

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

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2010-0059-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: Road ROW - COC34301
Pipeline ROW – COC25122BS, 25122P, 56769,
O&G Units – COC47656A, X

PROJECT NAME: Missouri Creek Road (BLM #1062) Improvement

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 6th Principal Meridian
T 3 S R 103 W,
Sections 19, 20, 28, 29, and 33
T 4 S R 103 W,
Sections 4, 9, 15, and 16

APPLICANT: Bureau of Land Management

ISSUES AND CONCERNS: The proposed section of road to be repaired shares the western boundary of the Oil Spring Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA). For most of the road length, the road also parallels a steep gullied section of Missouri Creek on its western side. In addition, there is a regional pipeline adjacent and/or sometimes within the roadway. Due to topography and poor soils, work on the side of the road would be difficult and would need to be confined for the most part to the already disturbed road surface. The Missouri Creek Road is failing in many ways, during fairly common storm events and at many locations along the road.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The original right of way (ROW) was issued in 1983 and did not include any “new construction” or upgrading as part of issuing the ROW. This road has long been a maintenance problem with multiple letters sent out to the ROW holder. These letters have detailed maintenance problems on the road, but no records have been located in receipt of the ROW holder addressing the problems identified.

The road was temporarily closed in 2007 and again in 2009 due to potential safety concerns. Warning signs have been posted to inform the public of the potential safety risk on the road. Most of the locations that are safety concerns are at the crossing of small drainages where soil piping and drainage off the road has eroded a section of the travel surface. Most of the oil and

gas wells that use this road as an access road are shut-in and/or in the process of being plugged and abandoned and most are controlled by the current ROW holder (Pioneer Natural Resources USA, Inc. for lease COC34301). The pipeline is currently maintained by ETC and the operators do periodic maintenance on the road to make it passable. EnCana has wells near Rio Blanco County Road (CR) 109 and use this road as an access; they have agreed to do some additional maintenance on the first two miles of the road. EnCana also has wells at the top of the road, but use the West Douglas drainage as the access road to service these wells.

In 2007, a detailed road survey was completed and problem areas were identified. All operators in the area were brought into the process to develop a coordinated approach to maintain the road. To contribute to this effort the White River Field Office (WRFO) put in a proposal for an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) project to do maintenance on a portion of the road. The goals of the project are to fix one of the more dangerous parts of the road and bring up a section of the road to acceptable Bureau of Land Management (BLM) standards.

After wells are plugged and the road is no longer needed for access, BLM would like to leave the road open for public recreational use with reduced potential of safety concerns. Therefore, the goal for these maintenance activities would be to improve the wear of the road during storm events in a way that would require minimum maintenance in the future and improve locations that are unsafe.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer, Regulatory Project Manager, Nathan Green of the Colorado West Regulatory Branch was contacted. The WRFO prepared a courtesy notification, which was responded to 4/26/2010 and stated the project does qualify under the Nationwide General Permit Number 14, without notification and that BLM may proceed at their convenience.

Proposed Action: The BLM would issue a contract to a private party for the road construction, but would oversee the work with the BLM District Engineers (contact is Jim Manual) at the Grand Junction Field Office. One location on the road was identified as the primary safety concern and as such required an engineered design by BLM District Engineers. This location would be the focus of the construction activities. The rest of the road to the junction of CR 109 would require more typical maintenance type activities and minor construction. These maintenance activities include placing pit run material from the Texas Creek Pit (which is a Free Use Permit that Rio Blanco County operates), installing culverts and wing ditches to improve road drainage and in some cases excavating and replacing the road bed with compaction to reduce piping or soft soils.

The engineered design to fix the safety issue at mile 6 would employ large quarried rock (most likely from Maybell Enterprises Inc.) to hold the elevation of the compacted grade up to the road surface (Figure 1). This large rock is needed since this hole in the road bed is located on an outside meander bend along Missouri Creek (Figure 3). This rock material would be 1–6 feet diameter and would be placed using an excavator with a thumb. Access would be from the Missouri Creek channel and the road bed. Fill material would be from the Texas Creek Pit and/or purchased from a commercial source would then be mixed with native material and compacted to the finished grade of the road surface (Figure 3). Additional 4-6 inch angular rock from Maybell Enterprises Inc. or a local commercial gravel source would be placed on fabric on

top of the fill to armor a low water crossing (Figure 4). Additional gravel and/or road base would be placed on this armored surface to provide a driving surface.

A portion of the Missouri Creek Road from the Junction of CR 109 to the location of the engineered section described above would also be improved. This portion of road is a little over 6 miles long and would require improvements in the drainage features, fixing of small areas of poor soils, building a road shape that would drain stormwater (Figure 4), installing culverts for cross drainage, and adding road base and or gravel to improve the running surface. This portion of the project would use some material from the Texas Creek Pit. The running surface would be capped with gravel from a commercial gravel pit if possible. The amount of this work would depend on funding and costs for materials.

All areas disturbed; not needed as a travel surface would be broadcast seeded using Native Seed Mix #5. Slopes greater than 3(horizontal): 1 (vertical) would have erosion fabric installed to reduce runoff and rain splash erosion, the only location this is likely to occur is in the location of the engineered section for the safety concern described above. This would be done by the WRFO after construction activities have been completed at this site.

