

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2008-025-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC72003 (COC011243)

PROJECT NAME: Repair/Replace Segments of Weakened Segments

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 2 N., R. 103 W.,
Sec. 16, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;
Sec. 22, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$.

APPLICANT: Williams-Northwest Pipeline Corporation

ISSUES AND CONCERNS: None

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: Northwest has discovered the need to excavate, investigate and repair 6 separate anomalies which were discovered in the 50 year old mainline pipeline (known as the Ignacio/Sumas Pipeline).

Proposed Action: The proposed action is for temporary work space in order to excavate, investigate and repair 4 separate anomalies which have shown that these spots are weakened and could be leaking or in danger of rupturing. The requested workspace is as follows:

- #17710, 72.1' x 25' on each side of ROW
- #17720, 30' x 25' on each side of ROW
- #17680, 59.5' x 25' on each side of ROW
- #19000, 40' x 25' on each side of ROW

Access to each site will be along existing roads and the existing rights-of-way (ROW). This project is to ensure continued safe and reliable service. Work is scheduled for the spring time.

There have been several recoating/repair actions undertaken on this 50 year old line with the latest being environmental assessment (EA) CO-110-2006-109-EA approved 07/06/06 and documentation of NEPA adequacy (DNA) CO-110-2007-112-DNA approved 04/11/07.

A cultural resource inventory and a sensitive biological survey have been done with reports being submitted along with the application.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the application would be denied and the situation would remain unresolved.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The purpose of the proposed action is to prevent a pipeline rupture from weakened and possible leaking segments of a 50 year old system on Public Lands in a manner that avoids, minimizes, reduces, or mitigates potential impacts to other resource values.

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: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The entire White River Resource area has been classified as either attainment or unclassified for all pollutants, and most of the area has been designated prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) class II. The proposed action is not located within a ten mile radius of any special designation air sheds or non attainment areas. The air quality criteria pollutant likely to be most affected by the proposed actions is the level of inhalable particulate matter, specifically particles ten microns or less in diameter (PM10) associated with fugitive dust. No air quality monitoring data is available for the survey area. The Colorado Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) estimates the maximum PM10 levels (24-hour average) in rural portions of western Colorado to be near 50 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). This estimate is well below the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for PM10 (24-hour average) of $150 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The reclaimed pipeline will be disturbed to access the pipeline and the operator has asked for an additional 25 feet of working surface on either side of the pipeline, at each site (these sites are between 25 feet and 72 feet long). It is unlikely that the entire line will be disturbed by construction activities, but reclamation success is important to retain soils on the site. Travel to the construction site will occur on roads that are within 0.1 miles of all the sites and then along the pipeline ROW. There could be some fugitive dust production from accessing the construction sites with equipment, but with proper construction and reclamation activities the production of fugitive dust from the site is unlikely and travel to the site should be minimal.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The pipeline and working surfaces will not be disturbed and no vehicle access would be required, therefore no impacts would be expected.

Mitigation: None identified

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Station 19000 appears to fall within an area previously inventoried for repair work (Fetterman 2004, Compliance Dated 5/28/2004) with no cultural resources located in the proposed work area.

Stations 17710, 17720, 17610, 17680 and 17690 appear to be located on steep slopes that exceed the Colorado Protocol of 30% and are exempt from inventory requirements. There are no cultural resources expected on these slopes

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It does not appear that any known cultural resources will be impacted. However, previously unrecorded resources within 308

meters of the proposed work areas could be adversely impacted by vibrations associated with excavations to expose the pipeline or the operation of heavy equipment during repair work.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the holder is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within 5 working days the AO will inform the holder as to:

- Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- The mitigation measures the holder will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- A timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the holder wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the holder will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the holder will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The segments of the Ignacio/Sumas pipeline that need to be repaired are located within Alkaline Slope and Clayey Saltdesert ecological sites, which are dominated by salt tolerant vegetation. The dominate plant community for these sites consist of greasewood, Wyoming big sagebrush, and various saltbrushes such as shadscale, gardner saltbrush, mat saltbush, and fourwing saltbrush. The understory of these shrubs is dominated by western wheatgrass, salina wildrye, and squirreltail. Cheatgrass and halogeton are both annual plant species that are undesirable, invasive, and non-native plants which are present within the locality of the proposed action. Both of these species are highly adapted to disturbed soils.

