APPENDIX 6-1

COMMENTS LETTERS

ON THE GREATER DEADMAN BENCH

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

UTAH FIELD OFFICE

2369 WEST ORTON CIRCLE, SUITE 50

WEST VALLEY CITY, UTAH 84119

RECEIVED

MAR 2 - 2006

BLM VERNAL, UTAH

In Reply Refer To
FWS/R6
ES/UT
FA-0264

March 24, 2006

Memorandum

To: Greater Deadman Bench Project Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah 84078

From: Utah Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, West Valley City, Utah

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Proposed Greater Deadman Bench Region Oil and Gas Field Development; 1792 UT080-P

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your January 2006 letter regarding Questar Exploration and Production Company's (QEP) proposed oil and gas field development project within the Greater Deadman Bench Region. The proposed action would include constructing 1,020 natural gas wells, 219 oil/water injection wells, 169 miles of access roads, 193 miles of pipelines, 41 miles of oil flowlines, 15 compressor stations, and 22 central tank facilities. Long term surface disturbance throughout the project area over the life of the project is estimated at 4,561 acres. The maximum water use during the 10-year development phase would be 2,408 acre-feet per year. The project area is approximately 98,785 acres within Townships 6 to 8 South and Ranges 21 to 25 East, Uintah County, Utah.

Your letter requested comments regarding the draft EIS. The Service provides recommendations for protective measures for threatened and endangered species in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et. seq.*). Protective measures for migratory birds are provided in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 703 *et. seq.*) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 668 *et. seq.*). Wetlands are afforded protection under Executive Orders 11990 (wetland protection) and 11988 (floodplain management), as well as section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Other fish and wildlife resources are considered under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 48 Stat. 401, as amended (16 U.S.C. 661 *et. seq.*).

General Comments

The abstract for the proposed field development states 1,010 new gas wells will be drilled but tables S-1 page S-11 and 2.3 page 2-15 show 1,020. Also, table S-1 shows 891 new well pads will be constructed under the proposed action while table 2.3 lists 893 new well pads. Please verify numbers and any acreage calculations throughout.

On page 2-3, the last paragraph states that the requirement for lining the reserve pit would be site-specific. We recommend following the Guidance for Determining Pit Lining Requirements found within the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's *Environmental Handbook: Environmental Regulations for the Oil & Gas Exploration and Production Industry* (http://ogm.utah.gov/oilgas/PUBLICATIONS/Handbooks/envbook.htm). Soil type is only one factor to consider when determining whether a liner is needed. Other factors such as distance to groundwater, distance to wells, distance to surface water, fluid type, etc. are taken into consideration when evaluating the need for a liner. Absent site-specific evaluations, we recommend all pits be lined.

Best Management Practices

We commend QEP for being proactive and planning the field development using best Management Practices (BMPs). We appreciate your inclusion of standards for power line construction as outlined in the Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines (Edison Electrical Institute 1996) (Section 2.3.4 page 2-25).

QEP commits to monitoring and controlling noxious and invasive weeds (Section 2.3.5 page 2-25). We recommend that success criteria, frequency of control, and monitoring protocols be incorporated into the Pesticide Use Proposal.

Bald Eagle

Section 3.6.8.3, page 3-71, states there are four nesting sites within Utah. Currently, there are eight nesting pairs within Utah (http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/CountyLists/UTAH.htm).

The determination on page 4-36 states that the proposed action "may affect is not likely to adversely affect" the bald eagle. Because mortality could potentially occur, the determination should be "may affect, likely to adversely affect". In addition to the applicant committed BMPs described in chapter 2 and the mitigation measures outlined in 4.6.2, we recommend incorporating the following measures to minimize the impacts to bald eagle:

1. Temporary activities within 0.5 miles of winter roost areas, e.g., cottonwood galleries, will not occur during the winter roost season of November 1 to March 31, unless the area has been surveyed according to protocol and determined to be unoccupied.
2. No permanent infrastructure will be placed within 0.5 miles of winter roost areas.
3. Avoid loss or disturbance to large cottonwood gallery riparian habitats.
4. Where technically and economically feasible, use directional drilling or multiple wells from the same pad to reduce surface disturbance and eliminate drilling in suitable habitat Utilize directional drilling to avoid direct impacts to large cottonwood gallery riparian habitats. Ensure that such directional drilling does not intercept or degrade alluvial aquifers.
5. All areas of surface disturbance within riparian areas and/or adjacent uplands should be re-vegetated with native species.

Raptors

To help meet responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712), Executive Order 13186, and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 668 *et. seq.*), we recommend implementing the guidelines for avoiding and minimizing impacts to raptor species as described in the *Utah Field Office Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances* (Romin and Muck, 2002). The guidelines state that "long term land use activities and human use activities should not occur within the species-specific spatial buffer zone of occupied nests." Furthermore, long-term land use activities should not occur proximally to unoccupied nests unless it is determined that mitigation is appropriate and can be accomplished prior to initiation of the long-term disturbance.

Horseshoe Milkvetch

In the second paragraph of the horseshoe milkvetch section on page 4-21, the milkvetch is referred to as a cactus, please correct.

QEP commits to surveying potential habitat prior to any surface disturbance. We request that all survey results, whether or not plants are found, are provided to this office.

In the fourth paragraph of this section, it is unclear as to what mitigation would be used within horseshoe milkvetch habitat against weed invasion. In order to provide protection to this candidate species, we do not recommend mechanical or herbicide treatments in areas that will impact occupied habitat.

Effects to Federally Listed Fish Species

The EIS states the water depletion fee is $16.30 per acre-foot (page 4-39). The current water depletion fee is $16.67 and this fee changes annually. It appears from Figures 2-1 and 3.2-1 that there are proposed wells located within or impacting the designated critical habitat for the endangered Colorado River fish species. The analysis presented in 4.6.1.1 for the Endangered Colorado River Fish does not analyze the effects of the proposed action (drilling within the floodplain of the Green River) to the fish or its designated critical habitat. Absent this analysis and the full disclosure of effects, we recommend that well pads, roads, and pipelines should not be placed within designated critical habitat. Impacts to endangered fish or their habitats should be fully assessed through section 7 consultation with our office. Where technically and economically feasible, use directional drilling or multiple wells from the same pad to reduce surface disturbance and eliminate drilling in the designated critical habitat.

Floodplains

We recommend no well pads be placed within the 100-Year floodplain. Where technically and economically feasible, use directional drilling or multiple wells from the same pad to reduce surface disturbance and eliminate drilling in the 100-Year floodplain.

Seed Mixes

We recommend removing crested wheatgrass from the seed mixes listed in Attachment 2 as this introduced species has not been shown as occurring in the area (section 34.5.2 Vegetation Communities).

We appreciate your efforts to ensure the conservation of endangered, threatened, and candidate species and migratory birds. If you have further questions regarding our comments or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Bekee Megown at (801) 975-3330 extension 146.

cc: BLM State Office

Literature Cited

Edison Electric Institute. 1996. Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines: the State of the Art in 1996. Avian Power Line Interaction Committee, the Edison Electric Institute, and the Raptor Research Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1996.

Romin, L.A., and J.A. Muck. 2002. Utah Field Office Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances. U.S. Fish and Wildl. Serv., UT Field Office, Salt Lake City, UT.

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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MAR 27 2006

Ref: EPR-N

Stephanie Howard, Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Questar Exploration and Production Company – Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region
CEQ # 20060038

Dear Ms. Howard:

In accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region (GDBR) as proposed by Questar Exploration and Production Company (QEP). EPA appreciates the opportunity to review the Proposed Action and offers the following comments for your consideration.

The GDBR project area is located in eastern Uintah County approximately 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah. Questar E&P (QEP) proposes to exercise their valid oil and gas mineral leases in the GDBR and fully develop the oil and gas resources. The project includes the drilling and development of a total of 1,020 natural gas wells and 219 oil/water injection wells for a total of 1,239 wells. Of the total number of wells for this project, 891 wells are proposed in new locations with the remaining 348 wells "twinned" to an existing well pad. Additionally, there will be 170 miles of new access roads, 235 miles of new pipelines/flowlines, and a total of 37 new ancillary facilities constructed. The 98,785-acre project area is located entirely within the exterior boundaries of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation. The surface and mineral estate ownership is approximately 85% Federal lands administered by BLM and 12% owned by the State of Utah, with the remaining 3% of the project area privately owned. QEP holds leases on 79% of the federal, state, and private lands. The anticipated life of the project is 40 years, with the construction phase occurring in the first ten years or until full development of the resource.

Current land use in the GDBR is primarily oil and gas development, rangeland for cattle and sheep operations, utility corridors, and wildlife habitat. The area also includes limited

opportunities for recreational activities such as fishing, big game hunting, hiking, and off-highway vehicles. We understand that this project has the potential to significantly impact soils with 85% of the project area classified as severe to moderate erosion potential. There are also concerns related to project impacts on vegetation and wildlife. Potentially present within the vicinity of the GDBR are about eighteen special status species (2 plants, 2 mammals, 7 birds, and 7 fish), including ten species listed as threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidates under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the others found on the BLM Sensitive Species List.

Alternatives considered: The GDBR Draft EIS analyzed two alternatives, the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Alternative A, the Proposed Action, is the only alternative considered in detail that meets the purpose and need. While Alternative B, the No Action Alternative, was analyzed in detail, this alternative does not meet the purpose of the proposed action to fully recover oil and natural gas on these previously leased lands.

Range of Alternatives: The DEIS fails to compare the proposed action to any alternative that meets the purpose of QEP utilizing its valid existing rights on these previously leased lands to develop oil and natural gas. "The range of alternatives considered in an EIS is important because the decision maker can only choose from alternatives or combinations of specific parts of an alternative that have been analyzed" (see *Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenarios and Cumulative Effects Analysis for Oil and Gas Activities on Federal Lands*, Rocky Mountain Federal Leadership Forum, August 30, 2002, page 38). In addition, CEQ regulations, which require analysis of all reasonable alternatives, clearly contemplate that an EIS should evaluate reasonable alternatives in addition to the proposed action. The alternatives analysis "should present the environmental impacts *of the proposal and the alternatives* in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public", 40 CFR 1502.14 (emphasis provided). Only by providing a broad range of alternatives to consider in the EIS process can the decision maker have latitude in managing the development of the resource and its resulting environmental impacts. The GDBR Draft EIS lacks this basic requirement of an EIS. Therefore, a Supplemental Draft EIS or the Final EIS must consider reasonable alternatives, in addition to the proposed action, in order for reviewers to evaluate their comparative merits.

EPA recommends that a Supplemental Draft EIS or the Final EIS analyze a range of alternatives that will meet the purpose and need to provide for oil and gas drilling and development while assuring adherence to appropriate and necessary environmental protections. An appropriate range of alternatives may be selected by reassessing one or more of the alternatives considered but not evaluated in detail (see the DEIS pages 2-27 to 2-32). We suggest that a range of alternatives and an "environmentally preferred" alternative could be developed from the following four examples with features that include: 1) phased development; 2) site-specific directional drilling to reduce surface disturbance; 3) assuring all well locations meet environmental setback requirements; and 4) protecting the Green River floodplain though well-setbacks and other measures.

1. Phased Development: An alternative to delay access to certain leases for an extended period of time was considered in the DEIS (Section 2.4.2 Suspension of Operations) but rejected

from further analysis because it was determined to "merely put off environmental effects for the period of the suspension of lease access" (see page 2-28). However, this alternative should be given further consideration, as a phased development process could be designed to lessen impacts as drilling and production occurs sequentially across the Greater Deadman Bench area. Phased development could decrease the distances between each new rig setup, address issues of unitization and gas capture, and reduce field-related vehicular traffic. Phasing development also allows time for additional technological advancements, such as improving directional drilling methods, which could result in increased oil and gas production with fewer environmental impacts. Experience and knowledge gained from each development phase can be used to better plan and implement the subsequent phases.

2. Directional Drilling Alternative: A full-field directional drilling alternative (Section 2.4.4) was considered and rejected from further analysis in the DEIS. The DEIS recognizes that "consideration of directional drilling as an option for a site-specific situation may be appropriate," such as to avoid surface disturbance near prairie dog towns or floodplains in the GDBR (see page 2-28). According to the Draft EIS, full-field directional drilling would be an infeasible means of achieving the purpose of the proposed action. However, QEP has already successfully completed several directionally-drilled oil wells in GDBR from a single well pad at 40-acre down hole spacing. Directional drilling was performed in that case because the steep topography made it impractical to construct an individual pad and access for each well (see DEIS page 2-30). Based on the economic analysis provided in the Draft EIS, it appears that directional drilling would be economically feasible for the portion of the field where there are low risks such as the infill locations and are also within the exceptional recovery area. We suggest that the final EIS reconsider the alternative of directional drilling in all portions of the field with these characteristics.

3. Minimum Setback Distances Alternative: An alternative that assures adherence to all minimum setback distances from riparian zones, floodplains, springs, or sensitive wildlife, geologic, and cultural resource areas could be used to highlight where such conflicts may occur. BLM's Vernal Resources Management Plan (RMP) established that wells should be located outside of the 100-year floodplain or up to 200 meters (660 feet) from the river. Since the alternative of not allowing well development near these sensitive areas appears to substantially meet the stated purpose of the project, it should be fully evaluated in the Final EIS. EPA recommends consideration of an alternative that includes setback distances for specific locations to analyze the difference in environmental effects compared to the proposed action and other alternatives.

4. Green River Protection Alternative: An alternative that has no well pad development within the Green River floodplain could be fully developed in the Supplemental Draft EIS or the Final EIS. EPA has concerns with the impacts of the proposed wells within the riparian corridor along the Green River. There are proposed wells within the Green River floodplain located on BLM administered and private lands. As stated previously, BLM has a policy to require wells to be located 200 meters from the river or outside of the 100-year floodplain. While such locations are subject to approval at the APD stage, it is unclear whether the proposed action would approve these setback distances or grant waivers. Since the alternative of not allowing well development

in the Green River corridor and floodplain appears to substantially meet the stated purpose of the project, it should be fully evaluated in a Supplemental DEIS or the Final EIS. This alternative may still be considered for wells proposed on private lands since CEQ's guidance to lead agencies acknowledges that an alternative outside the legal jurisdiction of the lead agency must still be analyzed in the EIS if it is reasonable (see 40 CFR 1502.14(c) and CEQ's 40 Questions and Answers about NEPA, Question 2b).

EPA Rating

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft EIS on the QEP Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region. EPA rates this DEIS in Category EC-2, meaning we have Environmental Concerns with the proposed action regarding impacts to riparian areas and wildlife habitat. The "2" rating means that additional information is needed. Specifically, a Supplemental Draft EIS or the Final EIS should analyze an adequate range of alternatives to the proposed action in order to comply with the provisions of NEPA. A description of EPA's EIS rating system is enclosed.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments, please contact Jennifer Slavick of our staff at 303/312-6807 or me at 303/312-6004.

Sincerely,

Larry Svoboda
Director, NEPA Program
Office of Ecosystems Protection
and Remediation

Enclosure

Detailed Comments by the Environmental Protection Agency
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Questar E&P Company Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region
Bureau of Land Management, Vernal, Utah

General concerns:

1) EPA direct implementation in Indian County: As you are aware the project area is located on Indian country lands within the exterior boundaries of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation. Therefore, EPA directly implements our federal environmental protection programs with regard to activities associated with the proposed project. This includes permitting authority for the proposed water injection wells for enhanced recovery and any produced water disposal wells pursuant to the Underground Injection Control (UIC) program as authorized by the Safe Drinking Water Act. Please contact Tracy Eagle, EPA Region 8 UIC Program Director at 303/312-6373 for further information on EPA's implementation of the UIC permitting program for this project.

2) Pilot Office Coordination: We understand that the BLM Office in Vernal, Utah was designated as a pilot project office under Section 365 of the Energy Policy Act to "improve the efficiency of processing oil and gas use authorizations on public lands." A key goal of this effort is to maintain or enhance environmental protection through an effective oil and gas enforcement program for operations on Federal lands. (For further information, see MOU on implementing Section 365 signed by representatives of the EPA, Interior, Forest Service and the Department of the Army, October 19, 2005.)

3) Pilot Office Enforcement: It may be possible to improve the frequency of field inspections regarding environmental compliance based on the additional staffing provided to the Pilot Offices. We request that the Final EIS specify the number of staff and percentage of time allocated to enforcement inspection. It would be appropriate for members of the public and the Tribal members to be able to receive quarterly or semi-annual reports of field compliance with all environmental stipulations or any waivers to such stipulations.

4) Management, Mitigation, and Monitoring: Throughout the DEIS, there are many activities descried that require management, mitigation, and monitoring of construction and operational project impacts, as well as reclamation status and effectiveness. BMPs must be implemented during construction and operation, water quality is monitored, road access control methods and devices are utilized and monitored, weeding and seeding operations are performed and monitored, drill pad and facility maintenance and decommissioning activities occur, and other activities important to environmental protection are implemented. Details will be required for accomplishing these activities in each annual work plan. It is important to specifically designate which entity (BLM, the Operators, resource organizations, or some combination) will be in charge of what activity, and who will have specific enforceable accountability. All management, mitigation, and monitoring should be verifiable, and an agency/entity needs to be held accountable for performance oversight, both throughout the project life and after the project has been decommissioned. Please provide additional detail in the Final EIS on the issues discussed above. We also recommend that BLM provide public disclosure of these performance

oversight activities.

5) Revegetation Concerns: In Section 4.4, it is stated that the project area would be difficult to re-vegetate due to high erosion potentials and poor topsoil and soils with the potential for severe water erosion in about 45% of the GDBR. Although there are a number of mitigation measures proposed, reports indicate that reclaimed areas have not shown much success to date and many disturbed areas currently show increased erosion, weed infestations, and low native vegetation cover. Studies also show that new roads can become a pathway for the spread of invasive plants. We suggest that the Final EIS address the control of such intrusions via new roads during the initial review and planning stages and document the implementation of proper management and mitigation measures.

Detailed comments by page:

Page 1-11: Table 1-1 presents the issuing agency for major permits, approvals, and authorizing actions required for QEP's Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Development Project. The entire 98,785-acre project area lies within the exterior boundaries of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation and therefore the authority to approve and issue Underground Injection Control (UIC) permits for the produced water disposal wells is the Region 8 Office of the EPA. In other words, regardless if these disposal wells are proposed on Tribally-owned surface, State-owned surface, or public lands under BLM's management, the GDBR is entirely within Indian Country where EPA is the permitting authority for these activities under the Safe Drinking Water Act. EPA also has jurisdiction over the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), NPDES General Permit for Storm Water Discharges, and New Source Review (NSR) Permit, Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD), which are listed under the Utah Department of Transportation in Table 1.1 of the DEIS. The Final EIS should list those permits under EPA authority, as appropriate.

Page 2-30: The economic rationale used to reject the full-field directional drilling alternative is unclear. The DEIS acknowledges that for the proposed deep gas wells, "completion times and cost are not appreciably impacted by directional drilling" (see page 2-29). For the deep oil wells, the analysis indicates that a directional well would cost about 19% more, or approximately $140,000 more, than a conventional vertical well. Despite such increased drilling costs, the economic analysis provided in the Draft EIS indicates that "unrisked" directional wells in the exceptional recovery area would have a favorable return on investment exceeding 20% based on a gas price of $4.84 per thousand cubic feet. Current limitations regarding the technical and economical aspects of directional drilling should be updated from the information provided by a 2004 QEP report because the advances in directional drilling technologies are very rapid.

Page 3-33: Although table 3.3-3 lists air quality standards, the Affected Environment section lacks a similar table to summarize background concentrations of air pollutants. Footnotes to tables 4.3-4 and 4.3-5 cite some background concentrations, but not their sources or other details. In the Final EIS, please include a table that lists background concentrations, including the sources of the data and the statistics selected (for example, a 24-hr PM_{10} concentration as either the highest or the second highest monitored value, an eight-hour CO concentration as the second-

highest non-overlapping average, and a one-hour CO concentration, a 24-hour SO_2 concentration, and a three-hour SO_2 concentration as the second-highest averages in their reporting periods).

Page 4-6: According to section 4.3.1.1, an Air Quality Technical Support Document is available from the Vernal Field Office. Please send a copy of the document to EPA Region 8. We also ask that, in the future, the VFO send copies of air quality technical support documents for our review concurrent with Draft EISs, consistent with existing guidelines from the Federal Leadership Forum.

Page 4-8: A paragraph in the section on near-field impacts at the bottom of page 4-8 refers to potential concentrations of air pollutants "after all construction would be complete," referring to the near-field analysis of operational emissions. However, the percentages of air quality standards mentioned in this paragraph do not match the direct project impacts or the project impacts combined with background listed in table 4.3-5. Please clarify this section and its accompanying table. The last paragraph of the subsection on far-field impacts (page 4-11) discusses the potential maximum visibility impact at the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge, which has a Class II designation. Potentially, up to four days having a visibility change greater than 1.0 deciview (Δdv) could occur, with the maximum impact being 1.51 Δdv. The context suggests this would be a direct impact of project emissions and not a cumulative impact; please clarify whether this is the case.

Page 4-11: Section 4.3.2 on mitigation begins with a reference to the permitting authority of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Air Quality. As stated above, EPA has authority for air permits in Indian Country on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. Please revise this statement.

Page 4-12: There is no Figure 3.4-2 that illustrates the erosion potential.

Page 4-18: Regarding the direct and indirect impacts to vegetation communities, the Utah BLM has a state-wide policy (UT-93-93) that protects riparian habitat on BLM lands. This policy "requires that riparian areas be maintained and/or improved to Proper Functioning Condition".

Page 5-9: The list of proposed oil and gas NEPA projects in the Vernal Field Office should also include a similar list for the oil and gas NEPA projects being developed from the Bureau of Indian Affairs area office in Ft. Duchesne, Utah. A number of these projects, including Brundage Canyon, West Brundage Canyon, Tabby Canyon and Antelope Creek projects are mentioned on page 5-11. These projects were the subject of past Environmental Assessments and Findings of No Significant Impact by the BIA. In addition, this list should include Ute/FNR's gas development project on the former Naval Oil Shale Reserve #2 (NOSR#2) with the notation that federal action is not required for oil and gas development on these lands. NOSR#2 was transferred to the Ute Tribe under the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act, as amended by the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001. In 2004, Congress enacted the Native American Technical Corrections Act which provides that the NOSR#2 lands conveyed to the Tribe "no exploration, development,

or other agreement relating to the land that is authorized by resolution by the governing body of the Tribe, shall require approval by the Secretary of the Interior or any other Federal official."

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for Draft Environmental Impact Statements

Definitions and Follow-Up Action*

Environmental Impact of the Action

LO - - Lack of Objections: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC - - Environmental Concerns: The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce these impacts.

EO - - Environmental Objections: The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no-action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU - - Environmentally Unsatisfactory: The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1 - - Adequate: EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis of data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2 - - Insufficient Information: The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3 - - Inadequate: EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act and or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

* From EPA Manual 1640 Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment. February, 1987.

State of Utah

JON M. HUNTSMAN, JR.
Governor

GARY R. HERBERT
Lieutenant Governor

Office of the Governor
PUBLIC LANDS POLICY COORDINATION

LYNN H. STEVENS
Public Lands Policy Coordinator

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COMMITEE
Public Lands Section

RECEIVED
MAR 21 2006
ELM VERNAL, UTAH

March 15, 2006

Stephanie Howard, Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

SUBJECT: Greater Deadman Bench Region
Project No. 06-6221

Dear Ms. Howard:

The Resource Development Coordinating Committee (RDCC) has reviewed this proposal. The Department of Environmental Quality/Division of Water Quality comments:

Wells should be drilled and managed to prevent degradation of water quality through measures to limit erosion, limit stormwater runoff, and limit pollutant loading to stormwater runoff.

1. Wellpad placement or expansion disturbs soils. Vegetative and/or structural measures to control erosion should be implemented within 60 days of initial soil disturbance to prevent erosion leaving the site from exceeding the tolerable rate as determined by the local office of USDA/NRCS.

2. If vegetation surrounding the wellpad does not provide at least 60% ground cover within 60 days of creating the wellpad, engineering practices should be implemented within those 60 days to control erosion. Such engineering measures may include mulching, use of fiber mats, cross slope trenching, contour furrows, rock dams, terracing or such other erosion control practices as are required to prevent erosion from exceeding the tolerable rate as defined by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

3. No disturbance or degradation, to or of surrounding or nearby soils, native or beneficial vegetation or riparian areas should be permitted beyond the defined wellpad or permitted roads.