Access to the site would be via CR 109 from Rangely and or from State Highway 139 in Douglas Creek. All hauled materials and equipment would follow these routes in to the site. Heavy Equipment needed for this project would likely be an excavator on tracks, a backhoe, a bulldozer and a road grader. Any water that may be needed for the project would be purchased from the City of Rangely and/or the City of Meeker. Water would be used to achieve compaction of the fill on the engineered section. A small pump may be used to get water from Missouri Creek for compacting the soil lifts for the engineered section. The pump would be equipped with a filter. The amount of water needed is expected to be small and for not more than a few days, with most of the water returning to the channel or evaporating. There are currently no plans for the use of water for dust abatement or compaction for the majority of the road surface, but it may be needed and would be trucked to the site if needed.

Construction activities are expected to occur for not more than four weeks with a start date between May 1st and September 1st 2010.

The White River Field Office and the BLM contractor would adhere to the following additional design features/ mitigation measures:

1. The contractor will need to inform the BLM contracting officer and the WRFO when construction and improvements will take place. Post construction signs and closures when improvements are being made at:
 - West end 3 South, 103 West, Section 18, SE/SW (county road 109)
 - East end 4 South, 102 West, Section 19, SE/NE (east Missouri Creek rd)
2. The contractor must coordinate with existing linear facilities (ETC Canyon Pipeline) and employ appropriate avoidance methods such as Colorado One Call. All appropriate permits from State or local government must be obtained and followed.

3. Since the Texas Creek Pit is a Free Use Permit for which Rio Blanco County has sole responsibility there needs to be a signed agreement between the BLM and Rio Blanco County outlining the responsibilities and roles of the contractor for the use of the pit and removal of the material. The contractor shall be provided a copy of this agreement. At a minimum the agreement should contain the following:
 - Removal of no more than 2,000 bank cubic yards of pit run material.
 - Verification of Contractor bonding.
 - Contractor/employees must have current OSHA/MSHA certification when working in Texas Creek Pit with verification provide to Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge.
 - Prior to commencement of project, contractor will schedule with representatives of Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge and the BLM an onsite visit of the Texas Creek Pit.
 - The contractor will notify the Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge at a minimum 72 hours prior to any entrance of equipment in the Texas Creek Pit
 - To verify the amount of material removed, the contractor will survey the Texas creek pit prior to removal of material and again within 30 days of project completion.
 - The contractor is responsible for any damages that are incurred to RBC 109 by the contractor.
 - Gross vehicle weight on Rio Blanco county roads may not exceed 85,000 pounds.
 - The contractor is responsible for dust suppression, if dust suppression is required, on RBC 109. The contractor will contact the Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge for prior approval if a dust suppressant other than water is used.
 - BLM will provide oversight on the project to insure this agreement is implemented.
 - Contractor shall be responsible for reclamation/re-contouring and hazardous waste or spills of the area affected by the contractor to insure no hazards are created and left in the Texas Creek Pit.
4. Raptor surveys will be conducted by WRFO wildlife staff prior to project implementation. The BLM contracting officer will need to coordinate this effort with the BLM Wildlife staff. Nest activity in close proximity to more persistent forms of disturbance may prompt imposition of timing limitations that defer those points of activity until the young fledge or achieve a stage that is more tolerant of weather exposure or parental absence.
5. All work done on the east side of BLM Road #1062 must be confined to areas of prior surface disturbance (i.e., approximately 5 feet from the current road bed, or 10 feet where the Missouri Creek Unit 28-1 pipeline follows the road's eastern margin). Work on the west side of BLM Road #1062 must be confined to an area on the upper bench above Missouri Creek and no more than 100 feet from the road's western margin. Between 39°45'06"N and 39°04'00"N, no native soil deposits may be disturbed. Repairs made in this area should be accomplished with the minimum impact possible, and may only include the addition of new material on top of the existing ground surface. Any machinery utilized in road improvements within this delimited area must remain on the established road bed or within the existing channel of Missouri Creek.
6. Standard cultural mitigations will apply. These include, but are not limited to, a responsibility on the part of the operator to notify all field crew of their legal responsibilities

to protect cultural resources and to notify the Authorized Officer if cultural remains are discovered during operations.

7. The contractor will cease all activities when soils or road surfaces become saturated to a depth of three inches unless otherwise approved by the Authorized Officer.
8. Reclamation will be implemented by the BLM or the contractor concurrently with construction and site operations to the fullest extent possible.
9. All disturbed areas not needed as travel surface with Native Seed mix #5 listed below. Revegetation will commence immediately after construction and will be done by broadcast seeding.

Native Seed Mix # 5 ^a		
Species (Variety)	Lbs PLS/Ac	Ecological Site
Basin Wildrye (Magnar)	4	Foothill Swale, Sandy Swale, Swale Meadow
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	6	
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar)	2	
Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana)	4	
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	2	

^a Seeding rates reflect double the rate that would be needed for drill seeding, since the proposed action is to broadcast seed. Applied seed must be certified and free of noxious weeds.

