher than desired. Livestock grazing and irrigation practices within the Soap Creek drainage have resulted in less than desirable wetland vegetation (willows, sedges and rushes). However, the riparian health within Soap Creek is considered to be functioning, but in the long term, improved irrigation practices and livestock distribution is still needed to further improve the wetland vegetation.

Environmental Consequences: Providing upland water sources for livestock is a best management practice for improving wetland conditions and protecting the water quality. The pipeline extension would result in livestock grazing more of the upland portions of the pasture, decreasing the utilization in the wetland areas. This would encourage livestock to water away from Soap Creek which would improve livestock distribution, reduce cattle trails along the banks, improve long term water quality, vegetation health and reduced utilization of riparian vegetation. Although the wetland areas in the MacFarlane Pasture are meeting the Standard, they are not at their full potential due to higher utilization levels. The Proposed Action would help insure the pasture is meeting long-term, sustainable land health standards.

Under the No Action Alternative, an opportunity to improve wetland vegetation and livestock grazing would be reduced or remain the same. This would result in increased grazing use along Soap Creek and McFarlane Reservoir riparian areas, as this is the only source of water.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: The Proposed Action would help insure the pasture is meeting long-term sustainable land health standards. The No Action Alternative would not improve the wetland conditions and wetland vegetation could be at risk for not meeting the Standard in the future.

#### SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The well and proposed pipeline occur on Fluetsch-Tiagos association as mapped in the Jackson County Soil Survey. The soils are fine sandy loams to sandy loam soils, common to North Park. The soils have a moderate hazard for water erosion and low to moderate for wind erosion. Shrink-swell potential is low and there are few soil limitations for excavations. One acre of soil is expected to be disturbed by this project for the pipeline and livestock tanks installation

Environmental Consequences: The Proposed Action would increase runoff potential along the pipeline in the short term, until vegetation reestablishes. Around the livestock tanks, soil compaction would increase due the hoof action from increased livestock use. This would result in reduced water infiltration and increased runoff. Both of these impacts would have a minor impact to the soils in the whole allotment as the proposed project would benefit the overall allotments soil conditions.

Under the No Action Alternative, the overall grazing management would be constrained. This would result in livestock use concentrated around McFarlane Reservoir and other riparian areas. This would result in compacted soils which would reduce infiltration and increase runoff. However, there would be no impact to soils at the proposed locations of the tanks and pipeline.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The pipeline construction would disturb a narrow swath of soil and does not directly affect upland soil health. Indirectly, it improves the ability to manage grazing on the entire allotment, benefiting the overall allotment's soil conditions. This would result in the allotment meeting land health standards in the long-term. The No Action Alternative would continue present conditions, which may result in the allotment not meeting land health standards in the future.

#### VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed project is located within a mixture of sagebrush with an understory of grasses and forbs. The project would result in approximately one acre of soil and vegetation disturbance.

Environmental Consequences: Although a small amount of vegetation would be disturbed by this action, this project would improve the vegetation's health within the whole allotment by moving livestock use away from portions of Soap Creek and McFarlane Reservoir. This would result in improved vigor, root structure and diversity of plants within the allotment

Under the No Action Alternative, the project would not be developed and livestock distribution would continue to be a problem along portions of Soap Creek and McFarlane Reservoir. This would result in reduced vegetation health over the long term and may result in the vegetation not meeting land health standards in the future due to reduced vigor and diversity.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The allotment was assessed for Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. It was determined that the allotment was meeting standards, however, there were concerns along Soap Creek and McFarlane Reservoir and upland sites along Soap Creek due to poor livestock distribution.

#### WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed project area provides habitat for a variety of species including mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, pronghorn, and a variety of small mammals. Coyotes, badgers, and several species of rodents are yearlong residents of the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed water development would provide an additional water source for pronghorn and small mammals during the summer season as well as improve livestock distribution during the grazing season. The change in livestock distribution would improve forage conditions and provide additional food and cover vegetation for wildlife using the allotment. The proposed project would not conflict with terrestrial wildlife since habitat disturbance would be minimal. All vegetative disturbances associated with the project would be reclaimed. Harassment or disturbance of wildlife would also be minimal since construction activities would be short term, in an isolated area, and not likely to occur during periods of animal concentration.

The No Action Alternative would not improve livestock grazing distribution nor provide an additional water source of forage for wildlife. This would reduce forage for big game species and habitat for various small mammals.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): Allotment # 07150 would continue to meet this standard with implementation of either the Proposed Action or the No Action alternatives. However, implementation of the Proposed Action would improve the allotment for wildlife, while the No Action Alternative would not provide additional forage and cover vegetation since poor livestock distribution would continue.

### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:

#### Geographic Scope of the Cumulative Analysis:

For the purpose of this EA, the general geographic boundary for the cumulative impact analysis is allotment 07150 grazed by Evans Ranch. This allotment is found within the Soap Creek drainage area south of Walden Colorado.

#### Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions:

Before the 1980's, the majority of the land within this allotment was owned by Evans Livestock. During the 1980s, the BLM, Evans Livestock and the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge entered into a land exchange. As part of that land exchange, the BLM acquired all the private lands within allotment 07150.

Within this allotment livestock grazing has been the historical and current use of the land however, hunting (waterfowl and big game) have occurred and are anticipated to continue in the future.

During recent land health assessments, concerns about vegetation, soils, wetlands health have been determined due to current and historical livestock grazing. This has resulted in range improvement projects being constructed and a new grazing system within the past 5 years. These projects, coupled with the new grazing system should improve habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife species that use this allotment. The additional pipeline and tank installation would further ensure the vegetation, soil and wetlands are improving.

Livestock grazing is anticipated to continue within this allotment until 2019, when the grazing permit would be scheduled for renewal. During this time, further range improvement projects are not anticipated within this allotment.

The No Action Alternative would not allow project implementation, however livestock grazing would continue to occur within the allotment as would big game and waterfowl hunting. This alternative would reduce the ability to improve the overall land health within the allotment due to poor livestock distribution. This may result in riparian and upland vegetation not meeting land health standards when the permit is renewed in 2019. If the allotment was determined to not be meeting Land Health Standards, a reduction in AUMs or closure of the allotment may be

required. This would impact the permittee's ability to operate his ranch because BLM lands provide summer forage for their livestock while they are growing hay.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: See Appendix 2 for Tribal List. Blain Evans (permittee), Owl Mountain Partnership committee members, North Park Habitat Partnership committee members, Colorado Division of Wildlife. There was strong support for this project.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW: See IDT-RRC in Appendix 1.

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## DOI-BLM-CO-120-2010-0014-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

### DECISION RECORD

DECISION: It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in the attached EA. This decision is contingent on meeting the monitoring requirements listed below.

RATIONALE: The proposed action was chosen because the Soap Creek well pipeline extension will improve livestock distribution in the allotment and thus will improve vegetation, soils, wetlands that will benefit wildlife and the overall land health within the allotment.

MITIGATION MEASURES: None

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING:

- The BLM would monitor the project area for the establishment or spread of invasive, non-native species after the project is completed.

NAME OF PREPARER: Peter Torma

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Susan Cassel

DATE: 7/19/2010

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: /s/ David Stout

DATE SIGNED: 7/23/2010

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Review Record and Checklist  
Appendix 2 – Native American Tribal List

ATTACHMENTS:

None

**INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS REVIEW RECORD AND CHECKLIST:**

**Project Title: Soap Creek Well Pipeline Extension**

**Project Leader: Peter Torma**

**Date Proposal Received: (Only for external proposals)**

**Date Submitted for Comment: 3/1/2010**

**Due Date for Comments: 5/27/2010**

**Need for a field Exam: (If so, schedule a date/time)**

**Scoping Needs/Interested or Affected Publics: (Identify public scoping needs)**

**Consultation/Permit Requirements:**

Consultation	Date Initiated	Date Completed	Responsible Specialist/ Contractor	Comments
Cultural/Archeological Clearance/SHPO	12-9-2008	5-20-2010	B. Wyatt	The proposed action is a no effect, there are no historic properties that would be affected.
Native American	2-2-2005	5-20-2010	B. Wyatt	To date no American Indian Tribe has identified any area of traditional cultural concern.
T&E Species/FWS	5/30/2010		P. Belcher	Action is covered by MOU. Will be submitted to the USFWS for documentation of consultation.
Permits Needed (i.e. Air or Water)	N/A	N/A	P. Belcher	

**(NP) = Not Present**

**(NI) = Resource/Use Present but Not Impacted**

**(PI) = Potentially Impacted and Brought Forward for Analysis.**

NP NI PI	Discipline/Name		Date Review Comp.	Initials	Review Comments (required for Critical Element NIs, and for elements that require a finding but are not carried forward for analysis.)
<b>CRITICAL ELEMENTS</b>					
NI	Air Quality	<b>Belcher</b>	5/24/10	PB	Air quality in the North Park basin is considered good and in attainment of the National Air Quality Standards. The Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative do not affect air quality.
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	<b>McGuire</b>	3/30/10	MM	There are no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern in the proximity of the proposed project area.
NI	Cultural Resources	<b>Wyatt</b>	5/20/2010	BBW	The proposed action is a no effect, there are no historic properties that would be affected.
NP	Environmental Justice	<b>Cassel</b>	12/16/09	SC	According to the most recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income communities within the Kremmling Planning Area.
NP	Farmlands, Prime and Unique	<b>Belcher</b>	5/24/10	PB	There are no farmlands, prime or unique, in the proximity of the proposed project area.
NP	Floodplains	<b>Belcher</b>	5/24/10	PB	The proposal would occur in an upland area

					and does not directly or indirectly affect the flood hazard or floodplain functionality.
NP	Invasive, Non-native Species	<b>Johnson Torma Hughes</b>	02/2/10	PT	There are no known invasive, non-native species (noxious weeds) growing in the project area. Since soil or vegetation disturbing activities provide an avenue for the establishment or expansion of invasive, non-native species, the BLM would monitor the project area as specified in the Proposed Action
PI	Migratory Birds	<b>McGuire</b>	3/30/10	MM	See Migratory Birds analysis.
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	<b>Wyatt</b>	5/20/2010	BBW	To date no American Indian Tribe has identified any area of traditional cultural concern.
NP	T/E, and Sensitive Species (Finding on Standard 4)	<b>McGuire</b>	3/30/10	MM	No impact to T/E species in the proposed action or the no action alternatives
NP	Wastes, Hazardous and Solid	<b>Hodgson</b>	5/29/2010	KH	There are no quantities of wastes, hazardous or solid, located on BLM-administered lands in the proposed project area, and there would be no wastes generated as a result of the Proposed Action or No Action alternative.
NI	Water Quality, Surface and Ground (Finding on Standard 5)	<b>Belcher</b>	5/24/10	PB	The Proposed Action does not measurably affect water quality. Indirect benefits are discussed in the Wetland Section.
PI	Wetlands & Riparian Zones (Finding on Standard 2)	<b>Belcher</b>	5/24/10	PB	See the Wetland Section.
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	<b>Windsor</b>	11/16/09	AW	There are no eligible Wild and Scenic River segments in the proposed project area.
NP	Wilderness	<b>Monkouski</b>	5/29/2010	JJM	There is no designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas in the proximity of the proposed project area.
<b>NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS</b> (A finding must be made for these elements)					
PI	Soils (Finding on Standard 1)	<b>Belcher</b>	5/24/10	PB	See the Soils Section.
PI	Vegetation (Finding on Standard 3)	<b>Johnson Torma</b>	11/21/09	PT	See Vegetation Section
NP	Wildlife, Aquatic (Finding on Standard 3)	<b>McGuire</b>	3/30/10	MM	There would be no impact to aquatic wildlife in the proposed action or the no action alternatives.
PI	Wildlife, Terrestrial (Finding on Standard 3)	<b>McGuire</b>	3/30/10	MM	See Terrestrial Wildlife analysis.
<b>OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS</b>					
NI	Access/Transportation	<b>Monkouski</b>	5/13/2010	JJM	The current designation is "Limited" within the Resource Management Plan Amendment. CFR9268.3 vii. States that no person shall operate an off road vehicle on public lands: (D) "In a manner causing, or likely to cause significant, undue damage to or disturbance of the soil, wildlife, wildlife habitat, improvements, cultural or vegetative resources or other authorized uses of the public lands. If properly signed and monitored to prevent motorized travel along the reseeded area there should not be any impacts to the existing access and transportation system. The proposed action would have no impacts to Access or Transportation.
NP	Forest Management	<b>K. Belcher</b>	4/2/10	KB	No forest resources present.