4. In addition, no spills nor runoff of chemicals including hydrocarbons, lubricants, salt water, antifreeze, or other potentially damaging materials should be permitted.

5. Before wellpad use is discontinued, permit holder should restore the site to prevent stormwater runoff from exceeding water quality standards. Erosion from the site should not exceed the tolerable rate as established by the local office of USDA/ RCS while the wellpad site is in use, or when it is no longer in active use. No petrochemicals, salt, pesticides, or other introduced potential pollutants should be left such that they might be eroded, dissolved, blown,

or otherwise carried away to become potential pollutant loads.

6. Any roads created should be limited in duration to not extend beyond the life of mineral rights lease. Access road and pipeline easements should include restrictions and requirements to prohibit erosion rates from exceeding the tolerable rate as established by USDA/NRCS. For pipelines, this may require seeding and establishment of vegetation following pipeline placement, or it may require other measures of stabilization, infiltration enhancement, and/or retention of runoff waters. Requirements could be developed for preventing or reducing such potential erosion which might include standards for:

a, Revegetation to ground cover level > or = to conditions prior to pipeline.

b. Structural BMPS to infiltrate runoff from slopes in pipeline excavation > 5 % for > 10 ft.

c. Maintaining the erosion rate on the pipeline below the standard NRCS acceptable level.

d. Structural BMPS to capture sediment and suspended solids in runoff before it would enter intermittent or perennial streams, or washes, or gullies.

7. It would be prudent to consult with USDA/NRCS to consider appropriate standards of erosion control to adopt into such requirements.

8. It would be beneficial to require implementation of road standards for the road easements similar to what are currently required for roadways on the Price District of BLM lands. The Price, Utah Field Office, US Bureau of Land Management has developed Hydrologic Modification Standards for Roads which have been required for several years. Leasors have found that while meeting the requirements requires a slightly higher initial expense in road construction, costs to maintain the roadways are significantly reduced. And leasors find that compared with other roads, roads constructed to these standards remain much more accessible and useful through unfavorable weather conditions and seasons. With this experience, some leasers now implement the standards even where they are not required. To protect the natural resources of Utah, to protect water quality, reduce erosion, improve accessibility and longevity of roadways, and to reduce long term costs for road maintenance, our office recommends and strongly advises that provisions similar to the Price Field Office Hydrologic Modification Standards for Roads (copied below) be included in all future mineral leases offered through Trust Land Administration.

The Committee appreciates the opportunity to review this proposal. Please direct any other written questions regarding this correspondence to the Resource Development Coordinating Committee, Public Lands Section, at the above address or call Jonathan Jemming at (801) 537-9023 or Carolyn Wright at (801) 537-9230.

Sincerely,

John Harja
Director
Resource Development Coordinating Committee
Public Lands Section

/attachment

Price Field Office –
Hydrologic Modification Standards for Roads
K. Flood – Hydrologist
Updated October 14, 2003

I. Surface Water Channel Crossing Criteria:

(1) Crossings which require a CWA-404 or GP-40 channel alteration permit, as determined by the Utah Division of Water Rights, are to be engineered if they are part of a federal Right of Way permit application.

(2) Channel crossings requiring culverts with individual or cumulative diameters of 30 inches or greater are to be engineered, and sized to the 25 year, 6 hour event at a minimum.

A. The commonly used sizing equations for culverts or other flow conveyances might not be reliable if there are no local precipitation stations from which to obtain accurate values. Isohyets are generated from available data. Often, the isohyet values given for remote areas have large errors associated with them. In such cases, run-off and stream flows should be obtained from hydrographs if available, measured directly if possible, or estimated based on channel dimension measurements.

(3) Wherever possible, roads should be aligned perpendicular to channels at crossings.

(4) Crossings on perennial channels which require structures or channel modification, including bank disturbance, are to be engineered. Crossings on intermittent and ephemeral channels may require engineering on a case by case basis.

(5) Culverts should connect a channel at existing points on both sides of the road. Realignment of channels is strongly discouraged. If realignment is the only option, engineering shall be done to ensure channel parameters are preserved as described in I. (6) A, B, and C.

(6) Engineered designs will ensure that crossings do not cause changes to the existing channel parameters as follows:

A. Cross Sectional Dimensions: Changes to the cross sectional dimensions of a channel destabilize streams. An altered channel often undergoes a series of undesirable changes before restabilizing. Significant widening and downcutting can occur, followed by the formation of a new channel within the widened area. This process results in significant soil loss, degrading water quality. Local ground water levels are often lowered, which can cause changes in vegetation.

1. width, as measured at bankfull level: Factors which influence width are:

a. flow velocity: Velocity of flow exiting the crossing must equal velocity of flow entering the crossing. Where culverts are used, a 'V' shaped flow guide (i.e., wing walls) should be installed

at the inlet. At the outlet, a 'U' shaped guide should be used to return flow to the original width, depth, and velocity. Also see criteria I. (6) A. 1. d. and I. (6) A. 2. b.

b. flow magnitude: Avoid changes in flow magnitude within the channel. Where a flood plain is present, flows from the flood plain must not be converged with channel flow. Each flood plain must be reestablished at the crossing outlet, with flow discharged at the same velocity, width, and depth as found immediately upstream of the inlet. Where culverts are used, the flood plains should have individually sized culverts, and each must be properly placed. Combination culvert/low-water crossings may be used, allowing flood level flows to go over the road. The same principles apply, differences in flow velocity on the flood plains must be considered in crossing designs. See I. (6) A. 2. a. and I. (6) A. 2. b.

c. size and type of transported sediment: Avoid creating changes in sediment load via use of erosion controls during construction and by replacing vegetation as soon after construction as possible.

d. bed and bank materials: Introduced bed and/or bank materials should have a friction coefficient similar to that of the natural channel, except where specifically designed to adjust flow velocity, and must be installed so as to withstand high flows and floods without dislodging.

2. depth, as measured from thalwag to bankfull level: The practice of installing culverts at a slope less than the natural channel bed slope to adjust flow velocity should be discontinued if changes to channel depth are to be avoided. This would also serve to reduce head at the inlet which can occur from the flow velocity change caused by the difference in culvert slope and bed slope.

a. Culverts should generally be installed with approximately ten percent of the diameter below the channel bed, provided rock or concrete aprons are included at the inlet and outlet, each flush with the original bed surface. Unless the bed is armored, both the inlet and the outlet must be installed at the existing bed level. Exceptions to this may be prescribed to reverse a preexisting downcutting problem without incurring additional costs.

b. Adjust flow velocity using an energy dissipating rock apron at the outlet.

B. Stream Channel Patterns:

1. radius of curvature: The following equation gives a relationship for the radius of curvature of meander bends to meander length and sinuosity.

$$R = L_m K^{-1.5} \div 13(K-1)^{0.5}$$

where: R = radius of curvature
L_m = meander length
K = sinuosity

and: $K = L_c \div L_v$; which may be approximated by $m_v \div m_c$

where: L_c = channel length
L_v = valley length
m_v = valley slope
m_c = channel slope
This relationship shows that parameters of a realignment can be made to mimic natural pattern geometry by adjusting channel slope and length within the realignment reach. It is necessary to design channel pattern changes (realignments) using the correct radius of curvature to avoid causing repercussions to the cross sectional dimensions. However, realignments should be made only if there are no alternatives. See I. (6) C. 1.

a. In cases where a channel must be realigned, the radius of curvature of the new alignment must equal the radius of curvature of the natural meander of the channel.

2. width/variable width, as a function of depth:

a. Width at bankfull of the new reach must equal width at bankfull of the original reach.

b. Banks must be contoured with the same slope as the original banks.

C. Stream Channel Profile:

1. slope of the channel bed: The bed slope is the single most sensitive physical parameter of a channel. When the bed slope changes, most or all other parameters of the pattern and cross sectional dimensions will change.

a. If possible, choose a crossing location low on the watershed, where the ground is relatively flat. See criteria I. (6) A. 2. a. and I. (6) A. 2. b.

2. pool-riffle ratio: At higher elevations in a watershed, the bed slope is generally greater and the channel is usually straighter (lower sinuosity). To compensate for low sinuosity, step pools and riffles develop at more frequent intervals. Pools occur where the bed slope is flatter, and riffles occur where the slope increases. Also, water seeps into the ground at pools, and discharges from the ground into the channel at riffles. If structures are built on riffles, water seepage could cause extensive damage and present potential safety risks.

a. Cross channels at pools, not at riffles.
b. Where roads must cross at riffles, in-seepage of water must be addressed in the design.

UINTAH COUNTY

STATE OF UTAH

Our part in the nation's future

COMMISSIONERS:
David J. Haslem
Jim Abegglen
Michael J. McKee
ASSESSOR - Gayla Casper
ATTORNEY - JoAnn Stringham
CLERK-AUDITOR - Michael W. Wilkins
RECORDER - Randy J. Simmons
TREASURER - Donna Richens
SHERIFF - Rick Hawkins
SURVEYOR - Robert Kay

March 17, 2006

RECEIVED
MAR 21 2006
BLM VERNAL, UTAH

Greater Deadman Bench Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

RE: Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region

Dear Project Manager,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region. We submit the following comments for your consideration:

Page 4-26 4.5.2 - Mitigation
Here, and in some of the other chapter 4 mitigation sections, soft wording is used. The word "could" is used to describe implementation of mitigation. Such wording begs the question "will, or will not", mitigation be used to address such impacts?

Page 4-82 4.17.2 - Irritereavable Effects
This section should be re-visited. The loss of vegetation, until reclamation, does not appear to be an irretrievable effect. The act of reclamation makes it retrievable as most of the losses reported here are to be mitigated or would be prevented through proper reclamation. It does not appear that they are irretrievable.

Page 2-34 2.4.6 - Best Management Practices
Anywhere this document addresses best management practices (BMP's), such BMP's must be adopted for local conditions. We object to the utilization of national BMP's until they have been analyzed and adjusted to be compatible with local conditions, both environmental and type of development.

COUNTY BUILDING · 152 EAST 100 NORTH · VERNAL, UTAH 84078

Page 234 1st paragraph
Here it states that the Vernal Field Office operators in the Uintah Basin and Uintah County officials are cooperatively developing a comprehensive list of improved standard operating practices and additional BMPs. To our knowledge this process has come to a halt and thus, this statement should be struck.

Thank you for your review and consideration. We have no further comments at this time, however, we reserve the right to comment at a later date.

Sincerely,

UINTAH COUNTY COMMISSION

Michael J. McKee, Chairman

David J. Haslem

Jim Abegglen

United States Department of the Interior

U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Reston, VA 20192

Division AFMS	Initial	Assigned
Field Manager		
Planner		
NEPA		
Ranger		
Bus. Practices		
Renewables		
Operations		

BUREAU OF LAND MGMT, VERNAL, UTAH

MAR 23 '06

MINERALS	
FIRE	
L EMPLOYEES	

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 423

MAR 2 0 2006

Greater Deadman Bench Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region

As requested by the Bureau of Land Management in correspondence dated January 27, 2006, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has reviewed the subject draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and offers the following comments.

GENERAL COMMENT

More information would be useful in evaluating the potential impacts of this project on water resources. It is estimated that oil field water flooding operations will require about 2,300 acre-feet per year of produced water and ground water (pages 2-12 through 2-14). However, the potential hydrologic effects of the proposed water usage are not described in the chapter on potential environmental consequences. Further assessment could address possible changes to the potentiometric surface of affected freshwater aquifers and the direction of ground-water flow, effects on spring or seep flow in the area, and potential effects of pumping water from deep production wells located within 100 yards of the Green River on streamflow. If changes in streamflow are predicted, associated effects on aquatic habitat could be assessed.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Pages 3-12 through 3-17, Section 3.2.3.1 Surface Water Flow

The USGS streamflow gaging station number 09307000 is Green River near Ouray, UT, which was discontinued in 1966. The gaging station near Jensen, UT is number 09261000. The peak flow information cited for this station is misleading. The lowest "annual" peak during the period 1992 to 2003 was 7,570 cubic feet per second (cfs) on May 23, 2002, as can be seen on the USGS website for peak flows for this site at:

http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/peak?site_no=09261000&agency_cd=USGS&format=html

If the intent is to compare the overall range of flow conditions at this site, a discussion of the monthly mean or daily streamflow data may be more appropriate. Monthly mean data can be found at:

http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/monthly/?site_no=09261000&agency_cd=USGS

Monthly mean streamflows of less than 1,000 cfs were measured during the summer of 2002, with some daily streamflows below 850 cfs.

http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/discharge/?site_no=09261000&agency_cd=USGS

Similarly, the description of streamflow conditions for the White River near Watson at gaging station number 09306500 is misleading. Streamflow information (annual peak, monthly mean, and daily data) for this station can be obtained by substituting this station number for 09261000 in the preceding three websites.

A peak streamflow of 852 cfs was measured on October 5, 1981 for Coyote Wash near Ouray (gaging station number 09306878), which is larger than the "up to 600 cfs" reported on page 3-16. Instantaneous peak flow information for this station can be found at:

http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/peak?site_no=09306878&agency_cd=USGS&format=html

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this DEIS. If you have any questions concerning our comments, please contact Lloyd Woosley, Chief of the USGS Environmental Affairs Program, at (703) 648-5028 or at lwoosley@usgs.gov.

Sincerely,

James F. Devine
Senior Advisor for Science Applications

United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Uintah and Ouray Agency
P.O. Box 130, 988 South 7500 East
Fort Duchesne, Utah 84026-0130
(435) 722-4300

MAR 2 2 2006

IN REPLY REFER TO:
MS – 420 Real Estate Services
Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region EIS

March 21, 2006

Greater Deadman Bench Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

Subject: Comments on UTU-080-2003-0396V

Dear Ms. Howard;

I am providing comments regarding the Questar Exploration and Production Company's (QEP) Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region (UTU-080-2003-0396V) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) as it impacts Tribal resources of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation.

Cooperating Agency

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Uintah and Ouray Agency (BIA) wishes to be a cooperating agency on this project. I apologize for any inconvenience this causes at this late date. Please update all areas of the document to reflect BIA cooperating agency status. Comments are being prepared through the Uintah and Ouray Agency. BIA's Record of Decision (ROD), however, will be issued through the Western Regional Office. If the BLM and BIA need to do separate consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, please advise us of such.

Proposed Action Comments

Tribal and Allotted lands should be included as part of the Proposed Action. QEP's existing NEPA is limited in extent and the mineral estate is primarily Federal. Please include lands within Township 8 South, Range 21 East, Sections 1, 10-16, and 19-23; Township 8 South, Range 22 East, Sections 3, 5-8, 16-19, 27 and 30; and Township 8 South, Range 20 East, Section 34 (approximately 17,280 acres) in your analysis. This includes existing and future wells in the Glen Bench, Gypsum Hills, Wonsits Valley and any other of QEP's wells in the Greater Deadman Bench Area on Indian lands.

Please extend the estimates for surface damage for well pads, access roads, and pipelines and number of wells, and associated analysis/effects (air quality, surface and subsurface hydrologic issues, water depletion issues, erosion, wildlife, socio-economics, and AUM reduction, etc.) to the Proposed Action.

Summary Comments

Page S-5 State how this document conforms to the new RMP.

Page S-11 Update Proposed Action if it has changed since scoping occurred in 2003-2004.

Page S-11 List additional compressors on Indian land in the project area.

Page S-12 Update No Action well numbers.

Page S-13 Include Tribal/Allotted Ownership.

Page S-13 Address reduction in AUMs.

Page S-14 Avoid giving specifics on cultural sites.

Impacts Comparison Table-

- Special status wildlife-List number of active nests for Proposed Action. List current number of leks for No Action.
- Cultural resources-Surveys will identify possible impacts.
- Effects to land use -List number of AUMs lost.
- Rangeland Management-Forward adjusted AUMs to the range program for implementation.

Chapter 1

1.4 Western Regional Director of the BIA will also issue a ROD. Individual site-specific NEPA documents will be prepared and approved by Agency Superintendent.

1.4.1 Company will work with Ute Indian Tribe and/or BIA to lay out locations on Indian lands.

1.5.2 State how this document conforms to the new RMP.

1.7 Document does not address: Native American Religious Concerns or Environmental Justice. There are approximately 17,280 acres held in Trust for QEP's development.

Table 1.1 Add Ute Indian Tribe's and BIA's authorizations.

Chapter 2

2.1 Verify current well spacing APDs on Tribal land. It seems that increased density wells on Tribal may be being permitted.

2.1.1.1 Access may be on Tribal roads. All reserve pits on Tribal land need to be lined with an impervious material.

2.1.3/2.1.4.1/2.1.4.2/2.1.6 Include table with all water requirements; specify duration of water use. Verify Section 7 Consultation with USFWS covers all water usage.

2.1.8 Reclamation will occur per surface management agency (SMA) specifications.

Page 2-23 Assumption regarding compressor stations conflicts with that listed on page S-11.

2.3.1 SMA would be notified immediately if cultural resources were found.

2.3.3 SMA would prescribe mitigation measures to protect special status species.

2.3.12 QEP will work with SMA to monitor success of reclamation.

2.3.13 Ute Indian Tribe needs to be included in road usage monitoring.

2.4.6 Include BMPs that are to be applied in all cases directly to Proposed Action.

Add Depletion to Table.

Chapter 3

3.2.3.1 Add newer hydrograph and water quality data where available.

3.6.8.2 No black-footed ferrets exist on Tribal land in the project area.

3.6.8.4 Yellow-billed cuckoo may have suitable habitat on Allotted/Tribal land near the Green River.

3.6.8.5 Golden eagles often winter roost on Tribal/Allotted land near the Green River.

3.6.8.6 Ferruginous hawks are known to use artificial nest structures in the project area.

3.6.8.9 Suitable habitat near the Green and White Rivers may exist for common yellowthroat.

3.9 Update acreage of project area and number of wells to reflect Tribal lands. Also include Tribal/BIA rights-of-way.

3.11 List any Indian grazing allotments.

3.12 Cross country travel is not permitted on Tribal lands.

3.13 Visual classifications have not been assigned to Indian lands; however development will use matching earth-toned mat-finish on all structures to minimize visual impact.

3.14.1 Include population centers of Fort Duchesne and Roosevelt in demographic analysis.

3.14.4.2 Surface use agreements and other surface payments provide revenues to Ute Indian Tribe and to Allottees in the project area.

Chapter 4

Increase all environmental consequences where Indian lands will be affected.

Special status species on Indian land will be surveyed and appropriately avoided.

Chapter 5

No comments.

Chapter 6

Include BIA as a consulted agency.

Chapter 7

Update reviewers and preparers.

The BIA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this DEIS and your consideration of our comments and requests. We look forward to receiving a Final version of this document in the future. If you have any questions please contact Niccole Mortenson, Environmental Protection Specialist, at 435-722-4322.

Sincerely,

Chester D. Mills
Superintendent

cc: Branch and chrono files
Amy Hueslein, WRO EQS
Allen Anspach, Regional Director, WRO

CENTER FOR NATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

1536 Wynkoop, Suite 302
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cne@nativeecosystems.org
www.nativeecosystems.org

Stephanie Howard
Vernal Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078

25 March 2006

Dear Stephanie,

Center for Native Ecosystems provides these comments on the January 2006 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region.

Here are our main concerns:

Lack of a reasonable range of alternatives

The BLM presents only the preferred alternative and a No Action alternative, both of which involve drilling in sensitive habitats. Many other alternatives could have been considered which conserve irreplaceable resources and meet the stated purpose and need: "to extract and transport oil and natural gas, at a profit, from the portions of the GDBR leased by its companies" (p. 1-1). Therefore, the FEIS must consider additional alternatives, including delaying approval until the RMP revision is complete and prohibiting surface disturbance in habitat for special status species, floodplains, and in other sensitive areas - these can all be accomodated with QEP still making a profit.

Horseshoe milkvetch

Horseshoe milkvetch is only found in one site, which includes part of the planning area. Figure 3.1-4 suggests that all of its habitat is found within the Horseshoe Bend oil and gas field. We are currently evaluating whether an emergency listing petition is warranted for this species, and this project's proposed disturbance of over 1000 acres of potential habitat argues for the need for immediate protection. The DEIS claims that there will be no direct impacts, but page 3-54 acknowledges that the actual extent of the occupied habitat in the project area is not known. The DEIS provides no information on how how the potential habitat in this project area compares to the total potential habitat believed to be available. There is no discussion of cumulative impacts from other oil and gas drilling, including wells approved outside of field development projects. I think this is the fourth time we've argued this in the past week - the BLM must disclose not just

the estimated extent of the potential impacts in the project area; it must also give the public some context as to what this means for the species as a whole, or at the very least, within the Field Office.

How does the BLM arrive at the conclusion that there is a 4% chance of taking horseshoe milkvetch (p. S-16), especially if the potential habitat has not been surveyed for the plant? This is a Candidate species found in a single site. Allowing surface disturbance in potential habitat shows that the BLM lacks the regulatory mechanisms necessary to recover the species, and that the agency is contributing to the need to list this wildflower under the Endangered Species Act. Instead, the BLM should not approve any surface disturbance in potential (or occupied) habitat and should immediately begin working on a comprehensive conservation plan for horseshoe milkvetch. We are participating with the BLM in the Uinta Basin Rare Plant Forum, and strongly encourage the agency not to allow this surface disturbance which will further imperil one of the most at-risk plants in the basin.

Raptors

The Vernal Field Office's track record on raptors is apalling. Page 3-62 indicates that only 17 of 232 nests in the project area (plus one-mile buffer) are presently active - about 7%. None of the 15 Artificial Nest Structures in the project area showed signs of use. Yet page 4-42 states that "appropriate measures to avoid disturbing active nest sites and to protect the viability of all nest sites for potential future nesting" may include "the construction of Artificial Nest Structures in appropriate locations". NEPA requires that mitigations be effective, and the existing ANSes in the project area itself are demonstrably ineffective. The DEIS tries to downplay the effects of additional disturbance on raptors because "overall abundance of nests should result in small overall effect" (p. S-16). Well, not if one of the 17 active nests is impacted, not if most of the 232 nests have already been impacted by other drilling, and not if the limiting factor isn't availability of nests but rather of undisturbed nests. The BLM must do a better job of analyzing the real impacts of approving this action. The DEIS states on page 2-36 that "43 new wells and associted access roads would be constructed within raptor guideline buffers." The BLM must not violate the MBTA, or its special status species Manual obligations.

Major projects authorized during plan revision

This is just one of a flurry of projects that are being approved during plan revision, which makes the planning process essentially irrelevant. The project area includes white-tailed prairie dog ACECs that the RMP process may designate - this is just one of the potential improvements in oil and gas management that waiting until after revision could provide. Field Managers have discretion to delay decisions while under plan revision, and Vernal should take advantage of that opportunity. Staff already are overwhelmed with processing and monitoring all the already-permitted projects.

Air quality

The BLM must carefully consider impacts to air quality, and obtain the proper state permits.

Interim reclamation

This DEIS analyzes impacts assuming that interim reclamation will occur. However, the Chapita Wells DEIS that we commented on recently acknowledges that interim reclamation has been ineffective, and that impacts should be considered long-term. This view is borne out by other portions of the Greater Deadman Bench DEIS that discuss the near impossibility of preventing weed infestation once soils have been disturbed. The BLM must revise this section to be in keeping with the more honest Chapita Wells analysis; doing otherwise would clearly be arbitrary and capricious and thus violate the APA.

White-tailed prairie dog management

The DEIS suggests that white-tailed prairie dogs will thrive if their forage is removed and they are left with bare ground to make a living on. Again, the BLM takes the inconsistent view that these areas will be successfully reclaimed, rather than becoming dominated by cheatgras: "when these disturbed areas are reclaimed, the regrowth of native vegetation provides ideal forage for the prairie dog" (p. 4-35). That would be nice, but the real story in the basin involves massive dieoff of native sagebrush and noxious weed proliferation, not recolonization of disturbed areas by natives.

Conclusion

Drilling in this project area will last for 40 years according to the DEIS. There should be no rush to approve this now. Instead, the BLM should wait until plan revision and the development of effective mitigations and reclamation methods are complete. If impacts to special status species cannot be effectively mitigated (as the major wildlife declines in the basin confirm) and/or effective reclamation cannot be achieved, these areas should not be developed. Allowing drilling in horseshoe milkvetch habitat is one of the most egregious aspects of this project, which must be remedied in the FEIS.