10. WRFO will monitor the project area for the presence of invasive, non-native species. Should noxious weeds occur as a result of the proposed action, they will be treated using materials and methods approved by the authorized officer. All equipment used by contractors should be cleaned to remove seed and soil prior to bringing equipment onto the project area
11. The WRFO will monitor erosion on the site and if erosion features such as rilling, gullying, piping and mass wasting occur on disturbed surfaces for the engineered section the erosion features will be addressed by the WRFO using soil stabilization measures and BMPs.

No Action Alternative: No improvements would be made to the road and the ROW by BLM, safety and erosion concerns on this section of road would persist.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION: The purpose of this action is to fix a safety hazard and improve the road design and maintenance on approximately 6 miles of Missouri Creek Road (i.e. BLM Road 1062). BLM Manual Section 9113, defines the need for BLM roads to be for the use, development, protection, and administration of public lands and resources and requires these roads should have minimum safety and design standards, which this road is currently not meeting.

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide for public safety along a BLM road and reduce environmental degradation from excessive run-off and erosion due to poor road design and maintenance.

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: 2-53

Decision Language: “Administrative and public access will be obtained through acquisition of easements, acquisition of land through exchanges, *road construction or renovation, or by other appropriate means.*”

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:

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS RECORD CHECKLIST

DETERMINATION OF STAFF:		
Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*
Natural, Biological and Cultural Resources		
NI	Air Quality	Construction activities would likely increase local fugitive dust and there would be emissions released from construction equipment during installation, but impacts are relatively minor for air quality and short-term.
PI	Soils	The soils in Missouri Creek alluvium have been identified as saline or having greater than 16 µmhos conductivity. Much of the road has soils identified as fragile mostly for steep slopes uphill of the road location along the terrace of Missouri Creek.
NI	Wastes (Hazardous or Solid)	No hazardous chemicals are proposed to be used and spills or other introduction of chemicals to the environment are very unlikely.

DETERMINATION OF STAFF:

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*
PI	Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	This area drains to Missouri Creek, Evacuation Creek and to the Utah Border. Local surface water quality is expected to improve over the long-term but may include some temporary degradation from sedimentation during construction.
NP	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	This reach of Missouri Creek is strictly ephemeral with no riparian expression. Reach characteristics are consistent along this 4 mile segment and indicate a physically-controlled, vertically stable/laterally unstable channel system within a deep incise, exhibiting a low gradient (~1.5%) bed that meanders with appropriate sinuosity (1.6) across the ~150 meter-wide valley. Proposed localized disturbances to the channel's bed and banks would not be expected to prompt substantive channel adjustments or aggravate current erosional processes.
PI	Vegetation	During repair work along the road, there would be some vegetation disturbance resulting from the proposed action.
PI	Invasive, Non-native Species	During implementation of the project, there is an opportunity for invasive, non-native species to establish within disturbed areas associated with project work. There is also an opportunity for weed seeds to be introduced/spread by construction equipment.
NP	Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plant Species	There are no plant species listed, proposed, or candidate to the Endangered Species Act, or plants considered sensitive by the BLM, that are known to inhabit areas potentially influenced by the proposed action.
PI	Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Animal Species	See comment for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Animal Species
PI	Migratory Birds	See comment for Migratory Birds
NP	Wildlife, Aquatic	See comment for Wetlands/Riparian Zones
NI	Wildlife, Terrestrial	Project area consists primarily of greasewood /basin big sagebrush valley vegetation at an elevation range of 5900-6500' that is used by deer and elk as winter range predominantly from October through January and again in April and early May. Small mammal populations are believed to be composed of more generalized, widely distributed species that are tolerant of road-related disturbance and poorly developed understories that possess strong complements of invasive annual weeds. Short term and transient disturbance along this existing maintained route would have no substantive influence on the distribution or abundance of resident wildlife.
NI	Wild Horses	The current Land Use Plan management position is not to manage wild horses in the area known as West Douglas Herd Area which is adjacent to the project area. During the February 2010 inventory, four bands of wild horses were known to occupying in or around the project area. WRFO is proposing to gather the wild horses in this area beginning in August 2010.
PI	Cultural Resources	One site (5RB.5245) potentially eligible for NRHP listing exists within the project area. The undertaking would have no adverse effect on the site if proposed mitigations are enacted, as no <i>in situ</i> features or soils would be disturbed within the site.
NP	Paleontology	Though the project area has been mapped as the Upper Part of the Mesaverde Formation (PFYC 5), field inspection has confirmed that

DETERMINATION OF STAFF:		
Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*
		portions of the road flagged for improvement would only impact previously-disturbed surface soils or deep modern alluvia (PFYC 2 or 3) (Tweto 1979). No substantial potential exists for disturbing scientifically-important fossils in these alluvia.

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for impact analyzed in detail in the EA

SOILS

Affected Environment: The soils in Missouri Creek alluvium have been identified as saline or having greater than 16 μmhos conductivity. Much of the road has soils identified as fragile mostly for steep slopes uphill of the road location along the terrace of Missouri Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Potential impacts to soils include increased runoff; erosion and sedimentation due to disturbance associated with construction activities. The magnitude of the impacts to soils would depend on the duration of construction activities, and the timely implementation and success/failure of reclamation.