The soils within the project area are principally a Chipeta-Killpack silty clay loam (Clayey Saltdesert ecological site) and Turley fine sandy loam (Alkaline Slope ecological site). The Chipeta-Killpack soil types have a high clay content that is moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting forage production and hampering re-vegetation efforts leading to the potential establishment of invasive species. Turley fine sandy loams has medium runoff with slight to moderate erosion potential. The stability of these soils relative to clayey soils does increase the chance for vegetation establishment of seeded species.

Drought conditions over the last several summers have been very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton, cheatgrass) have become dominate in portions of previously disturbed areas which provide little resource value and hinder efforts to meet Public Land Health Standards.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Weed species found in the area are effectively controlled by establishment of seeded species within disturbed areas. The proposed seed mix, which includes non-native species, is recommended because its associated plant species are highly adapted to this site (heavy clay soils) and offer the greatest opportunity to establish vegetation cover that will result in soil stabilization, thereby, providing a competitive interaction between seeded species and noxious and/or invasive weed species such as cheatgrass and halogeton. There is always the opportunity for other noxious weed species to be transported onto the proposed action locations by construction and/or support equipment.

The mitigated seed mix from the White River ROD/RMP (Standard Seed Mix #1) includes non-native plant species due to the harsh and restrictive conditions associated with the proposed area (see the Vegetation, Mitigation section). Limiting factors for successful reclamation of the site includes soils with a high clay content, low annual precipitation, drought prone, and cheatgrass establishment on the adjacent rangelands. These mitigated non-native species have demonstrated themselves to have the greatest ability to establish, provide soil protection, and offer a competitive interaction against invasive, non-native species such as cheatgrass.

Prompt reclamation with successful establishment would help prevent cheatgrass and halogeton from establishing on disturbed sites. If other noxious weeds were to invade the site, prompt control would prevent movement to the adjacent plant communities.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: The holder shall monitor the disturbed and reclaimed areas for the presence of invasive, non-native, and/or noxious plant species that have become established as a result of the proposed action. The holder will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass, noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action.

Upon detection of noxious, non-native, and/or invasive plant species, the holder will control their presence before seed production using materials and methods as outlined in the RMP and/or authorized in advance by the White River Field Office Manager. Application of herbicides must

be under field supervision of an EPA certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: Salt desert communities composed of Gardner's saltbush, shadscale, big sagebrush, and greasewood occur in the project area. Representative species for the area include vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*), Brewer's sparrows (*Spizella breweri*), and horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*). There are no specialized or narrowly endemic species known to inhabit the project area. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recognizes Brewer's sparrows as a "bird of conservation concern" (BCC). The BCC list identifies birds that, without conservation actions, may become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Most songbirds return to summer breeding ranges in April, begin nesting in earnest in late May or early June, and have fledged young by mid-August. Repair work is planned for the spring and so it is possible that repairs could be made before the majority of nesting attempts commence. However, there is no set schedule in the proposed action and so it is possible that repair work make occur during the nesting period. Since Coal Oil Basin is a heavily developed energy field and since the disturbance affects only 0.1 acre, it is unlikely to adversely affect local reproductive efforts or recruitment of migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Emergency maintenance or pipeline failure stemming from the lack of scheduled replacement and repairs may result in more lengthy and larger scale repairs at inopportune times (e.g. late enough in the breeding season so that re-nesting is not an option) which may create greater disturbance than that associated with the proposed action.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered, or sensitive animal species that would be affected by the proposed action. White-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys leucurus*) are a BLM sensitive species and are currently being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act by the USFWS. Prairie dogs occur throughout Coal Oil Basin and are known to build burrows on reclaimed pipelines. A field visit by a BLM biologist on 3/19/08 revealed that prairie dogs are located in close proximity to the work site, but there were no burrows on the identified pipeline segments needing repair. It is unlikely that prairie dogs would construct burrows on these segments in the future due to relatively steep slopes.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status wildlife species since the repair work sites do not occur in occupied or suitable habitat for prairie dogs. Access to the work sites would be via existing roads and rights-of-way and would not result in additional surface disturbance or notable long-term increases in human activity.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Emergency maintenance or pipeline failure stemming from the lack of scheduled replacement and repairs may result in more lengthy and larger scale repairs at inopportune times which may create greater disturbance than that associated with the proposed action.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed action would have no influence on the populations or habitats of special status wildlife species in the area, and thereby would have no bearing on the public land health standard.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered or BLM sensitive plant species, potential or suitable habitats associated with special status species that could be conceivably influenced directly or indirectly by construction and maintenance of these well locations.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status species or associated habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence special status species or associated habitats.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed and no-action alternatives would have no influence on populations or habitats of plants associated with the Endangered Species Act or BLM sensitive species and, as such, would have no influence on the status of applicable land health standards.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The following items should be applied as conditions of approval: The holder shall submit an updated Spill Prevention Containment and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan to the authorized officer prior to construction activities.