Sincerely,

Erin Robertson
Staff Biologist

QUESTAR

Questar Exploration and Production Company
Independence Plaza
1050 17th Street, Suite 500
Denver, CO 80265
Tel 303 672 6900 • Fax 303 294 9632

Rocky Mountain Region

March 27, 2006

Ms. Stephanie Howard
Greater Deadman Bench Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078

Re: Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region
Draft Environmental Impact Statement – January 2006

Dear Ms. Howard:

Questar Exploration and Production Company (QEP) appreciates the opportunity to review and submit comments on the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region (GDBR) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). QEP agrees with the BLM's preferred alternative, the Proposed Action. QEP submits the following specific comments to be considered in the final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD):

1. Abstract, paragraph 2: The abstract states, "In addition to QEP's commitment to voluntarily apply Best Management Practices, mitigation has been disclosed to lessen the environmental effects." This leads the reader to believe that QEP will apply *all* Best Management Practices and that the mitigation disclosed *will* be carried out. This should be rewritten for clarification: "In addition to QEP's commitment to voluntarily apply *selected* Best Management Practices, mitigation has been disclosed, *that if applied, could* lessen the environmental effects."

2. Page 2-33, Section 2.4.6 Best Management Practices: Paragraph 1 defines Best Management Practices as "innovative, dynamic, and economically feasible mitigation measures applied on a site-specific basis…" QEP feels it is necessary, to reiterate that Best Management Practices (BMPs) must be *economically* feasible and that they should also be *technically* feasible. BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2004-194 refers to BMPs that field offices and operators are encouraged to **consider** and provides the following criterion before listing examples of typical case-by-case BMPs: "Other BMPs are more suitable for Field Office consideration on a case-by-case basis depending on their effectiveness, **the balancing of increased operating costs vs. the benefit to the public and resource values,** the availability of less restrictive mitigation alternatives, and other site specific factors.

3. Page 3-21, Section 3.2.6 Groundwater, 4th paragraph: The text inaccurately states that the Birds Nest aquifer **may** be present beneath the GDBR, leading the reader

to question its existence below the project area. The Birds Nest *is* present beneath the GDBR and provides important technical rationale for not being able to directionally drill. The text should be changed to: "The Birds Nest Aquifer, which *is* present beneath the GDBR…"

4. Page 3-72, Section 3.6.8.8 Greater Sage-grouse *(Centrocercus urophasianus),* 1st paragraph, last sentence: This section claims, "Since 1967, the abundance of male grouse attending breeding grounds in Utah has declined by approximately 50 percent." Please cite the source for this statement or remove the statement if not supported by scientific data.

5. Page 3-72, Section 3.6.8.8 Greater Sage-grouse *(Centrocercus urophasianus),* 2nd paragraph: "UDWR records indicate that 14 leks exist within 5 miles of the GDBR, half of which occur within its boundary (Figure 3.6.4)." Figure 3.6.4 depicts White Tailed Prairie Dog Habitat. Please include the correct map. Regarding the 14 leks that exist within 5 miles of the GDBR, please indicate which leks are active and which are inactive. Appendix 3.5.2, USFWS T&E Species Consultation letter states on page 2, last paragraph: "There are two active sage grouse leks in the project area."

6. Page 4-5, Section 4.2.2 Mitigation [Water Resources]: The text states, "Roads crossing floodplains would be constructed at the narrowest part of the floodplain as designated by the Authorized Officer." While attempts to follow this guidance will be made, it should be recognized that site-specific conditions would dictate the road construction location. The text should be changed to read, "Roads crossing floodplains would be constructed at the narrowest part of the floodplain and perpendicular to the floodplain, *where feasible*."

7. Page 4-26, Section 4.5.2 Mitigation [Vegetation], paragraph 2: The text states, "All construction equipment and vehicles could be power-washed prior to the start of construction. Any construction or operational vehicles traveling between the GDBR and outside areas should be power-washed on a weekly basis". This mitigation measure should be removed from the final EIS. QEP employees typically wash their vehicles once per week but QEP cannot control whether and how often contractors wash their vehicles. QEP will encourage its contractors and vendors to comply with this guideline; however this requirement is unenforceable either by QEP or the BLM.

8. Page 4-27, Section 4.6.1, Direct and Indirect Effects [Wildlife]: There are several statements that imply certain consequences "would" take place. It should not be assumed that indefinite consequences such as mortality or displacement "would" take place; indefinite consequences "could" take place. The first sentence should be changed to read, "Direct impacts from the Proposed Action and alternative *could* include…." The 4th sentence should be changed to read, "Indirect impacts

from the proposed action *could* include…." The same comment applies to all indefinite consequences in this section found in pages 4-27 through 4-48.

9. Page 4-49, Section 4.6.2.1 Wildlife [Mitigation]:

    a. Bullet #3: "Avoid placing well pads within 0.5 to 1 mile of raptor nests, depending on the species." This mitigation measure should clarify active vs. inactive nests and should be rephrased: "Avoid placing well pads within 0.5 to 1 mile of *active* raptor nests, depending on the species."

    b. Bullet #6: "Conduct annual raptor nest activity and winter roosting inventories of their project area plus a one-mile radius during the seven-year drilling and construction phase." This mitigation measure does not state who will pay for this survey although it is implied that QEP would bear the expense. Annual surveys would impose an unnecessary expense because raptor nest and winter roosting inventories are already performed with every on-site inspection by a BLM wildlife biologist. This mitigation measure should be removed from the final EIS.

    c. Bullet #12: "Where such actions would not endanger human safety, require field personnel to remove animal carcasses along lease roads within the project area and place them at least 100 feet from the road." Questar suggests that this sentence be rewritten to say that Questar will notify the Department of Wildlife or other responsible wildlife agency of animal carcasses found on lease roads. Removing carcasses could potentially endanger human safety and health or violate state or federal wildlife laws and removal should remain the responsibility of wildlife agencies.

10. Page 4-50, Section 4.6.2.2 Special Status Wildlife:

    a. Bullet #1: "Remove dead animals from roads and ROWs to prevent mortality to the raptors." Questar suggests that responsibility for removing dead animals remain with the wildlife agencies as noted in comments to Bullet #12 above.

11. Page 4-50, Section 4.6.3.1 Wildlife and Section 4.6.3.2 Special Status Species [Unavoidable Adverse Impacts]: Again, it should not be assumed that indefinite consequences "would" take place; indefinite consequences "could" take place. The first sentence in each section should be rephrased: "Unavoidable adverse impacts to wildlife species from the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative *could* include:"

12. Page 4-60, Section 4.10.2 Mitigation [Transportation]: "QEP should implement and enforce speed limits for their employees and contractors while driving on roads within the GDBR." While efforts are made by all to maintain proper speed limits, QEP does not have the authority to implement and enforce speed limits.

13. Page 5-19, Section 5.4.6 Visual Resources [Cumulative Impacts Associated with the Proposed Action]: The first paragraph states, "...the Uintah Basin Best Management Practices that are currently being developed *would* be applied...." and "Such measures *would* include:" These sentences should be restated as "*could* be applied" and "*could* include". Use of the word "would" implies that these considerations are mandatory when in fact, they are examples given for consideration, are voluntary, and acceptable only when technically and economically feasible.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft EIS document. We look forward to working with the BLM to finalize a mutually acceptable and legally defensible EIS and ROD. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ms. Stephanie Tomkinson in our Vernal office at 435-781-4308.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Paul Matheny
Vice President

JPM/slt

APPENDIX 6-2

CONSULTATION LETTERS

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078
(435) 781-4400 Fax: (435) 781-4410

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1792
UT-080

January 8, 2004

Memorandum

To: Utah Field Supervisor, Utah Field Office, Fish & Wildlife Service, Salt Lake City, Utah

From: Acting Field Manager, Vernal Field Office, Bureau of Land Management

Subject: Initiation of Consultation and Request for List of Species - Questar Exploration and Production Company's Greater Deadman Bench Environmental Impact Statement

The Questar Exploration and Production Company's Uintah Basin Division has notified this Office of its proposal to drill up to 1, 239 new wells over a 10-year period, or until the resource base is fully developed on their leases. The project area would involve about 99,000 acres in the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas production region, located about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The project area would involve about 85% BLM-administered public lands, 12% State of Utah-administered lands; and 3% patented land.

The BLM is initiating an environmental impact analysis (EIS) to consider the proposal and reasonable alternatives. We have enclosed a Scoping Notice for your information which provides additional information on the proposed plan, preliminary resource issues and concerns, as well as general maps covering the project area.

In accordance with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act, BLM is initiating consultation and requesting a list of species specific to the project area that would be addressed in the EIS. Also, in accordance with NEPA and CEQ guidelines, BLM is conducting a formal scoping period seeking issues, concerns and/or data that should to be factored into to the EIS. We request that any concerns and/or information your office may have relative to this project be provided to us by on or before the close of the formal scoping period of February 4, 2004.

Should you have any questions on the NEPA aspects of this project, please contact Jean Nitschke-Sinclear (435-781-4437); relative to the consulting/conferring aspects, please

contact either Tim Faircloth (435-781-4465, wildlife) or Robert Specht (435-781-4436, plants).

Thank you for your assistance.

/s/ Howard B. Cleavinger II /jns

Enclosure – Scoping Notice

Cc: State Director, U-933
Central Files
Reading
QEP – Adm. Record
JNit-Sin:jns:1/08/04\NEPA.QEP.Scoping.FWS

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
VERNAL FIELD OFFICE
VERNAL, UTAH

SCOPING NOTICE

QUESTAR EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION COMPANY'S GREATER DEADMAN BENCH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

EIS NO. UTU-080-2004-0369V

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Questar Exploration & Production Company (QEP) has notified the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vernal Field Office that it proposes to fully develop hydrocarbon resources underlying oil and gas mineral leases within the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas-producing region (GDBR) (project area).

The project area consists of about 146 sections (approximately 99,000 acres) in an existing oil and gas producing region located in all or portions of T6 to 8S, R21 to 25E, Uintah County, Utah (Figure 1-1). The project area is on BLM-administered lands (83,864 acres); lands administered by the State of Utah (11,448 acres), and a small area of private lands (3,473 acres). QEP operates the majority of the mineral lease rights (79.2 percent) underlying the public, State and private lands in the project area.

QEP proposes to drill up to 1,239 wells at the rate of 100 to 120 wells per year over 10 years, or until the resource base is fully developed. This would include approximately 16 Uinta Formation gas wells, 219 Green River Formation oil wells, 148 Green River Formation gas wells, 451 Wasatch Formation gas wells, 68 Mesaverde Formation gas wells, 311 Blackhawk/Mancos Formation gas wells, and 26 Frontier/Dakota Formation deep gas wells. Of these, 769 well pads would be drilled on new locations and 470 would be "twins" drilled from existing locations (representing 38% of the total new wells that would be drilled).

1.1 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to further develop hydrocarbon resources underlying the GDBR. QEP estimates that the proposed project could yield over 9 million barrels of oil and 750 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas gross production over the next 40 years with a certain amount of risk associated with the success of the different horizons considered in the analysis. QEP believes that the public interest need for the project is to maintain and enhance responsibly developed domestic crude oil production which would result in less dependence on foreign sources of crude oil. On a regional scale, additional oil production would yield tax revenues as well as significant royalty revenues to both the United States and Utah State governments. On a local level, the development activity would provide employment opportunities that further enhance the local economy and tax base.

1.2 Relationship of the Project to Controlling Land Use Plans

The management of BLM public lands and resources encompassed by the project area are directed and guided by the BLM's Book Cliffs Resource Area (BCRA) Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (BLM 1985). The proposed project lies within an area that has been partially developed for oil and gas production and is designated by BLM as "Category 1" and "Category 2" for oil and gas leasing by the BLM.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION

QEP proposes to drill at a maximum rate of 100 to 120 wells per year until the resource base is fully developed (Table 2-1). The monthly rate of drilling would range from 0 to 12 wells per month. The total number of wells drilled would depend largely on factors out of the QEP's control such as geologic success, economic factors, and lease restrictions. The reasonably foreseeable full development model in the EIS analysis area ranges from 1,000 to 1,239 new wells. At the maximum drilling pace, development drilling is expected to occur over a span of 10 years.

TABLE 2-1 QEP GREATER DEADMAN BENCH PROPOSED 2004 - 2014 WELL DEVELOPMENT

FORMATION	RESOURCE	DRILLING RATE (WELLS/MONTH)	PROPOSED NEW WELLS
Uinta	Gas	0-1	16
Green River	Oil	0-3	219
Green River	Gas	0-3	148
Wasatch	Gas	0-6	451
Mesaverde	Gas	0-1	68
Blackhawk/Mancos	Gas	0-3	311
Frontier/Dakota	Gas	0-1	26
	Mixed	**0-12**	**1239**

The proposed wells would be drilled on a 40-acre spacing pattern in order to efficiently recover oil and gas reserves from the Green River Formation at depths of 3,500 to 5,500 feet; from the Wasatch Formation at depths of 5,500 to 8,000 feet; from the Mesaverde Formation at depths of 6,500 to 10,000 feet; and from the Blackhawk/Mancos Formation at depths of 10,500 to 14,000 feet. Deep drilling to the Frontier/Dakota would exceed 16,000 feet.

2.1 Location Construction and Land Requirements

Well site construction would consist of leveling a rectangular pad to 300 feet x 350 feet, occupying approximately 2.5 acres. Well pads would be constructed from the native sand/soil/rock materials present and leveled by balancing cut and fill areas.

A reserve pit (150 feet x 70 feet x 12 feet deep, approximately 0.24 surface acres) for drilling mud and water storage would be excavated adjacent to the pad. Stockpiles for both topsoil and subsoil would be established adjacent to the well pad and maintained for future use in backfilling the reserve pit and rehabilitating the location upon abandonment. Depending on the amount of cut and fill required to level each site, these stockpiles would occupy approximately 0.5 acres.

An access road connecting the pad to the nearest established road also would be

constructed. The existing road network within the EIS analysis area would provide the primary access routes to the new well sites. Over 600 miles of existing roads would be used, thereby minimizing additional surface impact. Based on the average well, each well site road would be approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide and cause approximately 0.5 acre of additional surface disturbance. For Green River Formation wells, a Right-of-Way (ROW) (approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide; running to a central tank facility) would be required for production flow lines or water injection lines causing approximately 0.5 acre of additional surface disturbance. For Wasatch, Mesaverde, Blackhawk/Mancos, and Frontier/Dakota Formation gas wells, a ROW (approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide) would be required for surface gathering lines, causing approximately 0.5 acres of additional surface disturbance per well.

Each well pad and access road would typically take 2 to 4 days to construct. The combined surface disturbance for the average new producing well would be approximately 3.75 acres, or 9.4 percent of the available surface area in each 40-acre tract. Thus, approximately 2,625 to 3,250 total acres would be disturbed for construction of the 700 to 800 maximum proposed well sites, access roads, and pipelines. Additional disturbance would be required for central tank batteries, compressor stations, and utility lines necessary for production operations.

Following the drilling and initial completion operations, a portion of each well pad plus the reserve pit would no longer be needed. These areas would be promptly rehabilitated and returned to natural conditions reducing long-term surface disturbance to approximately 3 acres per 40-acre tract, or 7.5 percent of total surface area. Of the 2,625 to 3,250 total acres disturbed during construction for well sites, access roads, and pipelines, approximately 600 acres would be reclaimed immediately after construction is complete.

Dry holes would be Plugged & Abandoned (P&A) as per applicable regulations, and the entire well location and its access road would be promptly rehabilitated and returned to natural conditions.

2.2 Drilling Operations

Drilling operations would be conducted in compliance with all Federal Oil and Gas Onshore Orders, all State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining rules and regulations, and all applicable local rules and regulations.

2.3 Completion Operations

Once production casing has been cemented in place, the drilling rig would be released and a completion rig would be moved in. The typical completion operation for Green River, Wasatch and Mesaverde wells typically takes 4 to 6 days to perform. Deeper

completions, such as in the Blackhawk /Mancos and/or Dakota wells, are performed in a similar manner but longer periods of time are needed for well bore cleanup and production testing which generally occurs between each stage of the completion. Completion of the initial Blackhawk /Mancos and/or Dakota wells would take 4 to 6 weeks. Eventually, that time period would be compressed to under 2 weeks.

2.4 Applicant-Committed Environmental Protection Measures

Several procedures are described below that would be implemented, at the sole expense of the interest owners, to reduce the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development activity. In addition, the BLM on-site inspection for each new well site may identify specific resources that may be affected on a particular location. The on-site inspection would be used in conjunction with the measures described below to develop site-specific mitigating measures for sensitive resources.

2.4.1 Cultural Resources

A Class III cultural resources survey, conducted by a qualified archaeologist, would be conducted over all areas proposed for surface disturbance. Class III cultural resource block surveys have been conducted in portions of the proposed development area and would be utilized where applicable. If these surveys identify areas with a high probability of encountering potentially significant subsurface archaeological sites, a qualified archaeologist would monitor surface disturbance. QEP and their contractors would inform their employees about relevant federal regulations intended to protect cultural resources. Equipment operators would be informed that if a site is uncovered during construction, activities in the vicinity would immediately cease and the BLM's Authorized Officer (AO) would be notified. Historic properties considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) would be avoided or mitigated through an approved data recovery plan.

2.4.2 Paleontological Resources

Based on site-specific recommendations from the BLM's AO, surveys for paleontological resources would be conducted on areas with sandstone outcrops and where bedrock excavation into sensitive formations is necessary. The survey would be conducted by a qualified paleontologist funded by QEP and would determine fossil localities and the sensitivity of the area for fossil resources. These actions would determine the necessity of having a qualified paleontologist on-site during construction. If paleontological resources were uncovered during ground disturbing activities, QEP would suspend all operation that would further disturb such materials and would immediately contact BLM's AO, who would arrange for a determination of significance and, if necessary, recommend a recovery or avoidance plan.

2.4.3 Wildlife and Vegetation (including Federally listed, Candidate and Proposed Species)

QEP would comply with Endangered Species Act regulations in order to prevent adverse impacts to Federally listed, Candidate and Proposed wildlife and plant species. QEP would also implement appropriate protective measures (e.g., timing and spatial stipulations) discussed in the Book Cliffs RMP in order to prevent adverse impacts on non-listed wildlife species and habitats.

2.4.4 Power Lines

Unless otherwise agreed to by the AO in writing, power lines shall be constructed in accordance with the standards outlined in *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines*, (Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. 1981). QEP would construct power lines in accordance with these standards or will assume the burden and expense of proving pole designs not shown in the referenced publication are "raptor safe". A raptor expert acceptable to the AO shall provide such proof. The AO reserves the right to require modification or additions to all power line structures on applied for route authorizations, should they be necessary to ensure the safety of large perching birds. QEP would make such modifications and/or additions without liability or expense to the Federal Government.

2.4.5 Noxious and Invasive Weeds

QEP would monitor and control noxious and invasive weeds along access road use authorizations, pipeline route authorizations, well sites, or other applicable facilities by spraying or mechanical removal. On BLM administered land, a Pesticide Use Proposal would be submitted and approved prior to the application of herbicides, pesticides or other hazardous chemicals.

2.4.6 Soils

All existing roads will be maintained and kept in good repair during all drilling, completion, and production operations associated with wells. Planned access roads and surface disturbing activities will conform to standards outlined in the BLM and Forest Service publication: *Surface Operating Standards for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development, 1989.*

2.4.7 Visual Resources

Based on site-specific recommendations from the BLM's AO, surface equipment would be painted to blend in with the surroundings.

2.4.8 Existing Facilities and Rights-of-Way

Cattle guards would be used for fence crossings whenever practicable. If a fence must be cut, H-braces would be installed to support the existing fence and a cattle guard installed to prevent livestock movement.

2.4.9 Hazardous and Solid Waste/Trash Disposal

All solid waste or trash would be transported for disposal to an approved solid waste disposal facility.

3.0 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) COMPLIANCE

The BLM has determined that permitting this Proposed Action constitutes a federal action that may affect the quality of the human environment. Pursuant to NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations on implementing NEPA, the BLM will prepare a NEPA-compliant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will describe and evaluate the potential impacts of QEP's Proposed Action and alternatives. The purpose of the EIS will be to provide the public and decision-makers with sufficient information to understand the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and alternatives, and to identify and develop appropriate mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts. NEPA requires that a No Action alternative and any reasonable action alternative(s) be evaluated during the analysis process. In part, this scoping statement has been prepared to enable government agencies, the general publics, and other interested parties to participate in and contribute to the alternative selection process.

4.0 PRELIMINARY RESOURCE ISSUES FOR NEPA ANALYSIS

Based on the BLM's preliminary review of QEP's Proposed Action, the following resource issues have been identified as requiring a full analysis in the EIS:

- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Federally listed and BLM Sensitive Plants, Wildlife, and Fish Species
- Existing Land Use and Status
- Noxious and Invasive Weeds
- Paleontological Resources
- Range and Rangeland Management
- Recreation Resources
- Socioeconomics
- Soils
- Hydrology and Watershed Resources
- Wildlife and Fisheries
- Vegetation and Wetlands
- Visual Resources and Noise

In addition to the above-listed resources, the EIS will address all of the Critical Elements of the Human Environment as described in the BLM's Instruction Memorandum Number ID-2003-075 9 (dated July 11, 2003). Additional issues or resource concerns are likely to be determined during the public scoping process.

5.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A critical element of the NEPA process is public scoping. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to:

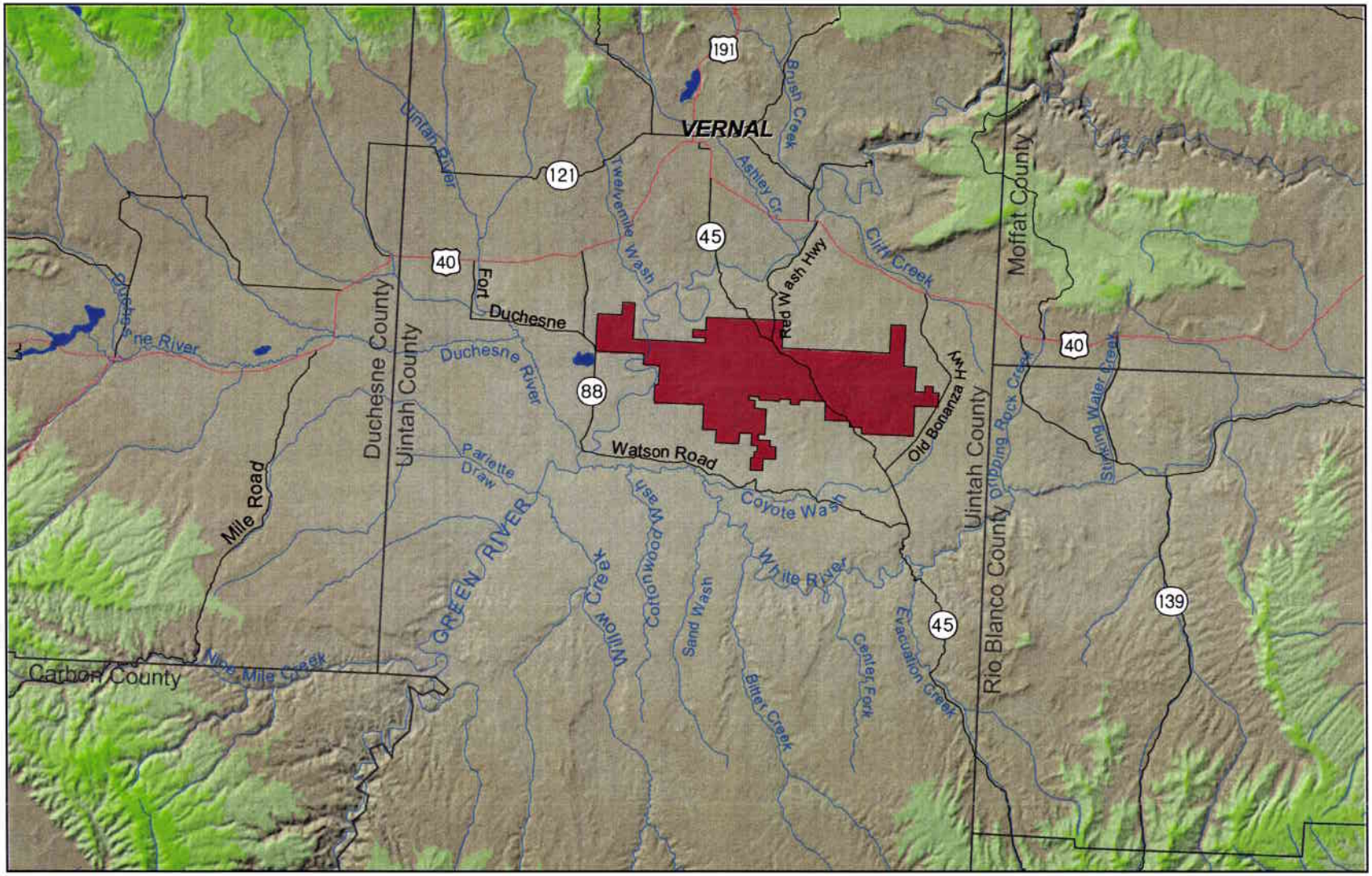
- Identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the NEPA document,
- Identify issues of concern related to the Proposed Action, and
- Determine the depth of the analysis for issues addressed in the NEPA document.