Impacts would likely be greatest shortly after the start of construction activities and would likely decrease in time due to stabilization and reclamation efforts. Erosion in these areas typically occurs after intense summer and late summer storm events. If one of these storms occurs during construction activities, construction would cease until the area dries out and therefore this should reduce the impact from these periodic intense, localized storms.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impacts identified.

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: It is unlikely that the pipeline replacement and installation would result in an exceedence of state water quality standards.

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

Affected Environment: Surface waters drain into Missouri Creek, Evacuation Creek and then to the Utah border. This is in segment stream segment 22 which include all tributaries to the White River from Douglas Creek to the Utah border. This segment is use protected and classified for Aquatic Life Warm 2, Potential Primary Contact Recreation, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated as Use-Protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach would apply. For stream segment 22, minimum standards for 4 parameters have been listed: Temperature, dissolved oxygen = 5.0 milligrams per liter (mg/l); pH = 6.5 to 9.0; and

Escherichia coli = 205/100 ml. Numeric standards for inorganic compounds and metals can be found in Regulation No. 37.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Potential impacts to the surface waters include increased runoff; erosion and sedimentation due to soil disturbance associated with construction activities. The magnitude of the impacts to surface water resources would depend on the duration of construction activities, and the timely implementation and success/failure of reclamation. This project is unlikely to influence the physical, biologic, or chemical minimum values listed in Regulation No. 37.

Impacts would likely be greatest shortly after the start of construction activities and would likely decrease in time due to stabilization and reclamation efforts. Sediment transportation in ephemeral and headwater systems requires storm events and typically occurs in stages with periodic intense, localized storms. The repair of the road should improve the way water moves on and around the road and the road would be more stable, therefore there is likely to be a long-term improvement in sediment production from the road.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impacts identified.

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: It is unlikely that construction activities would result in an exceedence of state water quality standards.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within a Foothill Swale ecological site. Within the project area, the dominate plant community consists Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentate*), various rabbit brush species (*Chrysothamnus spp.*) are also intermixed within the site. The understory of these shrubs primarily consists of Basin wildrye (*Elymus cinereu*), Western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), and Streambank wheatgrass (*Agropyron riparium*). Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) an invasive annual grass species is also present within the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Vegetation disturbance associated with the proposed action would primarily occur around the area of the engineered road repair location. Disturbance would result from construction equipment used to place rock and fill material used to repair this section of the road, this disturbance is expected to be minimal and localized.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impacts

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): With implementation of mitigation measures and successful re-vegetation, the proposed action would have no effect on this public land health standard.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Invasive species known to occur adjacent to the project area include: Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), and the invasive annual Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). Both Halogeton and Cheatgrass occur on areas of unvegetated earthen disturbance generally associated with projects such as roads.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would create new earthen disturbance on BLM surface. Disturbance associated with the proposed action could create a noxious weed problem by importing weed seed on vehicles and equipment or by creating suitable conditions (non-vegetated disturbed areas) for introduction of noxious weeds. In addition to noxious weeds, invasive non-native species such as Halogeton and Cheatgrass readily invade disturbed areas.

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: There would be no change from the present situation

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

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

Affected Environment: There are no listed, proposed, or candidate animals known to inhabit or derive important benefit from the project area. A number of BLM sensitive species are known to, or may potentially inhabit the project area, including: Townsend's big-eared bat, big free-tailed bat, and fringed myotis; Brewer's sparrow, Great Basin spadefoot, and midget faded rattlesnake.

There are no known features (e.g., caves, buildings) capable of supporting reproductive or hibernation-oriented activities for these bats, but rock crevices and cavities available in extensive woodland stands along the Missouri Creek valley offer habitat features potentially suited for roosting by individual or small numbers of bats during the summer months. Although the project area has no riparian systems that may attract concentrated use by bats (insect forage), a number of large perennial systems lie within the 10 mile foraging range of these bats, namely portions of West and East Evacuation Creeks, West Creek, and West Douglas Creek. Brewer's sparrows are

common and widely distributed on the sagebrush-greasewood terraces along Missouri Creek. Although the project area represents habitat that could be occupied by spadefoot toads, there appears to be no nearby impoundments that could be expected to maintain sufficient supplies of water (6 week duration) to support successful reproduction. The distribution (and taxonomy) of midget faded rattlesnakes in northwest Colorado is poorly understood. There is some evidence to suggest that these snakes are closely associated with outcrops of the Green River geologic formation, the nearest of which is about 0.7 mile from the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is not expected to affect Threatened and Endangered Species, or BLM sensitive herptiles. Proposed road maintenance work that would be confined to the existing roadbed would be similar in effect to current traffic activity and would not be expected to have any further influence on the utility of adjacent bat roosting or breeding bird habitat. The road reconstruction point would involve more concentrated and prolonged activity and would be expected to disrupt concurrent nesting attempts in close proximity to the site (see discussion in Migratory Birds). It is unlikely that disturbances generated at this site would involve more than 2 nesting attempts of Brewer's sparrow (e.g., incubation and early brood period, late May through mid-June). Considering the wide distribution and abundance of this species throughout the region, this level of risk and potential effect would be discountable at any landscape scale.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no activity authorized that would disrupt reproductive activities of BLM-sensitive animals.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The project area is not known to support a strong contingent of BLM sensitive species, but fulfills the land health standard by providing suitable habitat for Brewer's sparrow and (potentially) bat roosting substrate.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: Potential raptor nest substrate is prevalent along the project corridor (i.e., 200 meters either side), both in the form of mature pinyon-juniper woodlands and a nearly continuous series of low rock outcroppings that line the valley's west and southern exposures. Raptors that are most likely to nest in these situations include red-tailed hawk, golden eagle, Cooper's hawk, great horned owl and long-eared owl. The project area was extensively surveyed for ongoing raptor nest activity during the 2006 nest season. These surveys failed to locate any evidence of raptor nesting in woodland or cliff substrates in areas that would be susceptible to project-related disturbances; however, this effort did not record functional nest sites that may receive subsequent use.