If any hazardous chemicals, fuels, oils, lubricants, and/or noxious fluids are spilled during construction operations, they shall be cleaned up immediately. The release of any chemical, oil, petroleum product, produced water, or sewage, etc, (regardless of quantity) must be reported by the holder, to the Bureau of Land Management – WRFO Hazardous Materials Coordinator at (970) 878-3800.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The pipeline repair sites are on previously disturbed areas along a pipeline that is 50 years old west of the town of Rangely along highway 64. The sites are in the Cottonwood Creek drainage and the White River drainage near Rangely. The water quality classification reach is 22, and this reach is protected for Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 1b, and Agriculture beneficial uses. There are no 303d listed stream segments downstream and nothing listed on the Monitoring and Evaluation List for Colorado.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Surface disturbance to remove the pipeline for the maintenance work and moving equipment and personnel into the worksites is likely to temporarily disturb sections in and along the ROW. If successful, stabilization and reclamation activities should minimize the risk of potential impacts past the construction phase of the project. The potential for localized erosion during construction is the most likely source of impacts as well as inadequate or poorly executed stabilization and reclamation activities. Sites 17680, 19000, 17710 and 17720 are in saline soils with fairly steep slopes. Based on photographs from the wildlife surveys, this stretch is successfully reclaimed with brush and exposed boulders. Ecological sites are classified as Alkaline Slopes and Clayey Salt desert; therefore care should be taken to stabilize soils and to reduce additional non-point salt loading into the White River.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The pipeline and working surfaces will not be disturbed and no vehicle access would be required, therefore no impacts would be expected.

Mitigation: The following items should be applied as conditions of approval: If vehicle travel along the ROW to the pipeline repair sites results in visible ruts, the holder will install water bars, place wattles or other measure to convert concentrated runoff back to overland flow and therefore reduce potential erosion impacts from vehicle travel.

On all sites, prepare seed pad in disturbed areas by leaving them rough to allow seeds and water to find preferential microclimates for seed germination. Use seeding specifications in the vegetation section and apply mulch such as a tackifier to retain soil moisture for seed germination.

On sites 17680, 17710 and 17720, the holder will install silt fencing, wattles or other similar methods to reduce surface flow and retain sediment below the disturbed sites. It appears there will be 3 work areas for these sites and will likely require 3 sets of erosion measures, one for each area of disturbance.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: It is unlikely, especially with mitigation that this activity will cause an exceedance of Colorado water quality standards. There will not be a measurable increase in salt loading in the Colorado River Basin as a result of this project.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian areas potentially affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on wetlands or riparian areas.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no effect on existing wetlands and riparian areas under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Repair of the pipeline segments would have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of wetlands and riparian areas, and therefore, would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the area affected by the proposed action. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: In general, these soils are difficult to achieve successful reclamation. There is approximately 4 acres of saline soils in the project area, which is in the badland and Chipeta-Killpack silty clay loam soil types.

Soil Type	Slopes	Acres
Badland	-	0.84
Turley fine sandy loam	3-8%	1.76
Chipeta-Killpack silty clay loam	3-15%	3.22

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Surface disturbance to remove the pipeline for the maintenance work and moving equipment and personnel into the worksites is likely to temporarily disturb sections in and along the ROW. If successful, stabilization and reclamation activities should minimize the risk of potential impacts past the construction phase of the project. The potential for localized erosion during construction is the most likely source of impacts as well as inadequate or poorly executed stabilization and reclamation activities. Restoring the productivity of these soils will be entirely dependent on successful reclamation. The natural or potential productivity of these sites is relatively low due to the saline soils in most of the sites.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The pipeline and working surfaces will not be disturbed and no vehicle access would be required, therefore no impacts would be expected.