The public is encouraged to participate during the scoping process to help identify the scope of the analysis needed, alternatives to the Proposed Action, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process. **Your written comments will be accepted on or before February 4, 2004.** Please submit your written comments to:

Ms. Jean Nitschke-Sinclear, AFM NEPA, Planning and Special Projects
Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078
jean_nitschke-sinclear@blm.gov
Telephone: (435) 781-4400
Fax: (435) 781-4410

A public meeting to discuss the proposed project is scheduled for the following date and location:

Wednesday, January 14, 2003
7:00-9:00pm
South Conference Room, Uintah County Bldg., 147 East Main Street, Vernal Utah



Greater Deadman Bench Project Area Boundary

0 5 10 15 20 25
Scale (Miles)

N W E S

Figure 1-1. Location Map of the Greater Deadman Bench Project Area, Uintah County, Utah.

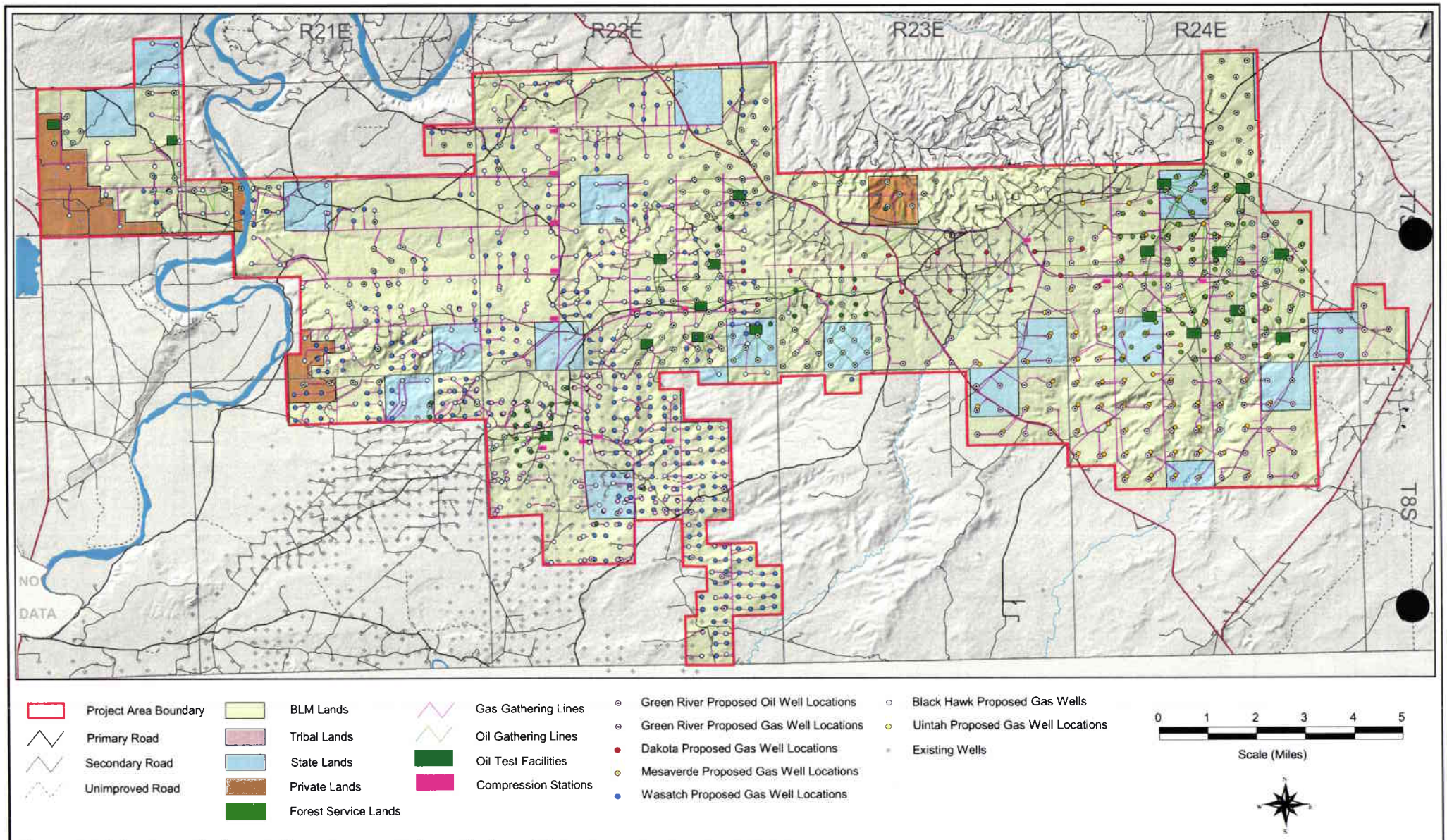


Figure 1-2. Existing Roads, Pipelines, Wells, and Proposed Wells and Pipelines within the Greater Deadman Bench Study Area.

(8)

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
UTAH FIELD OFFICE
2369 WEST ORTON CIRCLE, SUITE 50
WEST VALLEY CITY, UTAH 84119

RECEIVED
FEB 06 2004
BLM VERNAL, UTAH

In Reply Refer To
FWS/R6
ES/UT
04-0426

February 3, 2004

Memorandum

To: Field Manager, Vernal Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, Vernal, Utah

From: Utah Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Salt Lake City, Utah

Subject: 1792 UT-080; Questar Exploration and Production Company's Greater Deadman Bench Environmental Impact Statement, Scoping Notice

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your letter of January 8, 2004 announcing your intent to prepare an environmental document on the Questar Exploration and Production (QEP) Company's Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas production region project in Uintah County, Utah. The purpose of the project is to drill up to 1,239 new wells over a 10-year period, or until the resource base is fully developed on the leases. QEP estimates over 9 million barrels of oil and 750 billion cubic feet of natural gas will be produced over the next 40 years. The project area involves 99,000 acres in the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas production region, located about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah.

Of the proposed 1,239 wells, 769 well pads would be drilled on new locations and 470 would be "twins" drilled from existing locations. The proposed wells would be drilled on a 40-acre spacing pattern. Well site construction would consist of the following surface disturbance activities:

- Leveling a rectangular pad to 300' x 350', approx 2.5 acres
- Reserve pit for drilling mud and water storage of 150' x 70' x 12' deep adjacent to pad, approx 0.24 surface acres
- Stockpiles for topsoil and subsoil adjacent to pad, approx 0.5 acres
- Access road connecting the pad to the nearest established road of 1,000' x 30', approx 0.5 acres
- Right-of-Way for Green River Formation in the Green River Formation for production flow lines or water injection lines of 1,000' x 30', approx 0.5 acres
- Right-of-Way for Wasatch, Mesaverde, Blackhawk/Mancos, and Frontier/Dakota Formation gas wells for surface gathering lines of 1,000' x 30', approx 0.5 acres

Consistent with NEPA regulation 40 CFR § 1503.1(a)(1) that the action agency shall obtain the comments of any Federal agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved, we are responding to your request for concerns and comments on this EIS. In Section 1 of this letter we convey our concerns that should be addressed in the EIS for this project. Section 2 of this letter addresses your responsibilities under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, 16 U.S.C. § 1536.

Section 1.

The project area includes portions of the Upper Green River, which supports four federally endangered Colorado River fishes: Colorado pikeminnnow, humpback chub, bonytail, and razorback sucker. Sensitive species found within this river include roundtail chub, flannelmouth sucker, and bluehead sucker. The project area contains designated critical habitat for the endangered Colorado River fishes including those portions of the 100-year floodplain that contain constituent elements. The constituent elements are those physical and biological features that the Service considers essential for the conservation of the species and include, but are not limited to, the following items: (1) Space for individual and population growth, and for normal behavior; (2) food, water, air, light, minerals, or other nutritional or physiological requirements; (3) cover or shelter; (4) sites for breeding, reproduction, rearing of offspring, germination, or seed dispersal; and generally (5) habitats that are protected from disturbance or are representative of the historical, geographical, and ecological distributions of the species. Project activities should not lead to the detriment of this critical habitat.

White-tailed prairie dog colonies and habitat exist within this project area. White-tailed prairie dogs have been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. They are also included on the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Sensitive Species List. The EIS should describe impacts to the species and habitat. Modifications of project activities should be designed and implemented as necessary to protect the white-tailed prairie dog and/or habitat from surface disturbing activities. A Range-wide Conservation Assessment is being developed, and could result in specific conservation recommendation for the species that may be applicable to this project.

Black-footed ferret habitat exists within the project area (personal communication, Miles Hanberg UDWR, January 28, 2004). We recommend implementing the *Surface Disturbance Management Guidelines* in Appendix E of the *Cooperative Plan for the Reintroduction and Management of Black-Footed Ferrets* (UDWR 1996). Planned resource extraction should be designed to avoid adverse impacts on prairie dog and black-footed ferret habitat. In the event of adverse impacts, activities should be designed to influence the smallest area feasible (UDWR 1996) and compensatory mitigation should be required. Buffers around existing colonies of 500 meters should be implemented to alleviate potential disturbances (personal communication, Amy Seglund, UDWR 2003). In addition, implementation of a long-term monitoring program to evaluate effects of development on prairie dogs and ferrets should be instituted. Evaluation of prairie dog populations before and after resource projects is recommended. Monitoring of populations should incorporate the methodology developed by Biggins et al. 1993.

The project area contains important wintering and brooding habitat for Greater sage grouse. There are two active sage grouse leks in the project area (personal communication, Miles Hanberg, UDWR, January 28, 2004). Any surface occupancy within historical or presently

occupied habitat should be avoided; grouse may utilize different lek sites due to weather variations or population increases. Development near strutting grounds or leks should be avoided as they are considered the focal point of year-around activities for sage grouse populations (Braun et al. 1977). The EIS should discuss the direct and indirect impacts to sage grouse leks; habitat surrounding the breeding grounds; nesting; and brood-rearing areas. Fragmentation is identified as one of the factors contributing to sage-grouse population declines (Braun 1998). To minimize the impacts of resource developments in sage-grouse habitats, we recommend avoiding developments that may fragment contiguous sage-grouse habitat or connectivity between seasonal habitats (breeding, nesting, early or late brood-rearing habitats). Areas that dually provide lekking/nesting habitats and wintering habitats should not be considered for natural resource development because these areas provide yearlong grouse use. If breeding, nesting, brood-rearing, and/or wintering habitats are unknown, monitoring to identify these habitats is essential, prior to resource development. Guidelines to minimize impacts to sage grouse, including seasonal and spatial buffers and habitat restoration recommendations, can be found in: the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' *Strategic Plan for Management of Sage Grouse, 2002*, Publication No. 02-20 and in *Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse Populations and Their Habitats* (Connelly et al. 2000).

Activities should avoid, to the extent possible, sensitive wildlife periods and areas (breeding season, calving season, migration corridors). Impacts to migratory bird habitat should be evaluated and minimized, focusing on the sagebrush obligate and sagebrush associated species on the Service's 2002 List of Birds of Conservation Concern and the Partners in Flight Priority Bird Species. To help meet responsibilities under Executive Order 13186 (Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds), we recommend you conduct activities outside critical breeding seasons for migratory birds, minimize temporary and long-term habitat losses, and fully mitigate unavoidable habitat losses. If habitat disturbances occur in the spring or summer, we recommend surveys for migratory birds to assist in efforts to comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712) and E.O. 13186.

Ferruginous hawks are known to occur in the Greater Deadman Bench Study Area. We recommend use of the *Utah Field Office Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances* (Romin and Muck, 2002) which were developed in part to provide consistent application of raptor protection measures statewide and provide full compliance with environmental laws regarding raptor protection. Raptor surveys and mitigation measures are provided in the Raptor Guidelines as recommendations to ensure that proposed projects will avoid adverse impacts to raptors. Locations of existing raptor nests should be identified prior to the initiation of project activities. Direct loss of nesting sites or territories should be avoided. Appropriate spatial buffer zones of inactivity should be established during crucial breeding and nesting periods relative to raptor nest sites or territories. Arrival at nesting sites can occur as early as December for certain raptor species. Nesting and fledging continues through August. Generally we recommend spatial buffers of 1.0 mile for threatened or endangered raptors, 0.5 mile for other diurnal raptors, and 0.25 mile for nocturnal raptor nests.

The 1997 Mexican spotted owl model identifies habitat within the project area. Although the 2000 model suggests nesting habitat may not exist within the project area, field reviews should be conducted to ensure model accuracy (letter from our office to BLM State Director, November 21, 2002). Small-scale habitat features, such as crevices or alcoves that may provide suitable owl

microclimates may be missed by the 2000 model. In addition, the 2000 model does not necessarily identify all owl habitat, such as foraging, dispersal, and wintering habitats. The EIS should discuss potential impacts and measures to minimize effects to the Mexican spotted owl.

Horseshoe Milkvetch occurs directly north of the study area and the Uinta Basin hookless cactus occurs in the project area (personal communication, Lenora Sullivan, UNHP, January 30, 2004). Impacts to these species should be minimized and the EIS should describe measures to protect these species.

The proposal may increase access and disturbance to previously isolated areas with high wildlife value. Therefore, the potential effects of dispersed recreation or enhanced access (camping, hiking, off-road vehicles) on wildlife habitat (disturbance of migration corridors, loss of vegetation) should be considered in project plans. Measures should be taken to prevent increased access to sensitive wildlife areas. In addition, the project activities will lead towards fragmenting the landscape and habitat. The EIS should discuss these impacts and well as describe the measures that will be taken to limit them.

The EIS should also identify the amount, location, and timeframe of temporary disturbance that could result from the proposed action. Displacement of wildlife across a large area during critical times, such as breeding, could prove a significant impact. If wildlife are displaced, it is likely that the area to which they are displaced is inhabited by other wildlife or disturbed by other ongoing activities. Depending on the season and species, displacement could lead to nest abandonment, inter- and intra-specific competition, reproductive failure, and possible mortality. In addition, the cumulative effects of other projects in the area may limit the availability of alternative sites for displaced wildlife.

Cumulative effects of other projects and activities to wildlife and wildlife habitat should be taken into account in project plans. The compounded effects this project will have with relation to the sagebrush die-off should be discussed. Approximately 50% of the sagebrush within the project area has died; remaining stands are typically older, decadent sagebrush with a cheatgrass understory (personal communication, Miles Hanberg, UDWR, January 28, 2004). As cheatgrass is known to increase fire occurrence, the cumulative effects of the EIS should also discuss how fire and the suppression activities will impact the proposed project activities as well as the remaining vegetation.

As with all projects that will create surface disturbance, there is potential for introduction and spread of invasive species. All possible measures should be taken to prevent the introduction or further proliferation of noxious species. Monitoring and control efforts should be implemented following construction. Seed mixes should, to the extent practicable, contain native plants or non-natives that will not naturalize, and plants that can successfully compete with noxious weeds.

Impacts associated with this project may lead to heightened erosion and degradation of fish and wildlife resources. We recommend you discuss the potential for erosion as well as any measures that will be taken to minimize the effects.

· All mitigation efforts should be monitored using established thresholds to indicate the need for remedial action. Success criteria should be applied that address sensitive periods, species of concern, and desired vegetation communities.

Section 2.

Federal agencies have specific additional responsibilities under Section 7 of the ESA. To help you fulfill these responsibilities, we are providing an updated list of threatened (T) and endangered (E) species that may occur within the area of influence of your proposed action.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Horseshoe Milkvetch	*Astragalus equisolensis*	C
Uinta Basin Hookless Cactus	*Sclerocactus glaucus*	T
Bonytail[1, 2]	*Gila elegans*	E
Colorado Pikeminnow[1, 2]	*Ptychocheilus lucius*	E
Humpback Chub[1, 2]	*Gila cypha*	E
Razorback Sucker[1, 2]	*Xyrauchen texanus*	E
Bald Eagle[3]	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	T
Mexican Spotted Owl	*Strix occidentalis lucida*	T
Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo	*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*	C
Black-footed Ferret[4]	*Mustela nigripes*	E

[1] Critical habitat designated in this county.
[2] Water depletions from *any* portion of the occupied drainage basin are considered to adversely affect or adversely modify the critical habitat of the endangered fish species, and must be evaluated with regard to the criteria described in the pertinent fish recovery programs.
[3] Wintering populations (only four known nesting pairs in Utah).
[4] Historical range.

The proposed action should be reviewed and a determination made if the action will affect any listed species or their critical habitat. If it is determined by the Federal agency, with the written concurrence of the Service, that the action is not likely to adversely affect listed species or critical habitat, the consultation process is complete, and no further action is necessary.

Formal consultation (50 CFR 402.14) is required if the Federal agency determines that an action is "likely to adversely affect" a listed species or will result in jeopardy or adverse modification of critical habitat (50 CFR 402.02). Federal agencies should also confer with the Service on any action which is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any proposed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat (50 CFR 402.10). A written request for formal consultation or conference should be submitted to the Service with a completed biological assessment and any other relevant information (50 CFR 402.12).

Candidate species have no legal protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Candidate species are those species for which we have on file sufficient information to support issuance of a proposed rule to list under the ESA. Identification of candidate species can assist environmental planning efforts by providing advance notice of potential listings, allowing resource managers to alleviate threats and, thereby, possibly remove the need to list species as endangered or threatened. Even if we subsequently list this candidate species, the early notice provided here

could result in fewer restrictions on activities by prompting candidate conservation measures to alleviate threats to this species.

Only a Federal agency can enter into formal Endangered Species Act (ESA) section 7 consultation with the Service. A Federal agency may designate a non-Federal representative to conduct informal consultation or prepare a biological assessment by giving written notice to the Service of such a designation. The ultimate responsibility for compliance with ESA section 7, however, remains with the Federal agency.

Your attention is also directed to section 7(d) of the ESA, as amended, which underscores the requirement that the Federal agency or the applicant shall not make any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources during the consultation period which, in effect, would deny the formulation or implementation of reasonable and prudent alternatives regarding their actions on any endangered or threatened species.

Thank you for your interest in conserving endangered species. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Bekee Megown at 801-975-3330, ext. 146.

cc: BLM State Office – Attn: Ron Bolander
UDWR – SLC and Vernal
Buys & Associates, Inc., Attn: S. Kirby Carroll, Senior Ecologist, 300 E. Mineral Ave., Suite 10, Littleton, CO 80122-2631

Literature Cited

Biggins, D., B.J. Miller, L.R. Hanebury, B. Oakleaf, A.H. Farmer, R. Creete and A. Dood. 1993. A technique for evaluating black-footed ferret habitat. Pp. 73-88 *in* J.L. Oldemeyer, D.E. Biggins, B.J. Miller, and R. Crete, eds. Proceedings of the Symposium on the management of prairie dog complexes for the reintroduction of the black-footed ferret. Biological Report 13. July 1993. U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 96 pp.

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March 24, 2006

Memorandum

To: Greater Deadman Bench Project Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, Utah 84078

From: Utah Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, West Valley City, Utah

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Proposed Greater Deadman Bench Region Oil and Gas Field Development; 1792 UT080-P

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your January 2006 letter regarding Questar Exploration and Production Company's (QEP) proposed oil and gas field development project within the Greater Deadman Bench Region. The proposed action would include constructing 1,020 natural gas wells, 219 oil/water injection wells, 169 miles of access roads, 193 miles of pipelines, 41 miles of oil flowlines, 15 compressor stations, and 22 central tank facilities. Long term surface disturbance throughout the project area over the life of the project is estimated at 4,561 acres. The maximum water use during the 10-year development phase would be 2,408 acre-feet per year. The project area is approximately 98,785 acres within Townships 6 to 8 South and Ranges 21 to 25 East, Uintah County, Utah.

Your letter requested comments regarding the draft EIS. The Service provides recommendations for protective measures for threatened and endangered species in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et. seq.*). Protective measures for migratory birds are provided in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 703 *et. seq.*) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 668 *et. seq.*). Wetlands are afforded protection under Executive Orders 11990 (wetland protection) and 11988 (floodplain management), as well as section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Other fish and wildlife resources are considered under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 48 Stat. 401, as amended (16 U.S.C. 661 *et. seq.*).

General Comments

The abstract for the proposed field development states 1,010 new gas wells will be drilled but tables S-1 page S-11 and 2.3 page 2-15 show 1,020. Also, table S-1 shows 891 new well pads will be constructed under the proposed action while table 2.3 lists 893 new well pads. Please verify numbers and any acreage calculations throughout.

On page 2-3, the last paragraph states that the requirement for lining the reserve pit would be site-specific. We recommend following the Guidance for Determining Pit Lining Requirements found within the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's *Environmental Handbook: Environmental Regulations for the Oil & Gas Exploration and Production Industry* (http://ogm.utah.gov/oilgas/PUBLICATIONS/Handbooks/envbook.htm). Soil type is only one factor to consider when determining whether a liner is needed. Other factors such as distance to groundwater, distance to wells, distance to surface water, fluid type, etc. are taken into consideration when evaluating the need for a liner. Absent site-specific evaluations, we recommend all pits be lined.

Best Management Practices

We commend QEP for being proactive and planning the field development using best Management Practices (BMPs). We appreciate your inclusion of standards for power line construction as outlined in the Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines (Edison Electrical Institute 1996) (Section 2.3.4 page 2-25).

QEP commits to monitoring and controlling noxious and invasive weeds (Section 2.3.5 page 2-25). We recommend that success criteria, frequency of control, and monitoring protocols be incorporated into the Pesticide Use Proposal.

Bald Eagle

Section 3.6.8.3, page 3-71, states there are four nesting sites within Utah. Currently, there are eight nesting pairs within Utah (http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/CountyLists/UTAH.htm).

The determination on page 4-36 states that the proposed action "may affect is not likely to adversely affect" the bald eagle. Because mortality could potentially occur, the determination should be "may affect, likely to adversely affect". In addition to the applicant committed BMPs described in chapter 2 and the mitigation measures outlined in 4.6.2, we recommend incorporating the following measures to minimize the impacts to bald eagle:

1. Temporary activities within 0.5 miles of winter roost areas, e.g., cottonwood galleries, will not occur during the winter roost season of November 1 to March 31, unless the area has been surveyed according to protocol and determined to be unoccupied.
2. No permanent infrastructure will be placed within 0.5 miles of winter roost areas.
3. Avoid loss or disturbance to large cottonwood gallery riparian habitats.
4. Where technically and economically feasible, use directional drilling or multiple wells from the same pad to reduce surface disturbance and eliminate drilling in suitable habitat Utilize directional drilling to avoid direct impacts to large cottonwood gallery riparian habitats. Ensure that such directional drilling does not intercept or degrade alluvial aquifers.
5. All areas of surface disturbance within riparian areas and/or adjacent uplands should be re-vegetated with native species.

Raptors

To help meet responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712), Executive Order 13186, and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 668 *et. seq.*), we recommend implementing the guidelines for avoiding and minimizing impacts to raptor species as described in the *Utah Field Office Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances* (Romin and Muck, 2002). The guidelines state that "long term land use activities and human use activities should not occur within the species-specific spatial buffer zone of occupied nests." Furthermore, long-term land use activities should not occur proximally to unoccupied nests unless it is determined that mitigation is appropriate and can be accomplished prior to initiation of the long-term disturbance.