The project site is situated predominantly in a broad alluvial valley at an elevation of 5900-6500'. The dominant vegetation consists of basin big sagebrush-greasewood shrublands with a sparse herbaceous ground cover; adjacent ridges and benches support Wyoming big sagebrush

shrublands and pinyon-juniper woodlands. A broad array of migratory birds initiate nesting in these habitats from as early as April (western meadowlark, pinyon jay) and normally finish reproductive activity by mid-July. Birds that are listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as Birds of Conservation Concern include the sagebrush-associated Brewer's sparrow (also BLM sensitive) and the woodland associated juniper titmouse, pinyon jay, and Cassin's finch.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Based on project mapping, the road reconstruction site would involve the clearing of about 0.4 acre of sagebrush terrace and channel vegetation; no woodland vegetation would be involved. Because this acreage lies immediately adjacent (<15 meters) to an existing improved road, it is unlikely that any concurrent nesting attempt would be directly involved with vegetation clearing and excavation. In the event construction occurred during the nesting season (particularly prior to feathered young), it is likely that a small number of nearby nests would be subject to disturbances that may disrupt nest visitation or cause nest abandonment. These effects would be localized and expected to extend to no more than 4 acres of sagebrush and 2 acres of woodland. This habitat base would likely support no more than 6 nest attempts of all species and no more than 2 of Brewer's sparrow. Although nest fidelity is contingent on nest chronology, nest failures attributable to construction activity would likely be suffered in no more than half of these attempts. These effects applied to any bird population or community would be discountable at the smallest landscape scale.

Maintenance activities that are confined to the existing roadbed are expected to remain brief and transient and would not influence adjacent passerine nesting activity any more than current traffic loads.

The status of raptor nesting in the project area is uncertain. Concentrated activity associated with road reconstruction and culvert installation may be sufficient, depending on nest chronology, to compromise nest attempts in close proximity to the existing road. BLM wildlife staff would survey the project area for raptor nesting activity prior to implementation and apply measures to the project necessary to avoid disruptions of nest activity that pose a risk to successful reproduction.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no activity authorized that would disrupt reproductive activities of migratory birds.

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The project area was inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level by WRFO archaeologists on 4/9/2010 and 4/12/2010 (Haymes 2010, WRFO #10-10-02). No historic properties were discovered. One previously-recorded historic property, historic cabin and ranching complex 5RB.5245, was identified within the project area and reevaluated as potentially eligible for NRHP listing (Needs Data). The site is bisected by BLM

#1062 and the adjacent pipeline. The site is being eroded on its western margin by Missouri Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action has the potential to disturb buried archaeological deposits and standing architecture if mitigations are not fully met. With the proposed mitigations applied, road improvements within the site’s boundaries would not affect *in situ* deposits of cultural materials or significantly alter the site’s setting or feeling (cf. 36 CFR 800.5(a)(1)). The proposed action would preserve, not diminish, the integrity of the site’s location and materials, lessening further threats of erosion from the encroaching channel of Missouri Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The northwest extreme of the site would continue to be eroded and undermined by storm water runoff into Missouri Creek and by the creek’s channel. Otherwise, there would be no potential to affect cultural resources.

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

OTHER ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis would be addressed further.

Other Elements	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Visual Resources		X	
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management		X	
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Rangeland Management		X	
Wild Horses		X	
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation		X	
Access and Transportation			X
Geology and Minerals			X
Areas of Environmental Concern	X		
Wilderness		X	
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X		
Cadastral		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Law Enforcement		X	

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action involves BLM Road 1062, which is also known as Missouri Creek Road. This road is used for access by the public, oil and gas operators, BLM and the grazing permittee.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction and improvement operations could limit access while improvements are being made to the road, but would be beneficial in the long run.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Public access would decrease and the road would become impassable if improvements are not made.

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: The project is located in an area with little development, but is an access for Oil and Gas and the primary access for maintenance of pipelines that parallel the road. Pioneer Natural Resources holds right-of way (ROW) grant COC34301 for the sole road authorization. Access ROWs are not generally issued for access to existing pipelines so ETC Canyon uses the road for maintenance of three pipelines but does not have an access ROW. These buried pipelines are directly adjacent or tangential to the road. O&G leases and agreements date from the 1950's and 1960's and do not associated access ROWs for the use of the road.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The improvement project is needed to maintain safe and reliable access on this road.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: If the improvement project is not authorized, the road would degrade further. In the last two years, access has been closed or open only at the user's risk. If access is completely closed, maintenance of the pipelines and other facilities could be in jeopardy.