Mitigation: See the water quality section

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The productivity of these soils can be maintained with successful reclamation and therefore upland soils should meet standards a few years after disturbance.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within Alkaline Slope and Clayey Salt-desert ecological sites, which are dominated by salt tolerant vegetation. The dominant plant community for these sites consist of greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) and various saltbrushes such as shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), gardner saltbrush (*Atriplex gardneri*), mat saltbush (*Atriplex corrugate*), and fourwing saltbrush (*Atriplex canescens*). Other brushes intermixed in the area are various rabbit brushes (*Chrysothamnus spp.*) and Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). The understory of these shrubs primarily consists of western

wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), salina wildrye (*Elymus salinus*), sandberg bluegrass (*poa secunda*), and bottlebrush squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*). Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*) are undesirable, invasive, and alien plant species that are present within the locality of the proposed action.

The soils within the project area are principally a Turley fine sandy loam (Alkaline Slope ecological site) and Chipeta-Killpack silty clay loam (Clayey Salt-desert ecological site). Chipeta-Killpack silty clay loam soil types have a high clay content that is moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting vegetative production and hampering re-vegetation efforts.

Drought conditions throughout the past several growing seasons have been very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton, cheatgrass) have become dominant in portions of previously disturbed areas which provide little resource value and hinder efforts to meet Public Land Health Standards.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would disturb a mid to low seral class of salt-desert shrub community for a total of 0.1 BLM acres, and would be classified as short-term loss. Short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset by successfully reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. As this area has a component of cheatgrass and halogeton (undesirable, non-native, and annual plant species) within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would slightly increase desirable plant species within the rangelands.

Without successful reclamation of seeded species within this harsh landscape, a potential exist to increase the ground cover of undesirable plant species that invade disturbed sites. Limiting factors for successful reclamation of the site includes soils with a high clay content, low annual precipitation, drought prone, grazing use, and cheatgrass (invasive, non-native, and annual grass) establishment on the adjacent rangelands.

Previously this area has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities from a network of well pads, powerlines, pipeline corridors, and access roads; which have resulted in a fragmentation and reduction of available/productive ecological sites.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Promptly re-vegetate all disturbed areas associated with the pipeline repair using standard seed mix #1 in the White River ROD/RMP listed below.

BLM WRFO Standard Seed Mix #1		
Specie/Variety	Lbs. PLS/Acre	Range Site
Siberian Wheatgrass (P27)	3	Alkaline Slope Clayey Salt-desert
Russian Wildrye (Bozoisky)	2	
Crested wheatgrass (Hycrest)	3	

Seeding rates in the White River ROD/RMP and proposed table are shown as pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application, double the seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. Applied seed must be certified and free of noxious weeds and seed certification tags must be submitted to the Area Manager within 30 days of seeding. The holder will be responsible for controlling noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action. To control undesirable plant species, the holder will use materials and methods as outlined in the White River ROD/RMP or authorized in advance by the authorized officer.

The holder shall be required to achieve a reclamation success rate of sufficient vegetative ground cover from reclamation plant species within three growing seasons. The reclamation shall be comparable of that of the nearby undisturbed plant communities at a Potential Natural Community (PNC) state in relation to the seed mix as deemed appropriate by the BLM.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed action would disturb a segment of the Alkaline Slope and Clayey Salt desert ecological sites. Therefore, the action would further fragment these areas.

Early seral ecological sites associated with the proposed action lack desirable plant species at an appreciable density and frequency level, thus they are not meeting standards. This is largely due to the prevalence of cheatgrass and halogeton within the vegetative understory. A slight positive benefit would be received through a successful re-vegetation effort, thus increasing preferred plant species within this low producing rangeland. Mid seral ecological sites at the proposed action locality have acceptable components within the plant community and are meeting standards for public land health.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no aquatic systems potentially affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There would be no effect on existing aquatic wildlife or habitat under the no action alternative.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no effect on existing aquatic wildlife or habitat under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Repair of the pipeline segments would have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of aquatic habitats or wildlife associated with them, and therefore, would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within general winter range (as delineated by the Colorado Division of Wildlife) for elk (*Cervus canadensis*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). Although raptors may opportunistically forage throughout the project area, there is no suitable nesting substrate within the immediate vicinity of the segments scheduled for repair.