Horseshoe Milkvetch

In the second paragraph of the horseshoe milkvetch section on page 4-21, the milkvetch is referred to as a cactus, please correct.

QEP commits to surveying potential habitat prior to any surface disturbance. We request that all survey results, whether or not plants are found, are provided to this office.

In the fourth paragraph of this section, it is unclear as to what mitigation would be used within horseshoe milkvetch habitat against weed invasion. In order to provide protection to this candidate species, we do not recommend mechanical or herbicide treatments in areas that will impact occupied habitat.

Effects to Federally Listed Fish Species

The EIS states the water depletion fee is $16.30 per acre-foot (page 4-39). The current water depletion fee is $16.67 and this fee changes annually. It appears from Figures 2-1 and 3.2-1 that there are proposed wells located within or impacting the designated critical habitat for the endangered Colorado River fish species. The analysis presented in 4.6.1.1 for the Endangered Colorado River Fish does not analyze the effects of the proposed action (drilling within the floodplain of the Green River) to the fish or its designated critical habitat. Absent this analysis and the full disclosure of effects, we recommend that well pads, roads, and pipelines should not be placed within designated critical habitat. Impacts to endangered fish or their habitats should be fully assessed through section 7 consultation with our office. Where technically and economically feasible, use directional drilling or multiple wells from the same pad to reduce surface disturbance and eliminate drilling in the designated critical habitat.

Floodplains

We recommend no well pads be placed within the 100-Year floodplain. Where technically and economically feasible, use directional drilling or multiple wells from the same pad to reduce surface disturbance and eliminate drilling in the 100-Year floodplain.

Seed Mixes

We recommend removing crested wheatgrass from the seed mixes listed in Attachment 2 as this introduced species has not been shown as occurring in the area (section 34.5.2 Vegetation Communities).

We appreciate your efforts to ensure the conservation of endangered, threatened, and candidate species and migratory birds. If you have further questions regarding our comments or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Bekee Megown at (801) 975-3330 extension 146.

cc: BLM State Office

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United States Department of the Interior

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January 23, 2007

MEMORANDUM

To: Utah Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Salt Lake City Utah

From: Field Manager William Stringer

Subject: Initiation of Formal Consultation on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Biological Assessment (BA) for Questar Exploration & Production Company's (QEP), Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region.

The Draft EIS/BA for the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region (GDBR) was published on February 10, 2006 with a 45-day public comment period. Informal consultation, through phone calls and meetings, has been conducted between this office and the Service both prior and during the comment period for this FEIS/BA.

Attached is the FEIS/BA for the GDBR project. Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and in conformance with 50 CFR 402.12, the Vernal Field Office is requesting concurrence with the determinations made for the threatened, endangered and candidate species evaluated in the FEIS/BA and conclude formal consultation for this project.

Please refer to the attached FEIS/BA.

Project Overview

QEP proposes to develop oil and gas resources within the 98,785-acre GDBR area located about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The GDBR is partially developed with 278 existing oil and water-injection wells, 300 gas wells, and approximately 57 miles of primary roads and 314 miles of secondary roads. The Proposed Action would include the following: 1,020 natural gas wells, 219 oil/water injection wells, 169 miles of access roads, 193 miles of pipelines, 42 miles of oil flowlines, 15 2,000-horsepower compressor stations, and 22 central tank facilities. Construction would begin after the issuance of the Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision, approval of individual Applications for Permit to Drill, and

Opinions specify that the Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan, initiated in 1988 (FWS 1988) had made sufficient progress to be the reasonable and prudent alternative to avoid the likelihood of jeopardy to these endangered fish species from new depletions of less than 3,000 acre-feet. The FWS determined that water depletion fees for projects annually depleting less than 100 acre-feet of water were no longer necessary (FWS 1994c). Since the Proposed Action would result in an annual water depletion of a maximum of 2,300 acre-feet, a payment of a fee of $16.30 per acre-foot for water depletion above 100 acre-feet would be required.

Indirect impacts on the species could occur from decreased water quality due to increased erosion and sediment yield resulting from surface disturbance. However, the predicted increase would only be 0.03%, a negligible increase. Therefore, no impacts would occur to fish species from increased sedimentation.

Based on the removal of water from the Green River (i.e., water depletion) for construction and drilling operations, the Proposed Action "***may affect, is likely to adversely affect***" the endangered Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail, and razorback sucker.

Black-footed Ferret (*Mustela nigripes*)–E–10(j), Experimental Population in Uintah County

The black-footed ferret is a federally listed endangered species, which utilizes prairie dog colonies for shelter and feeds on the prairie dogs. The BLM records indicate that approximately 1,827 acres of white-tailed prairie dog habitat are present within the GDBR in Section 3, T7S, R24E; Sections 1 and 12, T8S, R23E; Section 2, 5-11, and 14-17, T8S, R24E) (see Figure 3.6-1).

If black-footed ferrets are present in the GDBR, the Proposed Action could result in direct and indirect impacts to this species. The direct impacts would include mortality from construction activities that resulted in destruction of the white-tailed prairie dog colonies. Indirect impacts would include loss of prairie dog colonies and disturbance due to noise from construction and human activities. Increased traffic and construction of well pads, pipelines and roads associated with the Proposed Action may cause an increase in prairie dog mortality, habitat fragmentation and loss, and colony abandonment, thereby decreasing the viability of the habitat to support black-footed ferrets. Fragmentation of habitat is of particular concern, since black-footed ferrets would need a minimum density of 8 prairie dog burrows/acre (20 burrows/ha) for the ferret population to survive (USFWS 1989).

Populations of black-footed ferrets have been introduced into the wild in Coyote Basin, south of the GDBR and are characterized as "non-essential experimental" populations. According to the FWS and the UDWR, management activities within the Coyote Basin PMZ should be conducted with the objective of maintaining a minimum of 10,000 acres of prairie dog colonies (EA No. UT-080-1999-02). Prairie dog colonies located in the PMZ and in the GDBR create a complex of approximately 16,000 acres. Approximately 1,830 acres of active prairie dog colonies exist in this area of the PMZ. It is estimated that well pad, pipeline and road construction would result in disturbance up to 73.2 acres within these sections of the GDBR. Therefore, the Proposed Action would be consistent with habitat management objectives (i.e., maintaining a minimum of 10,000 acres of prairie dog colonies) for the Coyote Basin PMZ. Based on the potential for prairie dog mortality and disturbance to the

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts to Wildlife

Unavoidable adverse impacts to wildlife species from the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives would include:

• Disturbance to raptor breeding, nesting, and foraging habitat from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Approximately 43 new well pads under the Proposed Action would need to be moved or constructed outside of timing limitations to mitigate these potential adverse impacts. Only 4 well pads would need mitigation under the No Action.

• Fragmentation of wildlife habitat from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Approximately five times more roads would occur under the Proposed Action than the No Action.

• Displacement of wildlife species habitat from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Total displacement would result from disturbance of 4,651 acres under the Proposed Action and 880 under the No Action.

• Increased disturbance from noise and human activities from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Total noise effect would result from disturbance of 4,651 acres under the Proposed Action and 880 under the No Action.

• Well pad and road and pipeline construction could result in long-term disturbance to white-tailed prairie dog colonies, which would result in loss of prey, breeding habitat and shelter for the black-footed ferret.
• Drilling, completion and dust suppression activities would result in water depletion from the Green River and result in adverse impacts to the endangered Colorado River fish species.

Special Status Plant Species

Section 7(a) of the ESA requires Federal agencies to evaluate their actions with respect to any species that is proposed or listed as endangered or threatened and with respect to its critical habitat, if any has been designated. Regulations implementing this interagency cooperation provision of the ESA are codified at 50 CFR 402. Section 7 (a)(2) requires Federal agencies to ensure that activities they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to adversely affect or jeopardize the continued existence of a federally listed species or result in the adverse modification or destruction of its critical habitat. If a Federal action "*may affect, is likely to adversely affect*" a federally listed species or its critical habitat, the responsible Federal agency must enter into formal consultation with the USFWS. Candidate and BLM sensitive species are also managed to prevent a future listing as threatened or endangered. The sections below describe the special status plant species that may be affected by the No Action Alternative. Effects of the No Action Alternative on special status plant species are also addressed in the FEIS/BA.

The special status plant species that potentially occur in the GDBR include the Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*) and the horseshoe milkvetch (*Astragalus equisolensis*). The following analyses assume that applicant-committed BMPs would be implemented.

natural sedimentation impacts on the Uinta Basin hookless cactus indicates that human induced sedimentation can have an even more detrimental effect on the species. Because of these potential impacts, sedimentation potentially resulting from surface disturbance under the proposed action is a concern. However, several applicant-committed BMPs have been incorporated into the proposed action in order to reduce erosion and subsequent sediment yield. These measures would serve to reduce the potential effects of sedimentation on Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats.

Based on these potential impacts, and the anticipated effectiveness of the mitigating measures BLM finds that the proposed action "***may affect, is not likely to adversely affect***" the Uinta Basin hookless cactus.

Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures would be applied to minimize the impact of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative to the vegetation communities.

Power-washing of all construction and drilling equipment would occur prior to the equipment entering the GDBR project area from outside the Vernal Field Office area.

Over the construction, drilling and completion season, QEP could implement an intensive interim reclamation program beginning the first growing season after each segment of project completion. As applicant-committed BMPs, QEP would reseed all portions of well pads and ROWs not utilized for the operational phase of the project, as well as any sites within the GDBR determined necessary by the appropriate SMA. Reseeding would be accomplished using SMA specified plant species. Post-construction seeding applications would continue as determined necessary by the SMA.

Weed control would be conducted through an Approved Pesticide Use and Weed Control Plan from the Authorized Officer of the appropriate SMA. Weed monitoring would occur on an annual basis (or as frequently as the SMA determines) throughout the life of the project. QEP would avoid placement of roads, pipelines, well pads, and ancillary facilities within 100 meters of riparian habitats. If avoidance is not feasible, then impacts to riparian habitats would be minimized, where possible.

During the APD process, BLM should consider moving facilities up to 200 meters away from water courses, livestock corrals, BLM rain gauges, and long-term established vegetation studies. If these range facilities could not be avoided, the operators could be required to replace them.

The following mitigation has been developed by BLM and the USFWS to mitigate potential impacts to the hookless cactus:

Surveys

• Pre-project habitat assessments will be completed across 100 percent of the project disturbance area within potential habitat prior to any ground disturbing activities to determine if suitable Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitat is present.

• Oil, water, or condensate tanks in centralized locations will be placed away from occupied habitat, and,

• Minimize the disturbed area of producing well locations through interim and final reclamation. Reclaim well pads following drilling to the smallest area possible.

Monitoring

• Occupied Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats within 100' of the edge of the surface pipeline rights-of-way, 100 feet of the edge of the roads' right-of-ways, and 100 feet from the edge of the well pad shall be monitored for a period of three years after ground disturbing activities. Monitoring will include annual plant surveys to determine plant and habitat impacts relative to project facilities. Annual reports shall be provided to the BLM and the Service. To ensure desired results are being achieved, minimization measures will be evaluated and may be changed after a thorough review of the monitoring results and annual reports during annual meetings between the BLM and the Service.

• Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the Service will be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus is anticipated as a result of project activities.

Should you have questions, or require additional information, please contact Amy Torres, Wildlife Biologist, at 435-781-4481

Attachment: Questar Exploration & Production Company's (QEP), Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region FEIS/BA (CD)

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January 23, 2007

MEMORANDUM

To: Utah Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Salt Lake City Utah

From: Field Manager

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by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 1994b, 1994c, 1997). These Biological Opinions specify that the Recovery Implementation Program Recovery Action Plan, initiated in 1988 (FWS 1988) had made sufficient progress to be the reasonable and prudent alternative to avoid the likelihood of jeopardy to these endangered fish species from new depletions of less than 3,000 acre-feet. The FWS determined that water depletion fees for projects annually depleting less than 100 acre-feet of water were no longer necessary (FWS 1994c). Since the Proposed Action would result in an annual water depletion of a maximum of 2,300 acre-feet, a payment of a fee of $16.30 per acre-foot for water depletion above 100 acre-feet would be required.

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If black-footed ferrets are present in the GDBR, the Proposed Action could result in direct and indirect impacts to this species. The direct impacts would include mortality from construction activities that resulted in destruction of the white-tailed prairie dog colonies. Indirect impacts would include loss of prairie dog colonies and disturbance due to noise from construction and human activities. Increased traffic and construction of well pads, pipelines and roads associated with the Proposed Action may cause an increase in prairie dog mortality, habitat fragmentation and loss, and colony abandonment, thereby decreasing the viability of the habitat to support black-footed ferrets. Fragmentation of habitat is of particular concern, since black-footed ferrets would need a minimum density of 8 prairie dog burrows/acre (20 burrows/ha) for the ferret population to survive (USFWS 1989).

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• Use directional drilling where technically and economically feasible to reduce disturbance and drilling in suitable roosting habitat. All areas of disturbance within riparian areas and/or adjacent uplands should be revegetated with native species.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts to Wildlife

Unavoidable adverse impacts to wildlife species from the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives would include:

• Disturbance to raptor breeding, nesting, and foraging habitat from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Approximately 43 new well pads under the Proposed Action would need to be moved or constructed outside of timing limitations to mitigate these potential adverse impacts. Only 4 well pads would need mitigation under the No Action.

• Fragmentation of wildlife habitat from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Approximately five times more roads would occur under the Proposed Action than the No Action.

• Displacement of wildlife species habitat from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Total displacement would result from disturbance of 4,651 acres under the Proposed Action and 880 under the No Action.

• Increased disturbance from noise and human activities from construction of well pads, roads, pipelines, and ancillary facilities. Total noise effect would result from disturbance of 4,651 acres under the Proposed Action and 880 under the No Action.

• Well pad and road and pipeline construction could result in long-term disturbance to white-tailed prairie dog colonies, which would result in loss of prey, breeding habitat and shelter for the black-footed ferret.
• Drilling, completion and dust suppression activities would result in water depletion from the Green River and result in adverse impacts to the endangered Colorado River fish species.

Special Status Plant Species

Section 7(a) of the ESA requires Federal agencies to evaluate their actions with respect to any species that is proposed or listed as endangered or threatened and with respect to its critical habitat, if any has been designated. Regulations implementing this interagency cooperation provision of the ESA are codified at 50 CFR 402. Section 7 (a)(2) requires Federal agencies to ensure that activities they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to adversely affect or jeopardize the continued existence of a federally listed species or result in the adverse modification or destruction of its critical habitat. If a Federal action "*may affect, is likely to adversely affect*" a federally listed species or its critical habitat, the responsible Federal agency must enter into formal consultation with the USFWS. Candidate and BLM sensitive species are also managed to prevent a future listing as threatened or endangered. The sections below describe the special status plant species that may be affected by the No Action Alternative. Effects of the No Action Alternative on special status plant species are also addressed in the FEIS/BA.

sedimentation. The BLM has documented incidences where natural sediment deposition (i.e., sedimentation not caused by oil and gas development or other human activities) caused the loss of cacti or modified suitable habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus. This example of natural sedimentation impacts on the Uinta Basin hookless cactus indicates that human induced sedimentation can have an even more detrimental effect on the species. Because of these potential impacts, sedimentation potentially resulting from surface disturbance under the proposed action is a concern. However, several applicant-committed BMPs have been incorporated into the proposed action in order to reduce erosion and subsequent sediment yield. These measures would serve to reduce the potential effects of sedimentation on Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats.

Based on these potential impacts, and the anticipated effectiveness of the mitigating measures BLM finds that the proposed action "***may affect, is not likely to adversely affect***" the Uinta Basin hookless cactus.

Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures would be applied to minimize the impact of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative to the vegetation communities.

Power-washing of all construction and drilling equipment would occur prior to the equipment entering the GDBR project area from outside the Vernal Field Office area.

Over the construction, drilling and completion season, QEP could implement an intensive interim reclamation program beginning the first growing season after each segment of project completion. As applicant-committed BMPs, QEP would reseed all portions of well pads and ROWs not utilized for the operational phase of the project, as well as any sites within the GDBR determined necessary by the appropriate SMA. Reseeding would be accomplished using SMA specified plant species. Post-construction seeding applications would continue as determined necessary by the SMA.

Weed control would be conducted through an Approved Pesticide Use and Weed Control Plan from the Authorized Officer of the appropriate SMA. Weed monitoring would occur on an annual basis (or as frequently as the SMA determines) throughout the life of the project. QEP would avoid placement of roads, pipelines, well pads, and ancillary facilities within 100 meters of riparian habitats. If avoidance is not feasible, then impacts to riparian habitats would be minimized, where possible.

During the APD process, BLM should consider moving facilities up to 200 meters away from water courses, livestock corrals, BLM rain gauges, and long-term established vegetation studies. If these range facilities could not be avoided, the operators could be required to replace them.

The following mitigation has been developed by BLM and the USFWS to mitigate potential impacts to the hookless cactus:

Surveys

• Before and during construction, areas for avoidance should be visually identifiable in the field, e.g., flagging, temporary fencing, rebar, etc.,

• Designs will avoid concentrating water flows or sediments into occupied habitat,

• Oil, water, or condensate tanks in centralized locations will be placed away from occupied habitat, and,

• Minimize the disturbed area of producing well locations through interim and final reclamation. Reclaim well pads following drilling to the smallest area possible.

Monitoring

• Occupied Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats within 100' of the edge of the surface pipeline rights-of-way, 100 feet of the edge of the roads' right-of-ways, and 100 feet from the edge of the well pad shall be monitored for a period of three years after ground disturbing activities. Monitoring will include annual plant surveys to determine plant and habitat impacts relative to project facilities. Annual reports shall be provided to the BLM and the Service. To ensure desired results are being achieved, minimization measures will be evaluated and may be changed after a thorough review of the monitoring results and annual reports during annual meetings between the BLM and the Service.

• Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the Service will be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus is anticipated as a result of project activities.

Should you have questions, or require additional information, please contact Amy Torres, Wildlife Biologist, at 435-781-4481

Attachment: Questar Exploration & Production Company's (QEP), Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region FEIS/BA (CD)

Bcc: Reading File
Central File
Project File: QEP's Greater Deadman Bench Oil & Gas Producing Region FEIS/BA

United States Department of the Interior

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March 27, 2007

MEMORANDUM

To: Utah Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Salt Lake City Utah

From: Field Manager

Subject: Supplemental Information regarding the Formal Consultation on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Biological Assessment (BA) for Questar Exploration & Production Company's (QEP), Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region.

The Draft EIS/BA for the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region (GDBR) was published on February 10, 2006 with a 45-day public comment period. Informal consultation, through phone calls and meetings, has been conducted between this office and the Service both prior and during the comment period for this FEIS/BA.

Consultation was initiated on January 23, 2007. Attached is the revised FEIS/BA for the GDBR project. Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and in conformance with 50 CFR 402.12, the Vernal Field Office is requesting concurrence with the determinations made for the threatened, endangered and candidate species evaluated in the FEIS/BA and conclude formal consultation for this project.

Please refer to the attached FEIS/BA.

Project Overview

QEP proposes to develop oil and gas resources within the 98,785-acre GDBR area located about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The GDBR is partially developed with 278 existing oil and water-injection wells, 300 gas wells, and approximately 57 miles of primary roads and 314 miles of secondary roads. The Proposed Action would include the following: 1,020 natural gas wells, 219 oil/water injection wells, 169 miles of access roads, 193 miles of pipelines, 42 miles of oil flowlines, 15 2,000-horsepower compressor

(BLM 1999). The GDBR is not within the ferret release location, but the southeast portion (i.e., T8S, R24E, Sections 2-11 and 14-17) is directly within the Coyote Basin Black-Footed Ferret Primary Management Zone (PMZ). Ferret reintroduction in the Coyote Basin PMZ was authorized by the USFWS, in cooperation with the BLM, the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Section 10j of the ESA classifies reintroduced populations such as those ferrets in the Coyote Basin as "nonessential-experimental", and these species are treated as a candidate species.

The BLM, USFWS, and UDWR are monitoring the released population closely and have noted that the ferrets are expanding into surrounding areas. Although ferrets have not been documented within the specific GDBR, it is possible that the species could eventually migrate into the GDBR as released populations grow and expand into other suitable habitats.

Impacts:
The black-footed ferret is a federally listed endangered species, which utilizes prairie dog colonies for shelter and feeds on the prairie dogs. The BLM records indicate that approximately 1,827 acres of white-tailed prairie dog habitat are present within the GDBR in Section 3, T7S, R24E; Sections 1 and 12, T8S, R23E; Section 2, 5-11, and 14-17, T8S, R24E) (see Figure 3.6-1).

If black-footed ferrets are present in the GDBR, the Proposed Action could result in direct and indirect impacts to this species. The direct impacts would include mortality from construction activities that resulted in destruction of the white-tailed prairie dog colonies. Indirect impacts would include loss of prairie dog colonies and disturbance due to noise from construction and human activities. Increased traffic and construction of well pads, pipelines and roads associated with the Proposed Action may cause an increase in prairie dog mortality, habitat fragmentation and loss, and colony abandonment, thereby decreasing the viability of the habitat to support black-footed ferrets. Fragmentation of habitat is of particular concern, since black-footed ferrets would need a minimum density of 8 prairie dog burrows/acre (20 burrows/ha) for the ferret population to survive (USFWS 1989).

Populations of black-footed ferrets have been introduced into the wild in Coyote Basin, south of the GDBR and are characterized as "non-essential experimental" populations. The Coyote Basin black-footed ferret Primary Management Area encompasses approximately 46,000 acres of which 10,250 acres are in the GDBR. According to the FWS and the UDWR, management activities within the Coyote Basin PMZ should be conducted with the objective of maintaining a minimum of 10,000 acres of prairie dog colonies (EA No. UT-080-1999-02). Prairie dog colonies located in the PMZ and in the GDBR create a complex of approximately 16,000 acres. Approximately 1,830 acres of active prairie dog colonies exist in this area of the PMZ. It is estimated that well pad, pipeline and road construction would result in disturbance up to 151 acres, or 1.5 percent of the PMZ. Therefore, the Proposed Action would be consistent with habitat management objectives (i.e., maintaining a minimum of 10,000 acres of prairie dog colonies) for the Coyote Basin PMZ.

avoidance and minimization measures identified in Section 4.6.2, the potential effects of the Proposed Action would be reduced.

Based on the potential loss of prey species and loss of habitat, the Proposed Action "*may affect is not likely to adversely affect*" the bald eagle.

Colorado Pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*)

The Colorado pikeminnow, also known as the Colorado squawfish, is federally listed as endangered by the USFWS. The Colorado pikeminnow thrives in swift flowing muddy rivers with quiet, warm backwaters. Colorado pikeminnow are primarily piscivorous (fish-eaters), but smaller individuals also eat insects and other invertebrates. The species spawns during the spring and summer over riffle areas with gravel or cobble substrate. Eggs are randomly splayed onto the bottom, and usually hatch in less than one week (Sigler and Sigler 1996).

The Colorado pikeminnow were historically found in the mainstream Colorado River and its tributaries from Wyoming to the Gulf of California. Currently, wild populations of pikeminnow persist only in the upper basin. The White River currently supports some of the highest densities of Colorado pikeminnow in the Green River sub-basin. The White River is used for year round residence and also as a migration corridor to other connected habitats in the Green and Yampa rivers. Adult Colorado pikeminnow are present in the White River upstream to the Taylor Draw Dam. Portions of the White River and its 100-year floodplain, about five miles south of the Project Area, are officially designated as critical habitat for the Colorado pikeminnow. Portions of the Green River and its 100-year floodplain in the Project Area are also officially designated as critical habitat for the Colorado pikeminnow (USFWS 2003).

Humpback Chub (*Gila cypha*)

The humpback chub is a federally endangered minnow found in the Upper Colorado River Basin. The humpback prefers deep, fast-moving, turbid waters often associated with large boulders and steep cliffs. Humpback chubs feed predominately on small aquatic insects, diatoms and filamentous algae. Spawning occurs between April and July during high flows from snowmelt (Sigler and Sigler 1996).