NI	Geology and Minerals	<b>Hodgson</b>	5/20/2010	KH	No impacts.
NI	Fire	<b>Wyatt</b>	5/20/2010	BBW	No effect. The water trough development would provide a water source in the event of a wildland fire.
NI	Hydrology/Water Rights	<b>Belcher</b>	5/24/10	PB	Soap Creek Well's pumping rate and yearly water useage would remain within the terms and conditions of the well permit. No other water uses would be impacted.
NI	Paleontology	<b>Rupp</b>	2/2/2010	FGR	Standard BLM "Discovery" Stipulation for cultural and paleontological resources.
NI	Noise	<b>Monkouski</b>	5/13/2010	JJM	Under the proposed action, there would be a short term increase in noise levels during the project implementation. There are no residences or developments within the immediate area of the proposed action. No Impacts.
NI	Range Management	<b>Johnson Torma</b>	12/22/09	PT	Livestock grazing would not change under the proposed action or no action alternative and it would not impact the ability of the permittee to graze this allotment.
NI	Lands/ Realty Authorizations	<b>Cassel</b>	11/5/09	AS	There are no leases, permits or rights-of-ways in the proposed project area.
NI	Recreation	<b>Monkouski Windsor</b>	5/13/2010	JJM	Recreational uses in the general area include hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing; and snowmobiling. There are no recreation activity plans or other special recreation designations for the area. The proposed action would have no impacts to the recreation resource.
NI	Socio-Economics	<b>Cassel</b>	12/16/09	SC	There would be no impacts to the Socio Economics of the area due to the proposed action or the No Action Alternatives.
NI	Visual Resources	<b>Windsor</b>	11/16/09	AW	The proposed project is in a Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) Class III area. Since the 1984 Resource Management Plan (RMP) did not designate Visual Resource Management (VRM) areas, BLM manages visual resources to protect the VRI by applying management class objectives to the inventory. The pipeline and trough would be visible from a short section of Hwy 125, but would not attract attention.
	Cumulative Impact Summary		5/27/2010	PT	
<b>FINAL REVIEW</b>					
	P&E Coordinator		7/19/10	SC	

Appendix 2

**NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES CONTACTED:**

Ivan Posey, Chairman  
Shoshone Business Council  
Shoshone Tribe  
P O Box 538  
Ft. Washakie, WY 82514

Mr. Norman Tidzump  
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer  
Shoshone Tribe, Cultural Center  
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Fort Washakie, WY 82514

Ernest House, Sr., Chairman  
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe  
P O Box JJ  
Towaoc, CO 81334

Mr. Terry Knight, Sr., NAGPRA Representative  
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe  
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Harvey Spoonhunter, Chairman  
Northern Arapaho Business Council  
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THPO Director  
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