Mitigation: Has been incorporated into the proposed action.

GEOLOGY AND MINERALS

Affected Environment: Surficial geology of the project area ranges in formations from the Cretaceous Mesaverde to the Tertiary Green River. In the project area there is a lack of high quality road building material derived from these formations. The Texas Creek Pit is located approximately 4½ miles east of the intersection BLM 1062 and RBC 109 and the BLM permit is issued to Rio Blanco County (RBC) under a BLM Free Use Permit (FUP) COC74208. FUPs are considered exclusive disposals in which the permit holder has an exclusive right to the materials

and sole responsibility for development and reclamation of the site. Remaining reserves in the pit are estimated at less than 8,000 cubic yards.

RBC is also required to permit the pit area with the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety. Since they are the permit holder they are responsible for the operational safety and maintenance within the pit under the jurisdiction of OSHA/MSHA requiring all individuals involved with operations in the pit to have OSHA/MSHA safety training and certifications.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Use of material from the RBC Texas Creek Free Use Pit for this project reduces the amount of material available for the maintenance of the higher traffic volume RBC 109. Due to the limited amount of material remaining in the pit, material required for maintenance of county roads would have to be transported from greater distances or the development of a new gravel pit with adequate material.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Material would be available for future maintenance of Rio Blanco County 109.

Mitigation: Incorporated into the proposed action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Haymes, Geoffrey

2010 *Class III Inventory for the Proposed Missouri Creek Road (BLM #1062) Improvements, 2010, Rio Blanco County, Colorado.* Bureau of Land Management – White River Field Office, Meeker, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden

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

CONSULTATION/COORDINATION:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Rio Blanco County,
Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Wastes, Hazardous or Solid, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights, Soils
Maggie Marston	Botanist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Geoffrey Haymes	Archeologist	Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources
Tyrell Turner	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Vegetation , Rangeland Management
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife, Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Andrew Burrows	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Access and Transportation, Recreation,
Jim Michels	Forester Fire / Fuels Technician	Fire Management, Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Linda Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Andrew Burrows	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Visual Resources
Melissa J. Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horses

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

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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 incorporated design features and mitigation measures recommended by specific resource specialists as proposed.

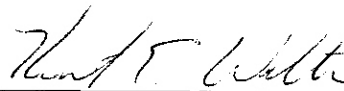
MITIGATION MEASURES: Have been incorporated into the proposed action.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: On-going compliance inspections and monitoring would be conducted by the BLM White River Field Office staff during and after construction. The BLM contract officer will assure that specific design measures/mitigation developed in this document will be followed. The contractor will be notified of compliance related issues and depending on the nature of the issue(s), would be provided 30 days to resolve such issues.