Historically, the humpback chub inhabited canyons of the Colorado River and four of its tributaries: the Green, Yampa, White and Little Colorado rivers. Today, populations currently exist near the Colorado/Utah border in Westwater Canyon in Utah and at Black Rocks, in Colorado. Smaller numbers have been found in the Yampa and Green Rivers in Dinosaur National Monument, Desolation and Gray canyons on the Green River in Utah, Cataract Canyon on the Colorado River in Utah and the Colorado River in Arizona. The largest known population is in the Little Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, where there may be up to 10,000 fish. There are no population estimates available for the rest of the upper Colorado River basin (USFWS 2003).

degrade the flow of downstream waters into the Colorado River (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1990a, b).

Implementation of the Proposed Action in or near designated critical habitats of the endangered Colorado River fish could impact the Colorado River Endangered Fish species by: 1) altering the substrate characteristics of the floodplain, thereby reducing the quality of habitat available to fish populations 2) changing the floodplain vegetation which provides allochthonous input into the river 3) potentially exposing fish species to contaminants from accidental spills/leaks of pipelines or productions facilities, and 4) resulting in a depletion of the Upper Colorado River Basin.

Increased vehicle traffic associated with oil and gas activities has the potential to introduce exotic species to floodplain areas. The spread of exotic plants can alter river channels. Channel width reductions increase water velocities in the main channel and decrease the number of low velocity backwaters. However, the operator has committed to control weeds that become established on their well pads and road and pipeline use authorizations, and rights of ways.

The Green River is a large river with high dilution factors. However, if a spill/leak were to enter this river, contaminants would likely to accumulate in backwater/depressional areas with reduced dilution and less flushing capacity (Woodward et al. 1985). The endangered Colorado River fish use these sites which provide cover and a food source. Water quality is defined by parameters such as temperature, dissolved oxygen, environmental contaminants, nutrients, turbidity, and is considered a primary constituent element of designated critical habitat for the Colorado River fishes. Research is limited regarding threats posed by environmental contaminants to the endangered Colorado River fishes (Woodward et al. 1985; Krahn et al. 1986; Mayer and Ellerieck 1986). However, these studies have shown that contaminants, including petroleum hydrocarbons released via spills/leaks, can affect behavioral functions which have been shown to impair feeding behavior (Woodward et al. 1987). Early life stages of all fish are generally more sensitive to environmental contaminants than juveniles or adults (Mayer and Ellersieck), and disruption of behavioral functions can result in population declines or changes in year-class strength if enough individuals are affected (Little et al. 1993). To minimize these impacts, the operator has committed to install secondary containment (berms, etc) around chemical storage facilities. They have also committed to line the pit as directed by the Surface Management Agency.

Depletion or the removal of water from the Upper Colorado River Basin reduce the ability of the river to create and maintain the physical habitat (areas inhabited or potentially habitable to special status fish for use of spawning, development of fish larvae, feeding, or serving as corridors between these areas) and the biological environment. Water depletions can also contribute to alterations in flow regimes that favor nonnative fish.

In order to address depletion (and other) impacts on the Colorado River Endangered Fish species, a Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Fish Species in the Upper

- Activities within ½ mile of winter roost areas, e.g., cottonwood galleries, will not occur during the winter roost season from November 1 to March 31.
- No permanent facilities will be placed within 0.5 miles of winter roost areas.
- Avoid loss or disturbance to large cottonwood gallery riparian habitats.
- Use directional drilling where technically and economically feasible to reduce disturbance and drilling in suitable roosting habitat. All areas of disturbance within riparian areas and/or adjacent uplands should be revegetated with native species.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts to T&E Wildlife Species

Unavoidable impacts resulting from the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative would include the following:

- Well pad and road and pipeline construction could result in long-term disturbance to white-tailed prairie dog colonies, which would result in loss of prey, breeding habitat and shelter for the black-footed ferret.
- Drilling, completion and dust suppression activities would result in water depletion from the Green River and result in adverse impacts to the endangered Colorado River fish species.

Special Status Plant Species

Uinta Basin Hookless Cactus (Sclerocactus glaucus)

The Uinta Basin hookless cactus' (federally threatened) unhooked large central spine differentiates it from other members of the *Sclerocactus* genus, which have either a hooked large central spine or none (USFWS 1990). However, at least a few individuals in most Uinta Basin hookless cactus populations possess moderately to strongly hooked spines (Goodrich and Neese 1986).

Habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus generally consists of gravelly or rocky surfaces on river terrace deposits and lower mesa slopes (USFWS 1990), as well as gravel littered draws (Goodrich and Neese 1986), that are underlain by clay or silty clay. This species does not grow in sandy soils. The species occurs on varying exposures, but is more abundant on south-facing exposures, slopes to about 30 percent grade, and where terrace deposits break from level tops to steeper side slopes. The Uinta Basin hookless cactus is found at elevations from 4,500 to 5,900 feet amsl within the desert shrub vegetation community (USFWS 1990). No populations of Uinta Basin hookless cactus currently occur in the GDBR but potential habitat for the species occurs in the southern and west portions of the GDBR in the Uinta Geological formation. Populations are found adjacent to the GDBR in the west near Pelican Lake and to the southeast near the Bonanza Power Plant.

cactus is not tolerant of heavy sedimentation. The BLM has documented incidences where natural sediment deposition (i.e., sedimentation not caused by oil and gas development or other human activities) caused the loss of cacti or modified suitable habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus. This example of natural sedimentation impacts on the Uinta Basin hookless cactus suggests that human-induced sedimentation can have an even more detrimental effect on the species. Because of these potential impacts, sedimentation potentially resulting from surface disturbance under the No Action Alternative is a concern. However, several applicant-committed BMPs have been incorporated into the No Action Alternative in order to reduce erosion and subsequent sediment yield. These measures would serve to reduce the potential effects of sedimentation on Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats.

Based on the potential for modification or loss of potential habitat and increased access to potential or occupied habitats, the No Action Alternative "*may affect, is not likely to adversely affect*" the Uinta Basin hookless cactus.

Mitigation Measures for T&E Plant Species:

The following mitigation measures would be applied to minimize the impact of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative to the vegetation communities.

Power-washing of all construction and drilling equipment would occur prior to the equipment entering the GDBR project area from outside the Vernal Field Office area.

Over the construction, drilling and completion season, QEP could implement an intensive interim reclamation program beginning the first growing season after each segment of project completion. As applicant-committed BMPs, QEP would reseed all portions of well pads and ROWs not utilized for the operational phase of the project, as well as any sites within the GDBR determined necessary by the appropriate SMA. Reseeding would be accomplished using SMA specified plant species. Post-construction seeding applications would continue as determined necessary by the SMA.

Weed control would be conducted through an Approved Pesticide Use and Weed Control Plan from the Authorized Officer of the appropriate SMA. Weed monitoring would occur on an annual basis (or as frequently as the SMA determines) throughout the life of the project.

QEP would avoid placement of roads, pipelines, well pads, and ancillary facilities within 100 meters of riparian habitats. If avoidance is not feasible, then impacts to riparian habitats would be minimized, where possible.

During the APD process, BLM would consider moving facilities up to 200 meters away from water courses, livestock corrals, BLM rain gauges, and long-term established vegetation studies. If these range facilities could not be avoided, the operators could be required to replace them.

- Surface pipelines will be laid such that a 100 foot buffer exists between the edge of the right of way and the plants, use stabilizing and anchoring techniques when the pipeline crosses the habitat to ensure the pipelines don't move towards the population,
- Before and during construction, areas for avoidance should be visually identifiable in the field, e.g., flagging, temporary fencing, rebar, etc.,
- Designs will avoid concentrating water flows or sediments into occupied habitat,
- Oil, water, or condensate tanks in centralized locations will be placed away from occupied habitat, and
- Minimize the disturbed area of producing well locations through interim and final reclamation. Reclaim well pads following drilling to the smallest area possible.

Monitoring

- Occupied Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats within 100' of the edge of the surface pipeline rights-of-way, 100 feet of the edge of the roads' right-of-ways, and 100 feet from the edge of the well pad shall be monitored for a period of three years after ground disturbing activities. Monitoring will include annual plant surveys to determine plant and habitat impacts relative to project facilities. Annual reports shall be provided to the BLM and the Service. To ensure desired results are being achieved, minimization measures will be evaluated and may be changed after a thorough review of the monitoring results and annual reports during annual meetings between the BLM and the Service.
- Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the Service will be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus is anticipated as a result of project activities.

Should you have questions, or require additional information, please contact Amy Torres, Wildlife Biologist, at 435-781-4481.

Attachment: Questar Exploration & Production Company's (QEP), Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region FEIS/BA (CD)

United States Department of the Interior

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March 27, 2007

MEMORANDUM

/s/ William Stringer

To: Utah Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Salt Lake City Utah

From: Field Manager

Subject: Supplemental Information regarding the Formal Consultation on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Biological Assessment (BA) for Questar Exploration & Production Company's (QEP), Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region.

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Please refer to the attached FEIS/BA.

Project Overview

QEP proposes to develop oil and gas resources within the 98,785-acre GDBR area located about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The GDBR is partially developed with 278 existing oil and water-injection wells, 300 gas wells, and approximately 57 miles of primary roads and 314 miles of secondary roads. The Proposed Action would include the following: 1,020 natural gas wells, 219 oil/water injection wells, 169 miles of access

In 1999, black-footed ferrets were released in Coyote Basin, an area approximately 32 miles southeast of Vernal, Utah and 5 miles from the southeastern end of the GDBR (BLM 1999). The GDBR is not within the ferret release location, but the southeast portion (i.e., T8S, R24E, Sections 2-11 and 14-17) is directly within the Coyote Basin Black-Footed Ferret Primary Management Zone (PMZ). Ferret reintroduction in the Coyote Basin PMZ was authorized by the USFWS, in cooperation with the BLM, the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Section 10j of the ESA classifies reintroduced populations such as those ferrets in the Coyote Basin as "nonessential-experimental", and these species are treated as a candidate species.

The BLM, USFWS, and UDWR are monitoring the released population closely and have noted that the ferrets are expanding into surrounding areas. Although ferrets have not been documented within the specific GDBR, it is possible that the species could eventually migrate into the GDBR as released populations grow and expand into other suitable habitats.

Impacts:
The black-footed ferret is a federally listed endangered species, which utilizes prairie dog colonies for shelter and feeds on the prairie dogs. The BLM records indicate that approximately 1,827 acres of white-tailed prairie dog habitat are present within the GDBR in Section 3, T7S, R24E; Sections 1 and 12, T8S, R23E; Section 2, 5-11, and 14-17, T8S, R24E) (see Figure 3.6-1).

If black-footed ferrets are present in the GDBR, the Proposed Action could result in direct and indirect impacts to this species. The direct impacts would include mortality from construction activities that resulted in destruction of the white-tailed prairie dog colonies. Indirect impacts would include loss of prairie dog colonies and disturbance due to noise from construction and human activities. Increased traffic and construction of well pads, pipelines and roads associated with the Proposed Action may cause an increase in prairie dog mortality, habitat fragmentation and loss, and colony abandonment, thereby decreasing the viability of the habitat to support black-footed ferrets. Fragmentation of habitat is of particular concern, since black-footed ferrets would need a minimum density of 8 prairie dog burrows/acre (20 burrows/ha) for the ferret population to survive (USFWS 1989).

Populations of black-footed ferrets have been introduced into the wild in Coyote Basin, south of the GDBR and are characterized as "non-essential experimental" populations. The Coyote Basin black-footed ferret Primary Management Area encompasses approximately 46,000 acres of which 10,250 acres are in the GDBR. According to the FWS and the UDWR, management activities within the Coyote Basin PMZ should be conducted with the objective of maintaining a minimum of 10,000 acres of prairie dog colonies (EA No. UT-080-1999-02). Prairie dog colonies located in the PMZ and in the GDBR create a complex of approximately 16,000 acres. Approximately 1,830 acres of active prairie dog colonies exist in this area of the PMZ. It is estimated that well pad, pipeline and road construction would result in disturbance up to 151 acres, or 1.5 percent of the PMZ. Therefore, the Proposed Action would be consistent with habitat

species (e.g., prairie dogs, rabbits, mice, small birds). This loss of some prey species may limit foraging opportunities for individual eagles. However, with the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures identified in Section 4.6.2, the potential effects of the Proposed Action would be reduced.

Based on the potential loss of prey species and loss of habitat, the Proposed Action "*may affect is not likely to adversely affect*" the bald eagle.

Colorado Pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*)

The Colorado pikeminnow, also known as the Colorado squawfish, is federally listed as endangered by the USFWS. The Colorado pikeminnow thrives in swift flowing muddy rivers with quiet, warm backwaters. Colorado pikeminnow are primarily piscivorous (fish-eaters), but smaller individuals also eat insects and other invertebrates. The species spawns during the spring and summer over riffle areas with gravel or cobble substrate. Eggs are randomly splayed onto the bottom, and usually hatch in less than one week (Sigler and Sigler 1996).

The Colorado pikeminnow were historically found in the mainstream Colorado River and its tributaries from Wyoming to the Gulf of California. Currently, wild populations of pikeminnow persist only in the upper basin. The White River currently supports some of the highest densities of Colorado pikeminnow in the Green River sub-basin. The White River is used for year round residence and also as a migration corridor to other connected habitats in the Green and Yampa rivers. Adult Colorado pikeminnow are present in the White River upstream to the Taylor Draw Dam. Portions of the White River and its 100-year floodplain, about five miles south of the Project Area, are officially designated as critical habitat for the Colorado pikeminnow. Portions of the Green River and its 100-year floodplain in the Project Area are also officially designated as critical habitat for the Colorado pikeminnow (USFWS 2003).

Humpback Chub (*Gila cypha*)

The humpback chub is a federally endangered minnow found in the Upper Colorado River Basin. The humpback prefers deep, fast-moving, turbid waters often associated with large boulders and steep cliffs. Humpback chubs feed predominately on small aquatic insects, diatoms and filamentous algae. Spawning occurs between April and July during high flows from snowmelt (Sigler and Sigler 1996).

Historically, the humpback chub inhabited canyons of the Colorado River and four of its tributaries: the Green, Yampa, White and Little Colorado rivers. Today, populations currently exist near the Colorado/Utah border in Westwater Canyon in Utah and at Black Rocks, in Colorado. Smaller numbers have been found in the Yampa and Green Rivers in Dinosaur National Monument, Desolation and Gray canyons on the Green River in Utah, Cataract Canyon on the Colorado River in Utah and the Colorado River in Arizona. The largest known population is in the Little Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, where

cypha), and bonytail (*Gila elegans*). These species have experienced severe population declines throughout their range as a result of the dams constructed along much of the Colorado River system. They continue to be impacted by activities that deplete or degrade the flow of downstream waters into the Colorado River (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1990a, b).

Implementation of the Proposed Action in or near designated critical habitats of the endangered Colorado River fish could impact the Colorado River Endangered Fish species by: 1) altering the substrate characteristics of the floodplain, thereby reducing the quality of habitat available to fish populations 2) changing the floodplain vegetation which provides allochthonous input into the river 3) potentially exposing fish species to contaminants from accidental spills/leaks of pipelines or productions facilities, and 4) resulting in a depletion of the Upper Colorado River Basin.

Increased vehicle traffic associated with oil and gas activities has the potential to introduce exotic species to floodplain areas. The spread of exotic plants can alter river channels. Channel width reductions increase water velocities in the main channel and decrease the number of low velocity backwaters. However, the operator has committed to control weeds that become established on their well pads and road and pipeline use authorizations, and rights of ways.

The Green River is a large river with high dilution factors. However, if a spill/leak were to enter this river, contaminants would likely to accumulate in backwater/depressional areas with reduced dilution and less flushing capacity (Woodward et al. 1985). The endangered Colorado River fish use these sites which provide cover and a food source. Water quality is defined by parameters such as temperature, dissolved oxygen, environmental contaminants, nutrients, turbidity, and is considered a primary constituent element of designated critical habitat for the Colorado River fishes. Research is limited regarding threats posed by environmental contaminants to the endangered Colorado River fishes (Woodward et al. 1985; Krahn et al. 1986; Mayer and Ellerieck 1986). However, these studies have shown that contaminants, including petroleum hydrocarbons released via spills/leaks, can affect behavioral functions which have been shown to impair feeding behavior (Woodward et al. 1987). Early life stages of all fish are generally more sensitive to environmental contaminants than juveniles or adults (Mayer and Ellersieck), and disruption of behavioral functions can result in population declines or changes in year-class strength if enough individuals are affected (Little et al. 1993). To minimize these impacts, the operator has committed to install secondary containment (berms, etc) around chemical storage facilities. They have also committed to line the pit as directed by the Surface Management Agency.

Depletion or the removal of water from the Upper Colorado River Basin reduce the ability of the river to create and maintain the physical habitat (areas inhabited or potentially habitable to special status fish for use of spawning, development of fish larvae, feeding, or serving as corridors between these areas) and the biological environment. Water depletions can also contribute to alterations in flow regimes that favor nonnative fish.

The following measures were recommended by the USFWS to ensure the protection of the bald eagle:

- Activities within ½ mile of winter roost areas, e.g., cottonwood galleries, will not occur during the winter roost season from November 1 to March 31.
- No permanent facilities will be placed within 0.5 miles of winter roost areas.
- Avoid loss or disturbance to large cottonwood gallery riparian habitats.
- Use directional drilling where technically and economically feasible to reduce disturbance and drilling in suitable roosting habitat. All areas of disturbance within riparian areas and/or adjacent uplands should be revegetated with native species.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts to T&E Wildlife Species

Unavoidable impacts resulting from the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative would include the following:

- Well pad and road and pipeline construction could result in long-term disturbance to white-tailed prairie dog colonies, which would result in loss of prey, breeding habitat and shelter for the black-footed ferret.
- Drilling, completion and dust suppression activities would result in water depletion from the Green River and result in adverse impacts to the endangered Colorado River fish species.

Special Status Plant Species

Uinta Basin Hookless Cactus (Sclerocactus glaucus)

The Uinta Basin hookless cactus' (federally threatened) unhooked large central spine differentiates it from other members of the *Sclerocactus* genus, which have either a hooked large central spine or none (USFWS 1990). However, at least a few individuals in most Uinta Basin hookless cactus populations possess moderately to strongly hooked spines (Goodrich and Neese 1986).

Habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus generally consists of gravelly or rocky surfaces on river terrace deposits and lower mesa slopes (USFWS 1990), as well as gravel littered draws (Goodrich and Neese 1986), that are underlain by clay or silty clay. This species does not grow in sandy soils. The species occurs on varying exposures, but is more abundant on south-facing exposures, slopes to about 30 percent grade, and where terrace deposits break from level tops to steeper side slopes. The Uinta Basin hookless cactus is found at elevations from 4,500 to 5,900 feet amsl within the desert shrub vegetation community (USFWS 1990). No populations of Uinta Basin hookless cactus currently occur in the GDBR but potential habitat for the species occurs in the southern and west portions of the GDBR in the Uinta Geological formation. Populations are found

where stormwater flows across slopes. Surface disturbance associated with the construction of well pads, access roads, pipelines, etc., can lead to increased soil erosion, and stormwater runoff with heavy concentrations of sediment. The Uinta Basin hookless cactus is not tolerant of heavy sedimentation. The BLM has documented incidences where natural sediment deposition (i.e., sedimentation not caused by oil and gas development or other human activities) caused the loss of cacti or modified suitable habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus. This example of natural sedimentation impacts on the Uinta Basin hookless cactus suggests that human-induced sedimentation can have an even more detrimental effect on the species. Because of these potential impacts, sedimentation potentially resulting from surface disturbance under the No Action Alternative is a concern. However, several applicant-committed BMPs have been incorporated into the No Action Alternative in order to reduce erosion and subsequent sediment yield. These measures would serve to reduce the potential effects of sedimentation on Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats.

Based on the potential for modification or loss of potential habitat and increased access to potential or occupied habitats, the No Action Alternative "*may affect, is not likely to adversely affect*" the Uinta Basin hookless cactus.

Mitigation Measures for T&E Plant Species:

The following mitigation measures would be applied to minimize the impact of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative to the vegetation communities.

Power-washing of all construction and drilling equipment would occur prior to the equipment entering the GDBR project area from outside the Vernal Field Office area.

Over the construction, drilling and completion season, QEP could implement an intensive interim reclamation program beginning the first growing season after each segment of project completion. As applicant-committed BMPs, QEP would reseed all portions of well pads and ROWs not utilized for the operational phase of the project, as well as any sites within the GDBR determined necessary by the appropriate SMA. Reseeding would be accomplished using SMA specified plant species. Post-construction seeding applications would continue as determined necessary by the SMA.

Weed control would be conducted through an Approved Pesticide Use and Weed Control Plan from the Authorized Officer of the appropriate SMA. Weed monitoring would occur on an annual basis (or as frequently as the SMA determines) throughout the life of the project.

QEP would avoid placement of roads, pipelines, well pads, and ancillary facilities within 100 meters of riparian habitats. If avoidance is not feasible, then impacts to riparian habitats would be minimized, where possible.

During the APD process, BLM would consider moving facilities up to 200 meters away from water courses, livestock corrals, BLM rain gauges, and long-term established

- A buffers of at least 100 feet will be established between the edge of the right of way (roads and surface pipelines) or surface disturbance (well pads) and plants and populations will be incorporated,
- Surface pipelines will be laid such that a 100 foot buffer exists between the edge of the right of way and the plants, use stabilizing and anchoring techniques when the pipeline crosses the habitat to ensure the pipelines don't move towards the population,
- Before and during construction, areas for avoidance should be visually identifiable in the field, e.g., flagging, temporary fencing, rebar, etc.,
- Designs will avoid concentrating water flows or sediments into occupied habitat,
- Oil, water, or condensate tanks in centralized locations will be placed away from occupied habitat, and
- Minimize the disturbed area of producing well locations through interim and final reclamation. Reclaim well pads following drilling to the smallest area possible.

Monitoring

- Occupied Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitats within 100' of the edge of the surface pipeline rights-of-way, 100 feet of the edge of the roads' right-of-ways, and 100 feet from the edge of the well pad shall be monitored for a period of three years after ground disturbing activities. Monitoring will include annual plant surveys to determine plant and habitat impacts relative to project facilities. Annual reports shall be provided to the BLM and the Service. To ensure desired results are being achieved, minimization measures will be evaluated and may be changed after a thorough review of the monitoring results and annual reports during annual meetings between the BLM and the Service.
- Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the Service will be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for the Uinta Basin hookless cactus is anticipated as a result of project activities.

Should you have questions, or require additional information, please contact Amy Torres, Wildlife Biologist, at 435-781-4481.

Attachment: Questar Exploration & Production Company's (QEP), Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region FEIS/BA (CD)

Bcc: Reading File
Central File
Project File: QEP's Greater Deadman Bench Oil & Gas Producing Region FEIS/BA

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078
(435) 781-4400 Fax: (435) 781-4410

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1792
UT-080

January 8, 2004

Mr. James L. Dykmann
Compliance Archaeologist
Utah Division of State History
300 Rio Grande Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1182

Dear Mr. Dykmann:

RE: Initiation of Consultation - QEP's Greater Deadman Bench
Oil & Gas Field Development Strategy

The Questar Exploration and Production Company's Uintah Basin Division has notified this Office of its proposed plan to drill up to 1, 239 new wells over a 10-year period, or until the resource base is fully developed on their leases. The project area would involve about 99,000 acres in the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas production region, located about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The project area would involve about 85% BLM-administered public lands, 12% State of Utah-administered lands; and 3% patented land.

The BLM is initiating an environmental impact analysis (EIS) to consider the proposal and reasonable alternatives. We have enclosed a Scoping Notice for your information which provides additional information on the proposed plan, preliminary resource issues and concerns, as well as general maps covering the project area.

We recognize that decisions involving BLM-administered public lands may have ramifications for State of Utah lands adjoining and within the project area. As such we would like to initiate consultation with your office and encourage and invite your participation on this project. At this time BLM is seeking issues, concerns and/or data that the SHPO may have which should be factored into to the EIS. We request that any concerns and/or information your office may have relative to this project be provided to us by close of business February 4, 2004.

Please provide written comments to: Field Manager
ATTN: QEP Field Development Project
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078

The SHPO is currently included on our mailing list to receive copies of the draft and final EIS documents. Should you not wish to receive copies of these documents, please let us know. Should you have questions or require additional information on this project, please contact Jean Nitschke-Sinclear at 435-781-4437.

Thank you for your continuing interest in public land management.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jean Nitschke-Sinclear

for Howard B. Cleavinger, II
Acting Field Manager

Enclosure – Scoping Notice

Cc: State Director, U-934
Central Files
Reading
QEP – Adm. Rec.