Nongame mammals and birds using this area are typical and widely distributed in extensive like habitats across the Resource Area and northwest Colorado; there are no narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit those lands potentially influenced by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There would be little if any impact on deer and elk habitat along the pipeline corridor. Pipeline replacement and repair is expected to occur during the spring or summer thereby having no negative impacts on winter use by deer and elk. Although maintenance activity would remove shrub growth as a potential source of big game winter forage, these sites would be small (combined disturbance 0.1 acre) and negligible in the context of the remaining woody forage base on the winter range in this area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Emergency maintenance or pipeline failure stemming from the lack of scheduled replacement and repairs may result in more lengthy and larger scale repairs at inopportune times (e.g. winter) which may create greater disturbance than that associated with the proposed action.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): Upland habitats encompassing the project area generally meet the land health standards for animal communities. The proposed action would have no measurable long-term influence on the condition or utility of terrestrial wildlife or their habitats.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights		X	
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise	X		

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: Station 19000 is located in an area generally mapped as the Sego Sandstone/Buck Tongue of the Mancos Shale (Tweto 1979) which the WRFO, BLM has currently classified as a PFYC 3 formation meaning it may, infrequently, contain scientifically noteworthy fossils.

Stations 17710, 17720, 17680 and 17690 are in an area generally mapped as the Mancos Shale (Tweto 1979) which the WRFO, BLM has currently classified as a PFYC 3 formation meaning it may, infrequently, contain scientifically noteworthy fossils.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: if it should become necessary to excavate into any of the underlying rock formations to expose the pipeline segments for repair or replacement there is a low potential to impact scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the holder is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the holder as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the holder will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the holder wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the holder will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the holder will then be allowed to resume construction.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in the Coal Oil Basin section of the Artesia allotment (06308), which is authorized for sheep use by Morapos Sheep Company. Grazing use by sheep in the allotment can be authorized from December 1st through April 20th.

Soils within the project area are principally a Billings Silty Clay Loam (Alkaline Slope ecological site) and Chipeta Silty Clay Loam (Clayey Salt-desert ecological site), which are dominated by a salt tolerant desert shrub and grass community. These brush/grass communities are utilized by sheep for meeting forage requirements, particularly during winter months. Soils in Coal Oil Basin typically have a high clay content that are moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting forage production and hampering re-vegetation efforts.

Drought conditions, outside of this current year, have been very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hindered successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other related disturbances in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton, cheatgrass) have become dominant in a portion of these disturbed areas which provide little forage and/or resource value.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The individual proposed action would have very minimal impacts on the authorized grazing use because the amount of new surface disturbance (0.1 acres) is nominal in regards to the scale of the allotment (43,347 total acres).

There would be not long-term loss of Animal Unit Months (AUM's) as a result of the proposed action. An AUM is the amount of forage necessary for the substance of 5 sheep (1 cow) for a period of 1 month. Previously this allotment has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities, which have resulted in a reduction and fragmentation of available rangelands and in a loss of forage for grazing use.

All disturbance associated with this proposed action can be classified as short-term disturbance. Short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by successfully reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. These short-term disturbance offsets occur on pipelines. As this area has a component of cheatgrass and halogeton (undesirable, non-native, and annual plant species) within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would slightly increase desirable forage species within the rangelands. Without successful reclamation of seeded species within this harsh rangeland, a potential exist to increase the ground cover of undesirable plant species that invade disturbed sites.

If the proposed action was authorized during the grazing period, it would have some limited impacts while sheep are grazing. This is in part due to the increased activity associated with the development of the proposed action and decrease in rangelands available for grazing. Also,

BLM grazing permit holders have experienced injury and losses of livestock due to heavy truck travel and inadequate fencing of areas where work is occurring. Other impacts to livestock grazing may include such influences as a modification in sheep distribution, reduction in available forage, injury/loss to livestock, and impediments to livestock grazing and movement.

Overall, there is the potential for a slight positive benefit through successful re-vegetation efforts on pipelines, thus increasing preferred forage plants within this mid to low producing rangeland. However, the cumulative impacts from past, present, and possible future oil and gas activities may have a long-term effect on the native range's carrying capacity, thus influencing the authorized AUMs. This possible affect would be determined during the grazing permit renewal process which includes an evaluation of forage capacity available for livestock. It is foreseeable that the grazing permit holder could lose a portion of permitted active AUMs due to a loss of forage and fragmentation of the rangelands associated with oil and gas development within the authorized BLM grazing allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action would be located in an area with a VRM III classification. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would be located in area that has a paved highway (SH 64) ½- ¾ mile distance that a casual observer might be traveling on and the proposed action would be visible for a short period of time. A temporary linear disturbance would be visible for a period of time until vegetation could become established from required seeding operations. By painting all above ground facilities Oil Green, the level of change to the characteristic landscape would be low and the objectives of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no environmental impacts.