NAME OF PREPARER: Bob Lange

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: _____

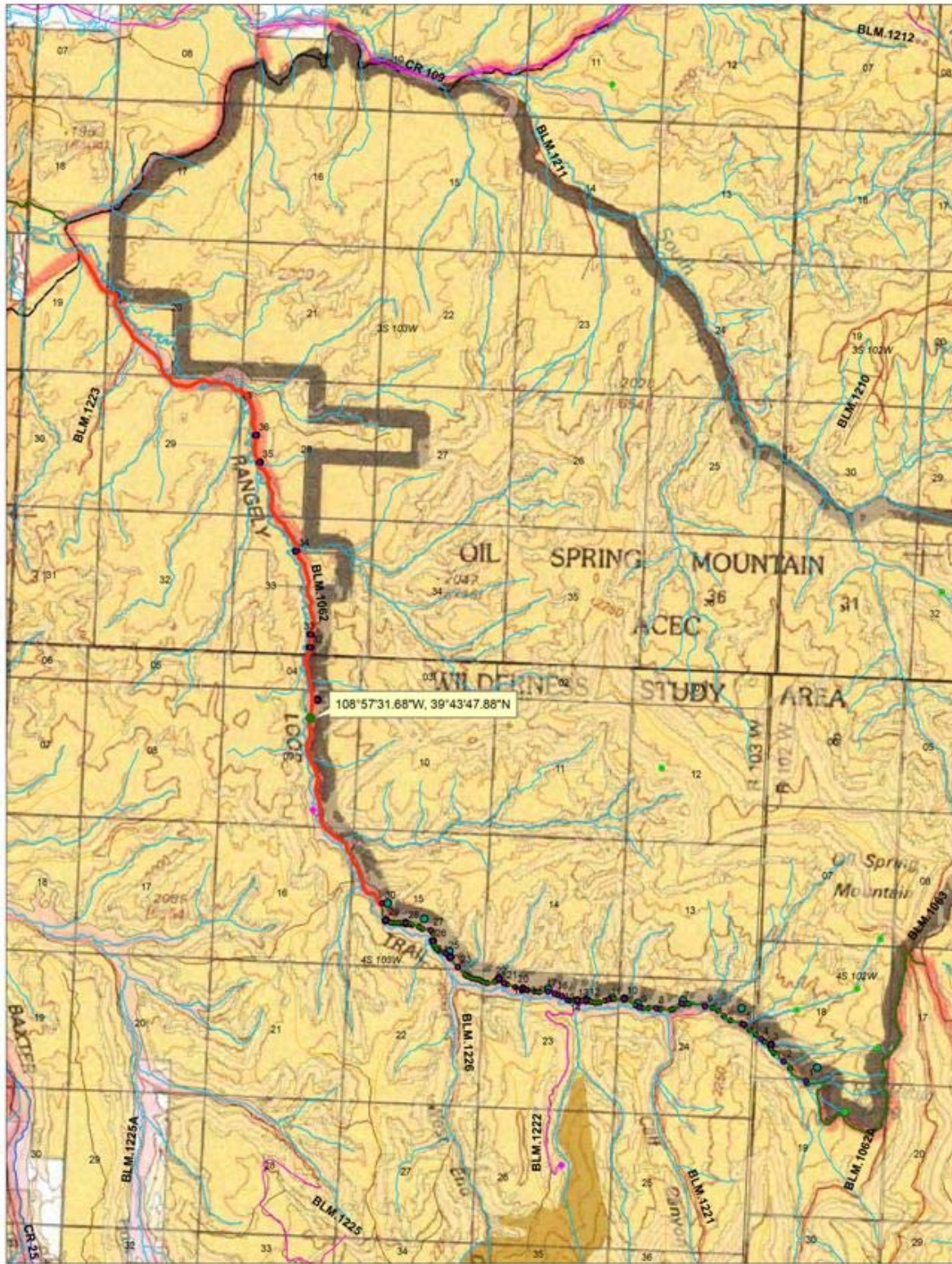


Field Manager

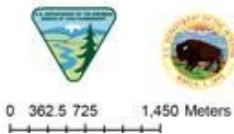
DATE SIGNED

5/07/10

ATTACHMENTS: Figure 1-Project Area with the Location of Safety Concern to be repaired
Figure 2-Plan View Engineered Road Section
Figure 3-Pictures of the Safety Concern
Figure 4-Typical Road Section



Missouri Creek Road Improvement



Sources:
BLM, USGS, CDOW, etc.

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Figure 1: Project Area with the Location of Safety Concern to be repaired