JNit-Sin:jns:1/08/04\NEPA.QEP.Scoping.SHPO

Jan. 2004
Cultural Program
QEP

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
VERNAL FIELD OFFICE
VERNAL, UTAH

SCOPING NOTICE

QUESTAR EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION COMPANY'S GREATER DEADMAN BENCH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

EIS NO. UTU-080-2004-0369V

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Questar Exploration & Production Company (QEP) has notified the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vernal Field Office that it proposes to fully develop hydrocarbon resources underlying oil and gas mineral leases within the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas-producing region (GDBR) (project area).

The project area consists of about 146 sections (approximately 99,000 acres) in an existing oil and gas producing region located in all or portions of T6 to 8S, R21 to 25E, Uintah County, Utah (Figure 1-1). The project area is on BLM-administered lands (83,864 acres); lands administered by the State of Utah (11,448 acres), and a small area of private lands (3,473 acres). QEP operates the majority of the mineral lease rights (79.2 percent) underlying the public, State and private lands in the project area.

QEP proposes to drill up to 1,239 wells at the rate of 100 to 120 wells per year over 10 years, or until the resource base is fully developed. This would include approximately 16 Uinta Formation gas wells, 219 Green River Formation oil wells, 148 Green River Formation gas wells, 451 Wasatch Formation gas wells, 68 Mesaverde Formation gas wells, 311 Blackhawk/Mancos Formation gas wells, and 26 Frontier/Dakota Formation deep gas wells. Of these, 769 well pads would be drilled on new locations and 470 would be "twins" drilled from existing locations (representing 38% of the total new wells that would be drilled). would these pads need to be expanded in size?

1.1 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to further develop hydrocarbon resources underlying the GDBR. QEP estimates that the proposed project could yield over 9 million barrels of oil and 750 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas gross production over the next 40 years with a certain amount of risk associated with the success of the different horizons considered in the analysis. QEP believes that the public interest need for the project is to maintain and enhance responsibly developed domestic crude oil production which would result in less dependence on foreign sources of crude oil. On a regional scale, additional oil production would yield tax revenues as well as significant royalty revenues to both the United States and Utah State governments. On a local level, the development activity would provide employment opportunities that further enhance the local economy and tax base. Given imports & U.S. production, does the US really needs these products now? How does the above mentioned statements correlate to market trends & projections?

1.2 Relationship of the Project to Controlling Land Use Plans

The management of BLM public lands and resources encompassed by the project area are directed and guided by the BLM's Book Cliffs Resource Area (BCRA) Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (BLM 1985). The proposed project lies within an area that has been partially developed for oil and gas production and is designated by BLM as "Category 1" and "Category 2" for oil and gas leasing by the BLM.

Will these categories stay the same in the l.u.p? How will this S.I.S. fit into the l.u.p?

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION

QEP proposes to drill at a maximum rate of 100 to 120 wells per year until the resource base is fully developed (Table 2-1). The monthly rate of drilling would range from 0 to 12 wells per month. The total number of wells drilled would depend largely on factors out of the QEP's control such as geologic success, economic factors, and lease restrictions. The reasonably foreseeable full development model in the EIS analysis area ranges from 1,000 to 1,239 new wells. At the maximum drilling pace, development drilling is expected to occur over a span of 10 years.

TABLE 2-1 QEP GREATER DEADMAN BENCH PROPOSED 2004 - 2014 WELL DEVELOPMENT How is this Table's data derived?

FORMATION	RESOURCE	DRILLING RATE (WELLS/MONTH)	PROPOSED NEW WELLS
Uinta	Gas	0-1	16
Green River	Oil	0-3	219
Green River	Gas	0-3	148
Wasatch	Gas	0-6	451
Mesaverde	Gas	0-1	68
Blackhawk/Mancos	Gas	0-3	311
Frontier/Dakota	Gas	0-1	26
	Mixed	**0-12**	**1239**

The proposed wells would be drilled on a 40-acre spacing pattern in order to efficiently recover oil and gas reserves from the Green River Formation at depths of 3,500 to 5,500 feet; from the Wasatch Formation at depths of 5,500 to 8,000 feet; from the Mesaverde Formation at depths of 6,500 to 10,000 feet; and from the Blackhawk/Mancos Formation at depths of 10,500 to 14,000 feet. Deep drilling to the Frontier/Dakota would exceed 16,000 feet.

1239 x 2.5 = 3097.5 acres

2.1 Location Construction and Land Requirements

Well site construction would consist of leveling a rectangular pad to 300 feet x 350 feet, occupying approximately 2.5 acres. Well pads would be constructed from the native sand/soil/rock materials present and leveled by balancing cut and fill areas. Is this an average for all stages of drilling?

A reserve pit (150 feet x 70 feet x 12 feet deep, approximately 0.24 surface acres) for drilling mud and water storage would be excavated adjacent to the pad. Stockpiles for both topsoil and subsoil would be established adjacent to the well pad and maintained for future use in backfilling the reserve pit and rehabilitating the location upon abandonment. Depending on the amount of cut and fill required to level each site, these stockpiles would occupy approximately 0.5 acres. x 1239 = 619.5 + 3097.5 = 3717 acres. / 5.8 miles^2

An access road connecting the pad to the nearest established road also would be

+619.5 acres To 3717 acres 619.5 acres + 619.5 acres + 3717 acres 4956 acres Total

constructed. The existing road network within the EIS analysis area would provide the primary access routes to the new well sites. Over 600 miles of existing roads would be used, thereby minimizing additional surface impact. Based on the average well, each well site road would be approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide and cause approximately 0.5 acre of additional surface disturbance. For Green River Formation wells, a Right-of-Way (ROW) (approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide; running to a central tank facility) would be required for production flow lines or water injection lines causing approximately 0.5 acre of additional surface disturbance. For Wasatch, Mesaverde, Blackhawk/Mancos, and Frontier/Dakota Formation gas wells, a ROW (approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide) would be required for surface gathering lines, causing approximately 0.5 acres of additional surface disturbance per well. ?

Each well pad and access road would typically take 2 to 4 days to construct. The combined surface disturbance for the average new producing well would be approximately 3.75 acres, or 9.4 percent of the available surface area in each 40-acre tract. Thus, approximately 2,625 to 3,250 total acres would be disturbed for construction of the 700 to 800 maximum proposed well sites, access roads, and pipelines. Additional disturbance would be required for central tank batteries, compressor stations, and utility lines necessary for production operations.

Following the drilling and initial completion operations, a portion of each well pad plus the reserve pit would no longer be needed. These areas would be promptly rehabilitated and returned to natural conditions reducing long-term surface disturbance to approximately 3 acres per 40-acre tract, or 7.5 percent of total surface area. Of the 2,625 to ~~3,250 total~~ 4956 Total acres acres disturbed during construction for well sites, access roads, and pipelines, approximately 600 acres would be reclaimed immediately after construction is complete.

Dry holes would be Plugged & Abandoned (P&A) as per applicable regulations, and the entire well location and its access road would be promptly rehabilitated and returned to natural conditions.

2.2 Drilling Operations

Drilling operations would be conducted in compliance with all Federal Oil and Gas Onshore Orders, all State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining rules and regulations, and all applicable local rules and regulations.

2.3 Completion Operations

Once production casing has been cemented in place, the drilling rig would be released and a completion rig would be moved in. The typical completion operation for Green River, Wasatch and Mesaverde wells typically takes 4 to 6 days to perform. Deeper

completions, such as in the Blackhawk /Mancos and/or Dakota wells, are performed in a similar manner but longer periods of time are needed for well bore cleanup and production testing which generally occurs between each stage of the completion. Completion of the initial Blackhawk /Mancos and/or Dakota wells would take 4 to 6 weeks. Eventually, that time period would be compressed to under 2 weeks.

2.4 Applicant-Committed Environmental Protection Measures

Several procedures are described below that would be implemented, at the sole expense of the interest owners, to reduce the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development activity. In addition, the BLM on-site inspection for each new well site may identify specific resources that may be affected on a particular location. The on-site inspection would be used in conjunction with the measures described below to develop site-specific mitigating measures for sensitive resources.

2.4.1 Cultural Resources

A Class III cultural resources survey, conducted by a qualified archaeologist, would be conducted over all areas proposed for surface disturbance. Class III cultural resource block surveys have been conducted in portions of the proposed development area and would be utilized where applicable. If these surveys identify areas with a high probability of encountering potentially significant ~~subsurface~~ archaeological sites, ~~a qualified archaeologist would monitor surface disturbance~~. QEP and their contractors would inform their employees about relevant federal regulations intended to protect cultural resources. Equipment operators would be informed that if a site is uncovered during construction, activities in the vicinity would immediately cease and the BLM's Authorized Officer (AO) would be notified. Historic properties considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) would be avoided or mitigated through an approved data recovery plan. (Provisions for cultural in the l.u.p needs to be added.

Sec. 106 consultation would occur and Tribal consultation as well.

what would be the cumulative effects if the maximum development occurs?

2.4.2 Paleontological Resources

Noise, visual impacts to sites, this is an effect considered in 36 CFR part 800.4-5.

Based on site-specific recommendations from the BLM's AO, surveys for paleontological resources would be conducted on areas with sandstone outcrops and where bedrock excavation into sensitive formations is necessary. The survey would be conducted by a qualified paleontologist funded by QEP and would determine fossil localities and the sensitivity of the area for fossil resources. These actions would determine the necessity of having a qualified paleontologist on-site during construction. If paleontological resources were uncovered during ground disturbing activities, QEP would suspend all operation that would further disturb such materials and would immediately contact BLM's AO, who would arrange for a determination of significance and, if necessary, recommend a recovery or avoidance plan.

P.A. for this E.I.S or covered by the P.A(?) ~~for~~ in the l.u.p?

USHPO consultation

Advisory Council on Historic Places consultation

Historic Trust consultation

Tribes?

2.4.3 Wildlife and Vegetation (including Federally listed, Candidate and Proposed Species)

QEP would comply with Endangered Species Act regulations in order to prevent adverse impacts to Federally listed, Candidate and Proposed wildlife and plant species. QEP would also implement appropriate protective measures (e.g., timing and spatial stipulations) discussed in the Book Cliffs RMP in order to prevent adverse impacts on non-listed wildlife species and habitats.

2.4.4 Power Lines

Unless otherwise agreed to by the AO in writing, power lines shall be constructed in accordance with the standards outlined in *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines*, (Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. 1981). QEP would construct power lines in accordance with these standards or will assume the burden and expense of proving pole designs not shown in the referenced publication are "raptor safe". A raptor expert acceptable to the AO shall provide such proof. The AO reserves the right to require modification or additions to all power line structures on applied for route authorizations, should they be necessary to ensure the safety of large perching birds. QEP would make such modifications and/or additions without liability or expense to the Federal Government.

2.4.5 Noxious and Invasive Weeds

QEP would monitor and control noxious and invasive weeds along access road use authorizations, pipeline route authorizations, well sites, or other applicable facilities by spraying or mechanical removal. On BLM administered land, a Pesticide Use Proposal would be submitted and approved prior to the application of herbicides, pesticides or other hazardous chemicals.

2.4.6 Soils

All existing roads will be maintained and kept in good repair during all drilling, completion, and production operations associated with wells. Planned access roads and surface disturbing activities will conform to standards outlined in the BLM and Forest Service publication: *Surface Operating Standards for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development, 1989.*

2.4.7 Visual Resources

Based on site-specific recommendations from the BLM's AO, surface equipment would be painted to blend in with the surroundings.

2.4.8 Existing Facilities and Rights-of-Way

Cattle guards would be used for fence crossings whenever practicable. If a fence must be cut, H-braces would be installed to support the existing fence and a cattle guard installed to prevent livestock movement.

2.4.9 Hazardous and Solid Waste/Trash Disposal

All solid waste or trash would be transported for disposal to an approved solid waste disposal facility.

3.0 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) COMPLIANCE

The BLM has determined that permitting this Proposed Action constitutes a federal action that may affect the quality of the human environment. Pursuant to NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations on implementing NEPA, the BLM will prepare a NEPA-compliant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will describe and evaluate the potential impacts of QEP's Proposed Action and alternatives. The purpose of the EIS will be to provide the public and decision-makers with sufficient information to understand the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and alternatives, and to identify and develop appropriate mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts. NEPA requires that a No Action alternative and any reasonable action alternative(s) be evaluated during the analysis process. In part, this scoping statement has been prepared to enable government agencies, the general publics, and other interested parties to participate in and contribute to the alternative selection process.

4.0 PRELIMINARY RESOURCE ISSUES FOR NEPA ANALYSIS

Based on the BLM's preliminary review of QEP's Proposed Action, the following resource issues have been identified as requiring a full analysis in the EIS:

- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Federally listed and BLM Sensitive Plants, Wildlife, and Fish Species
- Existing Land Use and Status
- Noxious and Invasive Weeds
- Paleontological Resources
- Range and Rangeland Management
- Recreation Resources
- Socioeconomics
- Soils
- Hydrology and Watershed Resources
- Wildlife and Fisheries
- Vegetation and Wetlands
- Visual Resources and Noise

In addition to the above-listed resources, the EIS will address all of the Critical Elements of the Human Environment as described in the BLM's Instruction Memorandum Number ID-2003-075 9 (dated July 11, 2003). Additional issues or resource concerns are likely to be determined during the public scoping process.

5.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A critical element of the NEPA process is public scoping. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to:

- Identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the NEPA document,
- Identify issues of concern related to the Proposed Action, and
- Determine the depth of the analysis for issues addressed in the NEPA document.

The public is encouraged to participate during the scoping process to help identify the scope of the analysis needed, alternatives to the Proposed Action, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process. **Your written comments will be accepted on or before February 4, 2004.** Please submit your written comments to:

Ms. Jean Nitschke-Sinclear, AFM NEPA, Planning and Special Projects
Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078
jean_nitschke-sinclear@blm.gov
Telephone: (435) 781-4400
Fax: (435) 781-4410

A public meeting to discuss the proposed project is scheduled for the following date and location:

Wednesday, January 14, 2003
7:00-9:00pm
South Conference Room, Uintah County Bldg., 147 East Main Street, Vernal Utah

1792

QEP.

FILE COPY

State of Utah

OLENE S. WALKER
Governor

GAYLE F. McKEACHNIE
Lieutenant Governor

Department of Community and Economic Development
DAVID HARMER
Executive Director

Division of State History / Utah State Historical Society
PHILIP F. NOTARIANNI
Division Director

January 26, 2004

Field Manager
ATTN: QEP Field Development Project
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal UT 84078

RE: Initiation of Consultation - QEP's Greater Deadman Bench Oil & Gas Field Development Strategy

In Reply Please Refer to Case No. 04-0002

The Utah State Historic Preservation Office received the referenced information on January 13, 2004. After consideration of the consultation request in behalf of the Bureau of Land Management, the Utah Preservation Office provides the following comments per §36CFR800.

Consultation Section 106; the statements outlined in section 2.4.1 are accurate, and USHPO will consult concerning the undertaking as the undertaking is developed.

This information is provided to assist with Section 106 responsibilities as per §36CFR800. My email address is: jdykman@utah.gov

As ever,

James L. Dykmann
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer - Archaeology

JLD:04-0002 BLM/EIS

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1. Article Addressed to:

Matthew T. Seddon
Deputy State Historic Preservation
Officer-Archaeology
Utah Division of State History
300 Rio Grande Avenue
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101-1182

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X [signature] ☐ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) [signature] C. Date of Delivery 2-14

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PS Form 3800, June 2002 See Reverse for Instructions

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078
(435) 781-4400 Fax: (435) 781-4410
http://www.ut.blm.gov/utah/vernal

IN REPLY REFER TO:
8141
UT-082

February 13, 2005

Matthew T. Seddon Ph.D.
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer-Archaeology
Utah Division of State History
300 Rio Grande Ave.
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101-1182

Dear Dr. Seddon:

RE: Section 106 Consultation: Greater Deadman Bench Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Attached for Section 106 consultation, comment and coordination is a copy of Questar Exploration and Production Companys "Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region Draft Environmental Impact Statement. (GDBR) EIS number: UTU-080-2003-0369V. This document is dated January, 2006. The Vernal Field Office requests written comments between February 10, 2006 through March 27, 2006..

Please refer to Page S-1 for a summary of the existing situation and proposed action. The GDBR has about 278 Oil and water-injection wells, 300 gas wells, and about 57 miles of primary roads and 314 miles of secondary roads. The proposed action includes 1020 natural gas wells, 219 oil wells, 170 miles of new roads, 235 miles of new pipelines, 22 new central tank facilities, and 15 new compressor stations. Of the total proposed locations, 891wells would require new construction and 348 wells would be "twinned" from existing well pads. A ten year project life is anticipated at this time. It is further anticipated that 100 to 120 wells would be drilled yearly.

In Section 2.3, applicant-committed best management practices, subsection 2.3.1, Page 2-24 through 2-29 describes the actions which would be taken prior to surface disturbance. This section includes class III (100%) inventories of the wells pads, access roads, pipelines and other ancillary facilities as needed. Project specific Section 106 will be done for each project which is the current practice.

Chapter three, Affected Environment describes the known cultural resources within the DEIS area; See Section 3.7, Cultural Pages 3-76 -77.

Chapter four, Environmental Consequences" describes impacts and affects on cultural resources for the proposed action and the "No Action Alternative."

If the applicant committed measures are followed the Vernal Field Office recommends a No Adverse Effect determination for the DEIS area and actions as proposed.

If there are questions, concerns or problems please contact this office at your earliest possible convenience. Please contact Blaine Phillips at 435-781-4438.

Sincerely,

Tim Faircloth
Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078
(435) 781-4400 Fax: (435) 781-4410

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1792
UT-080

January 8, 2004

Dear Sir/Madam :

RE: Initiation of Consultation - QEP's Greater Deadman Bench Oil & Gas Field Development Strategy

The Questar Exploration and Production Company's Uintah Basin Division has notified this Office of its proposed plan to drill up to 1, 239 new wells over a 10-year period, or until the resource base is fully developed on their leases. The project area would involve about 99,000 acres in the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas production region, located about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The project area would involve about 85% BLM-administered public lands, 12% State of Utah-administered lands; and 3% patented land.

The BLM is initiating an environmental impact analysis (EIS) to consider the proposal and reasonable alternatives. We have enclosed a Scoping Notice for your information which provides additional information on the proposed plan, preliminary resource issues and concerns, as well as general maps covering the project area.

We recognize that decisions involving BLM-administered public lands near reservations and in areas traditionally occupied or used by Tribes may have ramifications for future use of these lands by Tribes and Tribal members. As such we would like to initiate consultation with your Tribe and encourage and invite your participation on this project. At this time BLM is seeking issues, concerns and/or data that the Tribe may have which should to be factored into to the EIS. We request that any concerns and/or information the Tribe may have relative to this project be provided to this office by close of business February 4, 2004.

Please provide written comments to: Field Manager
ATTN: QEP Field Development Project
Bureau of Land Management
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078

The Tribe is currently included on our mailing list to receive copies of the draft and final EIS documents. Should you not wish to receive copies of these documents, please let us know. Should you have questions or require additional information on this project, please contact Jean Nitschke-Sinclear at 435-781-4437.

Thank you for your continuing interest in public land management.

Sincerely,

Jean Nitschke-Sinclear

for Howard B. Cleavinger, II
Acting Field Manager

Enclosure – Scoping Notice

Cc: State Director, U-934
Central Files
Reading
QEP – Adm. Record

JNit-Sin:jns:1/08/04\NEPA.QEP.Scoping.Tribes

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NEIL B. CLOUD
NAGPRA COORDINATOR
SOUTHERN UTE TRIBE
P.O. BOX 737 #12
IGNACIO CO 81137

TERRY KNIGHT
CULTURAL REPRESENTATIVE
UTE MOUNTAIN TRIBE
P.O. BOX 248
TOWAOC CO 83334

ALLAN DOWNER, DIRECTOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT
NAVAJO NATION
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WINDOW ROCK AZ 86515

LEIGH KUWANWISWMA
CULTURAL PRESERVATION OFFICER
THE HOPI TRIBE
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DOREEN MARTINEAU
CULTURAL RESOURCES OFFICER
PAIUTE INDIAN TRIBE OF UTAH
440 N PAIUTE DRIVE
CEDAR CITY UT 84720

DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCES
NORTHERN UTE TRIBE
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FT DUCHESNE UT 84026

PUEBLO OF ZUNI
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ZUNI NM 87327

BLAINE EDMO, CHAIRMAN
FT HALL BUXINESS COUNCIL
SHOSHONE-BANNOCK TRIBES
P.O. BOX 306
FORT HALL ID 83202-0306

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
VERNAL FIELD OFFICE
VERNAL, UTAH

SCOPING NOTICE

QUESTAR EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION COMPANY'S GREATER DEADMAN BENCH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

EIS NO. UTU-080-2004-0369V

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Questar Exploration & Production Company (QEP) has notified the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vernal Field Office that it proposes to fully develop hydrocarbon resources underlying oil and gas mineral leases within the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas-producing region (GDBR) (project area).

The project area consists of about 146 sections (approximately 99,000 acres) in an existing oil and gas producing region located in all or portions of T6 to 8S, R21 to 25E, Uintah County, Utah (Figure 1-1). The project area is on BLM-administered lands (83,864 acres); lands administered by the State of Utah (11,448 acres), and a small area of private lands (3,473 acres). QEP operates the majority of the mineral lease rights (79.2 percent) underlying the public, State and private lands in the project area.

QEP proposes to drill up to 1,239 wells at the rate of 100 to 120 wells per year over 10 years, or until the resource base is fully developed. This would include approximately 16 Uinta Formation gas wells, 219 Green River Formation oil wells, 148 Green River Formation gas wells, 451 Wasatch Formation gas wells, 68 Mesaverde Formation gas wells, 311 Blackhawk/Mancos Formation gas wells, and 26 Frontier/Dakota Formation deep gas wells. Of these, 769 well pads would be drilled on new locations and 470 would be "twins" drilled from existing locations (representing 38% of the total new wells that would be drilled).

1.1 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to further develop hydrocarbon resources underlying the GDBR. QEP estimates that the proposed project could yield over 9 million barrels of oil and 750 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas gross production over the next 40 years with a certain amount of risk associated with the success of the different horizons considered in the analysis. QEP believes that the public interest need for the project is to maintain and enhance responsibly developed domestic crude oil production which would result in less dependence on foreign sources of crude oil. On a regional scale, additional oil production would yield tax revenues as well as significant royalty revenues to both the United States and Utah State governments. On a local level, the development activity would provide employment opportunities that further enhance the local economy and tax base.

1.2 Relationship of the Project to Controlling Land Use Plans

The management of BLM public lands and resources encompassed by the project area are directed and guided by the BLM's Book Cliffs Resource Area (BCRA) Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (BLM 1985). The proposed project lies within an area that has been partially developed for oil and gas production and is designated by BLM as "Category 1" and "Category 2" for oil and gas leasing by the BLM.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION

QEP proposes to drill at a maximum rate of 100 to 120 wells per year until the resource base is fully developed (Table 2-1). The monthly rate of drilling would range from 0 to 12 wells per month. The total number of wells drilled would depend largely on factors out of the QEP's control such as geologic success, economic factors, and lease restrictions. The reasonably foreseeable full development model in the EIS analysis area ranges from 1,000 to 1,239 new wells. At the maximum drilling pace, development drilling is expected to occur over a span of 10 years.

TABLE 2-1 QEP GREATER DEADMAN BENCH PROPOSED 2004 - 2014 WELL DEVELOPMENT

FORMATION	RESOURCE	DRILLING RATE (WELLS/MONTH)	PROPOSED NEW WELLS
Uinta	Gas	0-1	16
Green River	Oil	0-3	219
Green River	Gas	0-3	148
Wasatch	Gas	0-6	451
Mesaverde	Gas	0-1	68
Blackhawk/Mancos	Gas	0-3	311
Frontier/Dakota	Gas	0-1	26
	Mixed	**0-12**	**1239**

The proposed wells would be drilled on a 40-acre spacing pattern in order to efficiently recover oil and gas reserves from the Green River Formation at depths of 3,500 to 5,500 feet; from the Wasatch Formation at depths of 5,500 to 8,000 feet; from the Mesaverde Formation at depths of 6,500 to 10,000 feet; and from the Blackhawk/Mancos Formation at depths of 10,500 to 14,000 feet. Deep drilling to the Frontier/Dakota would exceed 16,000 feet.