Mitigation: All permanent (onsite for six [6] months or longer) structures, facilities and equipment placed above ground shall be painted Oil Green (17-0115 TPX Pantone for architecture & interior color guide 2003), or equivalent within six months of installation.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of oil and gas activities are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the Proposed Action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Fetterman, Jerry

2004 Cultural Resource Investigations of 68 Proposed Recoating and Reconditioning Sties for Williams Gas Pipelines West in Rio Blanco County, Northwestern Colorado. Woods Canyon Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Yellow Jacket, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden

1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Wastes (Hazardous or Solids), Water Quality (Surface and Ground), Hydrology and Water Rights, and Soils
Ken Holsinger	Botanist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archeologist	Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources
Matthew Dupire	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Vegetation , Rangeland Management
Heather Sauls	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife, Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Access and Transportation, Recreation,
Jim Michels	Fire/Fuels Technician	Fire Management
Ken Holsinger	Botanist	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Melissa Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horse

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2008-025-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the below mitigation measures.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the holder is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within 5 working days the AO will inform the holder as to:

- Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- The mitigation measures the holder will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- A timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the holder wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the holder will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the holder will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you

must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. The holder shall monitor the disturbed and reclaimed areas for the presence of invasive, non-native, and/or noxious plant species that have become established as a result of the proposed action. The holder will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass, noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action.

4. Upon detection of noxious, non-native, and/or invasive plant species, the holder will control their presence before seed production using materials and methods as outlined in the RMP and/or authorized in advance by the White River Field Office Manager. Application of herbicides must be under field supervision of an EPA certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

5. Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas associated with the pipeline repair using standard seed mix #1 as listed below:

BLM WRFO Standard Seed Mix #1		
Specie/Variety	Lbs. PLS/Acre	Range Site
Siberian Wheatgrass (P27)	3	Alkaline Slope Clayey Saltdesert
Russian Wildrye (Bozoisky)	2	
Crested wheatgrass (Hycrest)	3	

Seeding rates in the White River ROD/RMP and proposed table are shown as pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application, double the seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. Applied seed must be certified and free of noxious weeds and seed certification tags must be submitted to the Area Manager within 30 days of seeding. The holder will be responsible for controlling noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action. To control undesirable plant species, the holder will use materials and methods as outlined in the White River ROD/RMP or authorized in advance by the authorized officer.

6. The holder shall be required to achieve a reclamation success rate of sufficient vegetative ground cover from reclamation plant species within three growing seasons. The reclamation shall be comparable of that of the nearby undisturbed plant communities at a Potential Natural Community (PNC) state in relation to the seed mix as deemed appropriate by the BLM.

7. The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the holder is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the holder as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the holder will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

8. If the holder wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the holder will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the holder will then be allowed to resume construction.
9. Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.
10. All permanent (onsite for six [6] months or longer) structures, facilities and equipment placed above ground shall be painted Oil Green (17-0115 TPX Pantone for architecture & interior color guide 2003), or equivalent within six months of installation.
11. The holder shall submit an updated Spill Prevention Containment and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan to the authorized officer prior to construction activities.
12. If any hazardous chemicals, fuels, oils, lubricants, and/or noxious fluids are spilled during construction operations, they shall be cleaned up immediately. The release of any chemical, oil, petroleum product, produced water, or sewage, etc, (regardless of quantity) must be reported by the holder, to the Bureau of Land Management – WRFO Hazardous Materials Coordinator at (970) 878-3800.
13. If vehicle travel along the ROW to the pipeline repair sites results in visible ruts, the holder will install water bars, place wattles or other measure to convert concentrated runoff back to overland flow and therefore reduce potential erosion impacts from vehicle travel.
14. On all sites, prepare seed pad in disturbed areas by leaving them rough to allow seeds and water to find preferential microclimates for seed germination. Use seeding specifications in the vegetation section and apply mulch such as a tackifier to retain soil moisture for seed germination.
15. On sites 17710, 17680, and 17720, the holder will install silt fencing, wattles or other similar methods to reduce surface flow and retain sediment below the disturbed sites. It appears there will be 3 work areas for these sites and will likely require 3 sets of erosion measures, one for each area of disturbance.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance should be conducted every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny Brown

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:  _____
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

4/8/08

ATTACHMENTS: Figure 1: General location Map of the Proposed Action

Figure 1: CO-110-2008-025-EA