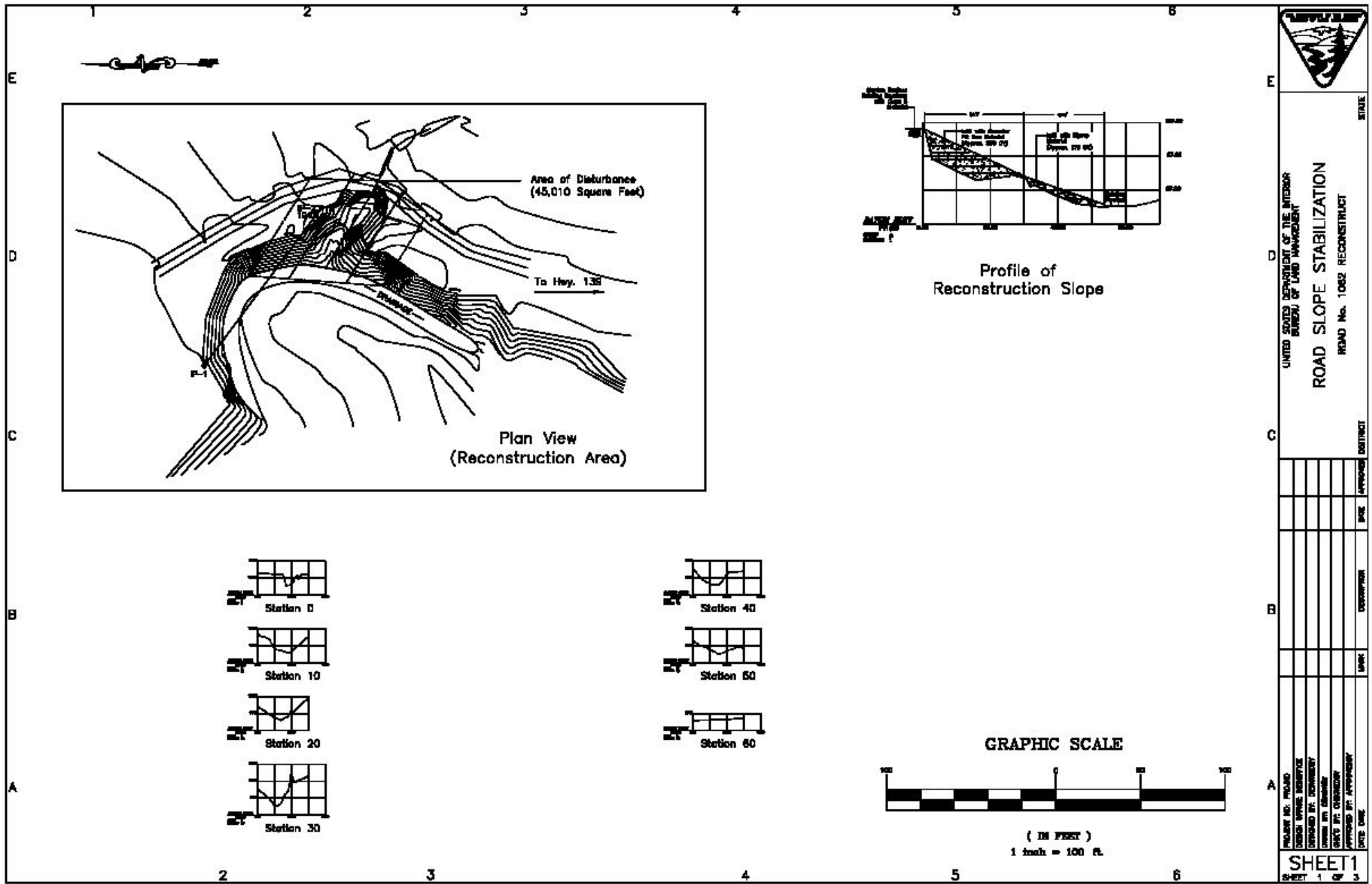


Figure 2: Plan View Engineered Road Section



Figure 3: Location of Proposed Road Improvement and Pictures of the Safety Concern
DOI-BLM-CO-110-2010-0059-EA

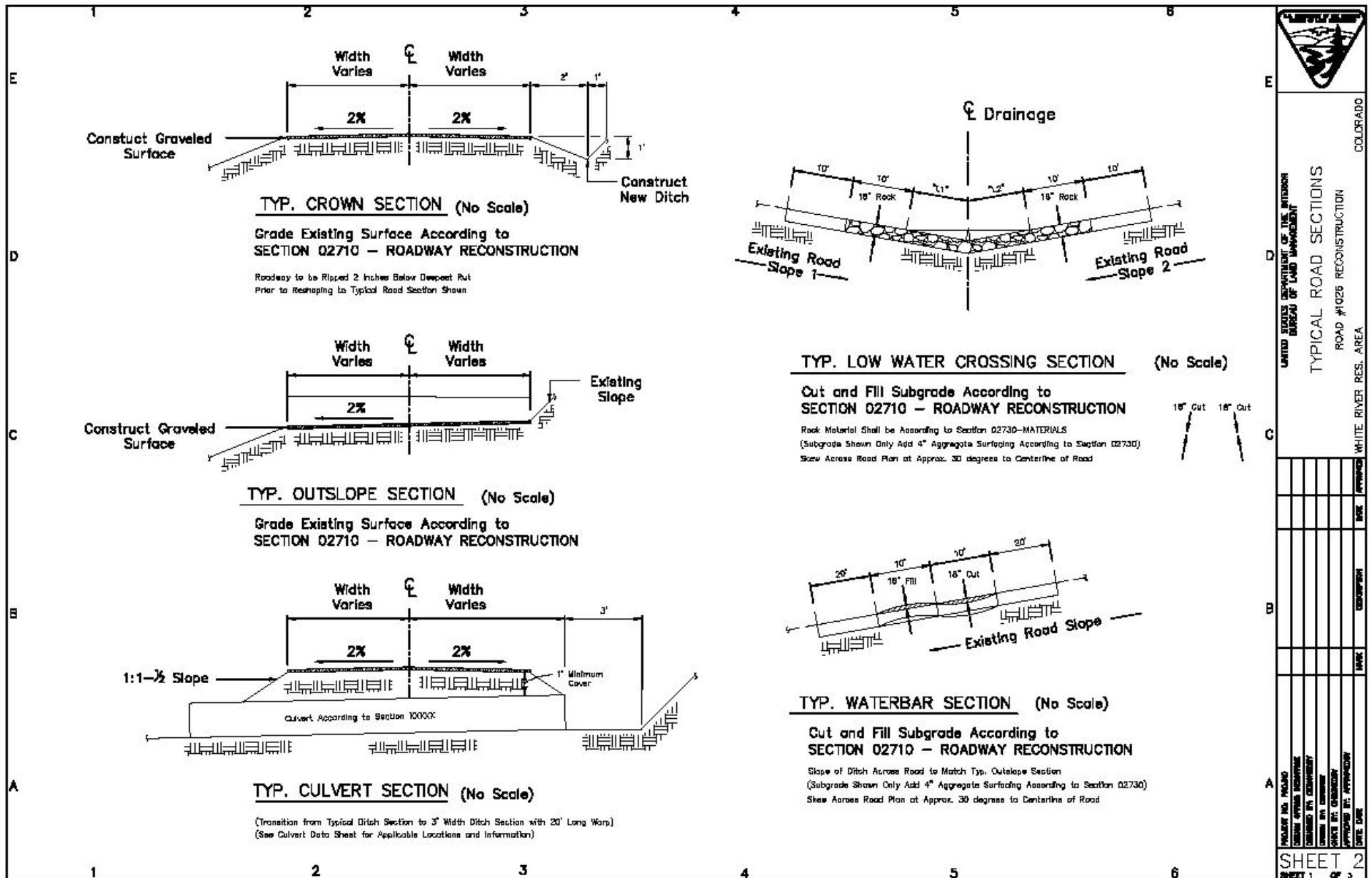


Figure 4: Typical Road Section