2.1 Location Construction and Land Requirements

Well site construction would consist of leveling a rectangular pad to 300 feet x 350 feet, occupying approximately 2.5 acres. Well pads would be constructed from the native sand/soil/rock materials present and leveled by balancing cut and fill areas.

A reserve pit (150 feet x 70 feet x 12 feet deep, approximately 0.24 surface acres) for drilling mud and water storage would be excavated adjacent to the pad. Stockpiles for both topsoil and subsoil would be established adjacent to the well pad and maintained for future use in backfilling the reserve pit and rehabilitating the location upon abandonment. Depending on the amount of cut and fill required to level each site, these stockpiles would occupy approximately 0.5 acres.

An access road connecting the pad to the nearest established road also would be

constructed. The existing road network within the EIS analysis area would provide the primary access routes to the new well sites. Over 600 miles of existing roads would be used, thereby minimizing additional surface impact. Based on the average well, each well site road would be approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide and cause approximately 0.5 acre of additional surface disturbance. For Green River Formation wells, a Right-of-Way (ROW) (approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide; running to a central tank facility) would be required for production flow lines or water injection lines causing approximately 0.5 acre of additional surface disturbance. For Wasatch, Mesaverde, Blackhawk/Mancos, and Frontier/Dakota Formation gas wells, a ROW (approximately 1,000-feet long by 30-feet wide) would be required for surface gathering lines, causing approximately 0.5 acres of additional surface disturbance per well.

Each well pad and access road would typically take 2 to 4 days to construct. The combined surface disturbance for the average new producing well would be approximately 3.75 acres, or 9.4 percent of the available surface area in each 40-acre tract. Thus, approximately 2,625 to 3,250 total acres would be disturbed for construction of the 700 to 800 maximum proposed well sites, access roads, and pipelines. Additional disturbance would be required for central tank batteries, compressor stations, and utility lines necessary for production operations.

Following the drilling and initial completion operations, a portion of each well pad plus the reserve pit would no longer be needed. These areas would be promptly rehabilitated and returned to natural conditions reducing long-term surface disturbance to approximately 3 acres per 40-acre tract, or 7.5 percent of total surface area. Of the 2,625 to 3,250 total acres disturbed during construction for well sites, access roads, and pipelines, approximately 600 acres would be reclaimed immediately after construction is complete.

Dry holes would be Plugged & Abandoned (P&A) as per applicable regulations, and the entire well location and its access road would be promptly rehabilitated and returned to natural conditions.

2.2 Drilling Operations

Drilling operations would be conducted in compliance with all Federal Oil and Gas Onshore Orders, all State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining rules and regulations, and all applicable local rules and regulations.

2.3 Completion Operations

Once production casing has been cemented in place, the drilling rig would be released and a completion rig would be moved in. The typical completion operation for Green River, Wasatch and Mesaverde wells typically takes 4 to 6 days to perform. Deeper

completions, such as in the Blackhawk /Mancos and/or Dakota wells, are performed in a similar manner but longer periods of time are needed for well bore cleanup and production testing which generally occurs between each stage of the completion. Completion of the initial Blackhawk /Mancos and/or Dakota wells would take 4 to 6 weeks. Eventually, that time period would be compressed to under 2 weeks.

2.4 Applicant-Committed Environmental Protection Measures

Several procedures are described below that would be implemented, at the sole expense of the interest owners, to reduce the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development activity. In addition, the BLM on-site inspection for each new well site may identify specific resources that may be affected on a particular location. The on-site inspection would be used in conjunction with the measures described below to develop site-specific mitigating measures for sensitive resources.

2.4.1 Cultural Resources

A Class III cultural resources survey, conducted by a qualified archaeologist, would be conducted over all areas proposed for surface disturbance. Class III cultural resource block surveys have been conducted in portions of the proposed development area and would be utilized where applicable. If these surveys identify areas with a high probability of encountering potentially significant subsurface archaeological sites, a qualified archaeologist would monitor surface disturbance. QEP and their contractors would inform their employees about relevant federal regulations intended to protect cultural resources. Equipment operators would be informed that if a site is uncovered during construction, activities in the vicinity would immediately cease and the BLM's Authorized Officer (AO) would be notified. Historic properties considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) would be avoided or mitigated through an approved data recovery plan.

2.4.2 Paleontological Resources

Based on site-specific recommendations from the BLM's AO, surveys for paleontological resources would be conducted on areas with sandstone outcrops and where bedrock excavation into sensitive formations is necessary. The survey would be conducted by a qualified paleontologist funded by QEP and would determine fossil localities and the sensitivity of the area for fossil resources. These actions would determine the necessity of having a qualified paleontologist on-site during construction. If paleontological resources were uncovered during ground disturbing activities, QEP would suspend all operation that would further disturb such materials and would immediately contact BLM's AO, who would arrange for a determination of significance and, if necessary, recommend a recovery or avoidance plan.

2.4.3 Wildlife and Vegetation (including Federally listed, Candidate and Proposed Species)

QEP would comply with Endangered Species Act regulations in order to prevent adverse impacts to Federally listed, Candidate and Proposed wildlife and plant species. QEP would also implement appropriate protective measures (e.g., timing and spatial stipulations) discussed in the Book Cliffs RMP in order to prevent adverse impacts on non-listed wildlife species and habitats.

2.4.4 Power Lines

Unless otherwise agreed to by the AO in writing, power lines shall be constructed in accordance with the standards outlined in *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines*, (Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. 1981). QEP would construct power lines in accordance with these standards or will assume the burden and expense of proving pole designs not shown in the referenced publication are "raptor safe". A raptor expert acceptable to the AO shall provide such proof. The AO reserves the right to require modification or additions to all power line structures on applied for route authorizations, should they be necessary to ensure the safety of large perching birds. QEP would make such modifications and/or additions without liability or expense to the Federal Government.

2.4.5 Noxious and Invasive Weeds

QEP would monitor and control noxious and invasive weeds along access road use authorizations, pipeline route authorizations, well sites, or other applicable facilities by spraying or mechanical removal. On BLM administered land, a Pesticide Use Proposal would be submitted and approved prior to the application of herbicides, pesticides or other hazardous chemicals.

2.4.6 Soils

All existing roads will be maintained and kept in good repair during all drilling, completion, and production operations associated with wells. Planned access roads and surface disturbing activities will conform to standards outlined in the BLM and Forest Service publication: *Surface Operating Standards for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development, 1989.*

2.4.7 Visual Resources

Based on site-specific recommendations from the BLM's AO, surface equipment would be painted to blend in with the surroundings.

2.4.8 Existing Facilities and Rights-of-Way

Cattle guards would be used for fence crossings whenever practicable. If a fence must be cut, H-braces would be installed to support the existing fence and a cattle guard installed to prevent livestock movement.

2.4.9 Hazardous and Solid Waste/Trash Disposal

All solid waste or trash would be transported for disposal to an approved solid waste disposal facility.

3.0 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) COMPLIANCE

The BLM has determined that permitting this Proposed Action constitutes a federal action that may affect the quality of the human environment. Pursuant to NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations on implementing NEPA, the BLM will prepare a NEPA-compliant Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will describe and evaluate the potential impacts of QEP's Proposed Action and alternatives. The purpose of the EIS will be to provide the public and decision-makers with sufficient information to understand the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and alternatives, and to identify and develop appropriate mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts. NEPA requires that a No Action alternative and any reasonable action alternative(s) be evaluated during the analysis process. In part, this scoping statement has been prepared to enable government agencies, the general publics, and other interested parties to participate in and contribute to the alternative selection process.

4.0 PRELIMINARY RESOURCE ISSUES FOR NEPA ANALYSIS

Based on the BLM's preliminary review of QEP's Proposed Action, the following resource issues have been identified as requiring a full analysis in the EIS:

- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Federally listed and BLM Sensitive Plants, Wildlife, and Fish Species
- Existing Land Use and Status
- Noxious and Invasive Weeds
- Paleontological Resources
- Range and Rangeland Management
- Recreation Resources
- Socioeconomics
- Soils
- Hydrology and Watershed Resources
- Wildlife and Fisheries
- Vegetation and Wetlands
- Visual Resources and Noise

In addition to the above-listed resources, the EIS will address all of the Critical Elements of the Human Environment as described in the BLM's Instruction Memorandum Number ID-2003-075 9 (dated July 11, 2003). Additional issues or resource concerns are likely to be determined during the public scoping process.

5.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A critical element of the NEPA process is public scoping. Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to:

- Identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the NEPA document,
- Identify issues of concern related to the Proposed Action, and
- Determine the depth of the analysis for issues addressed in the NEPA document.

The public is encouraged to participate during the scoping process to help identify the scope of the analysis needed, alternatives to the Proposed Action, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process. **Your written comments will be accepted on or before February 4, 2004.** Please submit your written comments to:

Ms. Jean Nitschke-Sinclear, AFM NEPA, Planning and Special Projects
Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078
jean_nitschke-sinclear@blm.gov
Telephone: (435) 781-4400
Fax: (435) 781-4410

A public meeting to discuss the proposed project is scheduled for the following date and location:

Wednesday, January 14, 2003
7:00-9:00pm
South Conference Room, Uintah County Bldg., 147 East Main Street, Vernal Utah

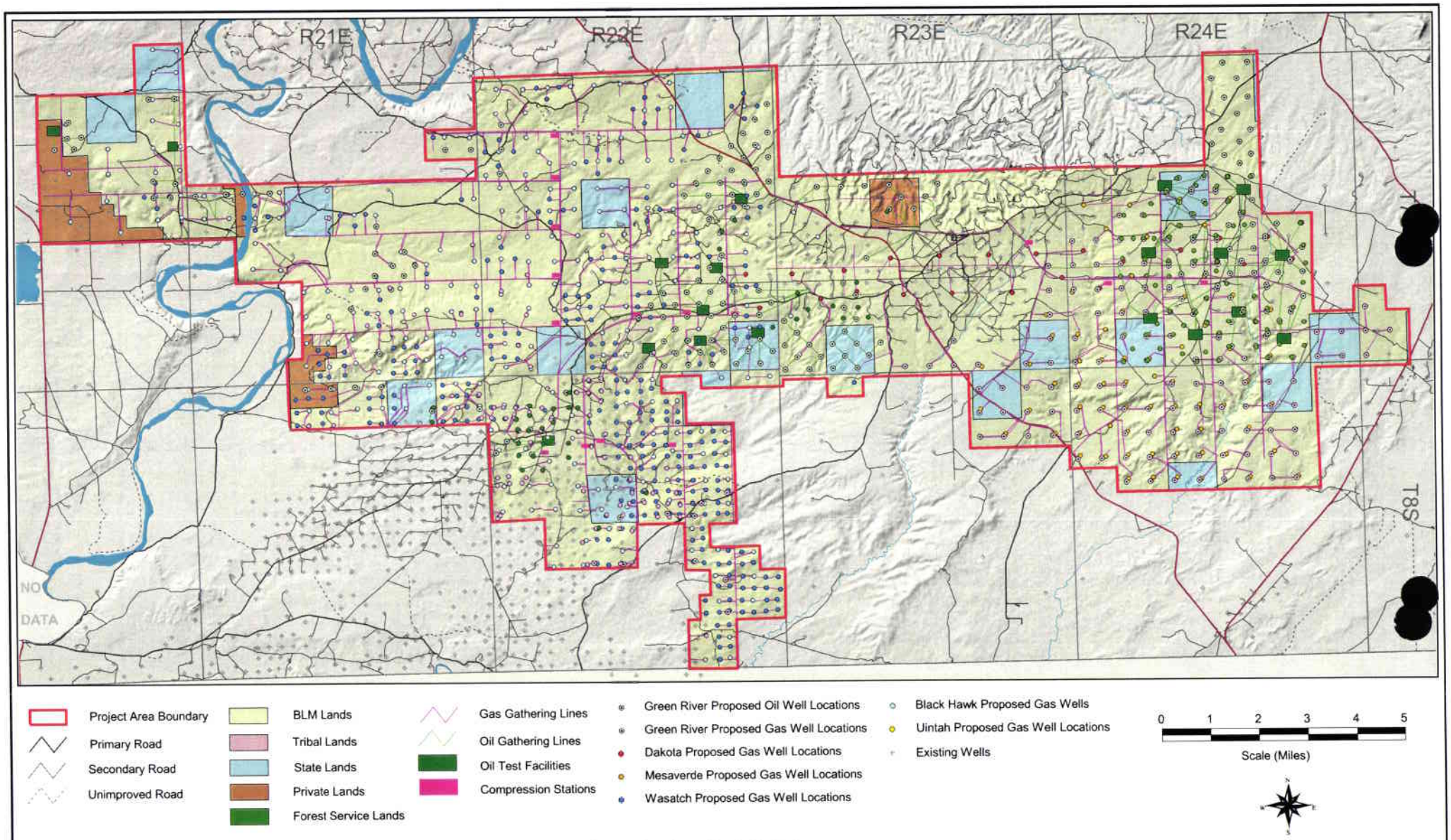

Figure 1-2. Existing Roads, Pipelines, Wells, and Proposed Wells and Pipelines within the Greater Deadman Bench Study Area.

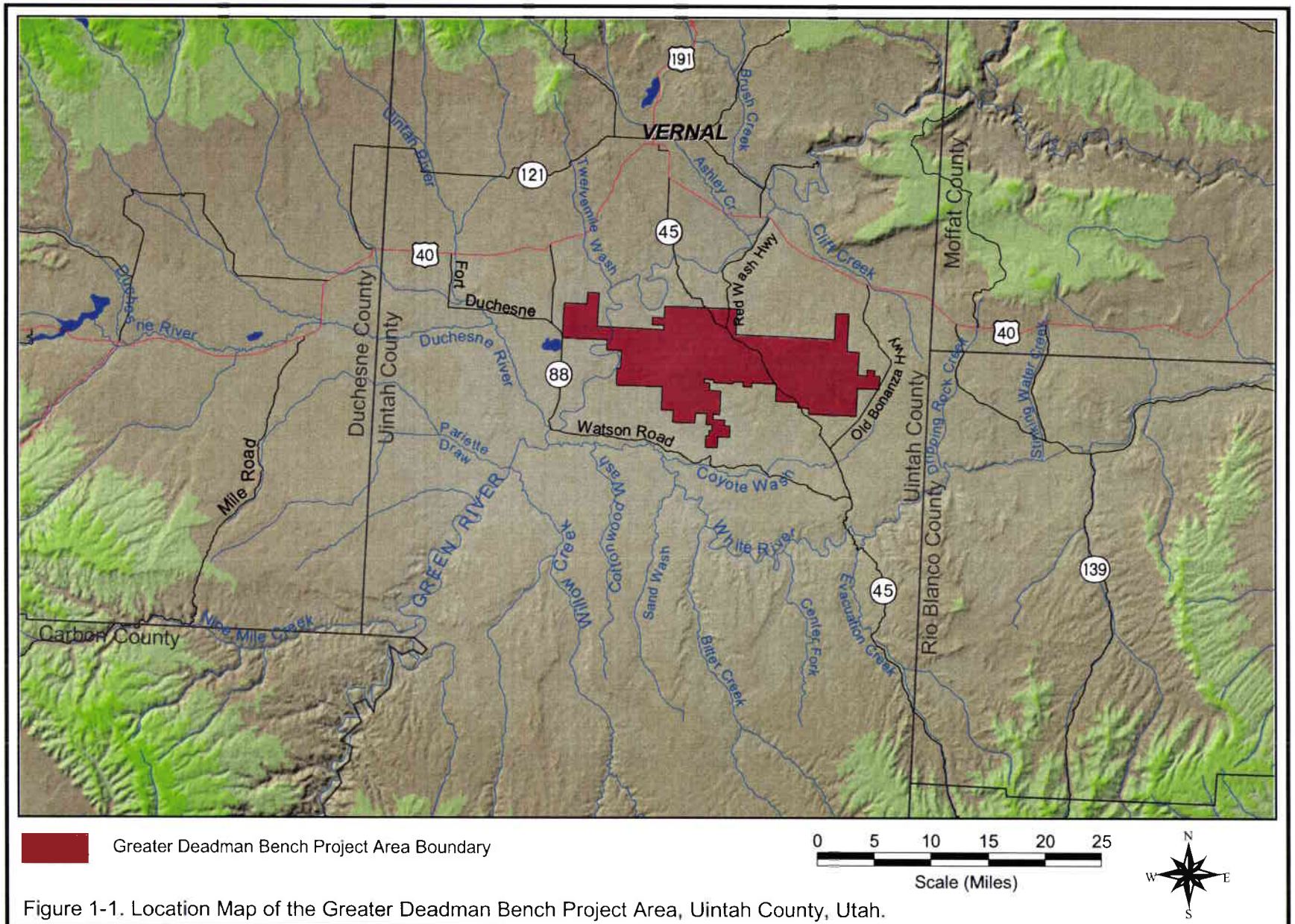

Figure 1-1. Location Map of the Greater Deadman Bench Project Area, Uintah County, Utah.

THE HOPI TRIBE

RECEIVED
JAN 20 2004
BLM VERNAL, UTAH

Wayne Taylor, Jr.
CHAIRMAN

Caleb Johnson
VICE-CHAIRMAN

January 13, 2004

Howard B. Cleavinger, II, Acting Field Manager
Attention: Jean Nitschke-Sinclear, AFM NEPA, Planning and Special Projects
Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078-2799

Dear Acing Field Manager Cleavinger,

This letter is in response to your correspondence dated January 8, 2004, and the enclosed Scoping Notice EIS NO. UTU-080-2004-0369V, regarding the Questar Exploration and Production Company's notification of its proposed plan to drill up to 1,239 new wells on a project area of about 99,000 acres in the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas production region, located about 20 miles south of Vernal. The Hopi Tribe claims cultural affiliation to prehistoric cultural groups in Utah, and therefore we appreciate the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Verbal Field Office's continuing solicitation of our input and your efforts to address our concerns.

The Hopi Tribe supports the identification and avoidance of prehistoric archaeological sites, and we oppose BLM Instruction Memoranda 98-131-2, which prohibit reburial of Native American human remains excavated from BLM land and subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) on BLM land. Therefore, we oppose all ground disturbing activities on BLM land with the potential to disturb the remains of our ancestors.

We understand the BLM is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Scoping Report states that Class III cultural resources surveys would be conducted over all areas proposed for surface disturbance. Presumably, these Class III surveys would be conducted separately as proposed over the next ten years for 1,239 new wells and associated roads and developments.

Therefore, in the development of this EIS, how does the BLM propose to identify prehistoric archaeological sites and Traditional Cultural Properties over this 99,000 acre project area? And how does the BLM propose respectful reburial of Native American ancestors that may be disturbed as a result of this proposal, through subsequent Class III surveys, mitigation and approved data recovery plans?

Please provide us with a copy of the Class I cultural resources overview for this proposal for review and comment. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Clay Hamilton or Terry Morgart at the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma, Director
Hopi Cultural Preservation Office

xc: Utah State Historic Preservation Office
Sally Wisely, Garth Portillo, BLM Utah State Office
Clay Hamilton, HCPO

P.O. BOX 123 — KYKOTSMOVI, AZ. — 86039 — (928) 734-3000

THE PAIUTE INDIAN TRIBE OF UTAH

440 North Paiute Drive · Cedar City, Utah 84720 · (435) 586-1112

RECEIVED
JAN 20 2004
BLM VERNAL, UTAH

January15, 2004

Field Manager
ATTN: QEP Field Development Project
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT: QEP's Greater Deadman Bench oil & Gas Field Development Strategy

The Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah is in receipt of your letter dated January 8, 2004 regarding the Initiation of Consultation - QEP's Greater Deadman Bench Oil & Gas Field Development Strategy. These particular areas that the proposed project is being considered for, is lands that are part of the aboriginal Southern Paiute home lands.

We are very much interested in consulting with you with regards to the above named project. Our interest is not limited to cultural resources but includes plants and animals as well as natural Springs or other places of cultural significance. At this time we are not aware of any archaeological resources in or near the proposed site, but would be very much interested in receiving copies of the documents in the future. Please notify the Paiute Tribe if there are any changes or updates to the project.

Sincerely

Dorena Martineau

Dorena Martineau
Cultural Resources
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

(9)

SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

RECEIVED
BLM VERNAL, UTAH

January 28, 2004

Attn: QEP Field Development Project
BLM, Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT 84078

Subject: QEP's Greater Deadman Bench Oil & Gas Field Development

Dear Project Manager:

I have reviewed your letter of January 8 2004, and, at this time, believe there are no known impacts to areas of Native American Cultural sites that are sensitive to this Tribe in regards to the proposed new wells being drilled over the next 10 years in the above named region. In the event of inadvertent discoveries of Native American sites, artifacts, of human remains, this Tribe would appreciate immediate notification of such findings.

Should you require additional comments or have any questions, feel free to contact me, at the number listed below, extension 2209.

Sincerely,

Neil B. Cloud

Neil B. Cloud
NAGPRA Coordinator

Cc: Howard D. Richards Sr., Chairman
Southern Ute Indian Tribe

P.O. Box 737 • Ignacio, CO 81137 • Phone: 970-563-0100

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, Utah 84078
(435) 781-4400 Fax: (435) 781-4410
http://www.ut.blm.gov/utah/vernal

IN REPLY REFER TO:
8141
UT-082

February 14, 2006

Name
Address

Dear Dr. Seddon:

RE: Greater Deadman Bench Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Consultation.

We are seeking your Tribe's comments, concerns or recommendations regarding the following federal action by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The Purpose of this letter is to introduce you to the proposed action for the Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas action. A copy of Questar Exploration and Production Companys "Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region Draft Environmental Impact Statement. (GDBR) EIS number: UTU-080-2003-0369V is provided for your review and comment. This document is dated January, 2006. The Vernal Field Office requests written comments between February 10, 2006 through March 27, 2006..

Please refer to Page S-1 for a summary of the existing situation and proposed action. The GDBR has about 278 Oil and water-injection wells, 300 gas wells, and about 57 miles of primary roads and 314 miles of secondary roads. The proposed action includes 1020 natural gas wells, 219 oil wells, 170 miles of new roads, 235 miles of new pipelines, 22 new central tank facilities, and 15 new compressor stations. Of the total proposed locations, 891wells would require new construction and 348 wells would be "twinned" from existing well pads. A ten year project life is anticipated at this time. It is ~~further~~ anticipated that 100 to 120 wells would be drilled yearly.

In Section 2.3, applicant-committed best management practices, subsection 2.3.1, Page 2-24 through 2-29 describes the actions which would be taken prior to surface disturbance. This section includes class III (100%) inventories of the wells pads, access roads, pipelines and other ancillary facilities as needed. Project specific Section 106 will be done for each project which is the current practice.

Chapter three, Affected Environment describes the known cultural resources within the DEIS area; See Section 3.7, Cultural Pages 3-76 -77.

Chapter four, Environmental Consequences" describes impacts and affects on cultural resources for the proposed action and the "No Action Alternative."

If the applicant committed measures are followed the Vernal Field Office recommends a No Adverse Effect determination for the DEIS area and actions as proposed.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, American Indian Religious Freedoms Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, Executive Order 13007, and the Federal land Policy and Management Act, the Vernal Field Office of the BLM respectfully inquires as to if there are any comments, special concerns that you and your Tribe may have about the protection of properties and places of traditional cultural or religious importance within the proposed project area. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the proposed project we would be pleased to discuss them with you. Please advise us whether there are any individuals, such as traditional cultural leaders or religious practitioners, contacted in regard to these matters. We also would like to know if you have any other general comments or concerns regarding the proposed project as outlined in this letter.

The potential for inadvertently discovering human remains and/or funerary objects during the implementation of the project outlined in this letter is limited. Previous inventories and discussions with Northern Ute traditional leaders have indicated a low potential for human remains in the areas to be disturbed by energy development. However, if such a discovery is made we will notify you within three days of the discovery, as per the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

The purpose of the proposed action is to facilitate further energy development in an environmentally sensitive manner in the Uinta Basin of North Eastern Utah for the benefit of the peoples of the United States.

If you are aware of any impacts this project may have on specific places of traditional cultural or religious importance to your Tribe and community, or have comments or concerns about the proposed project, please contact William Stringer, Field Office Manager at (435) 781-4400. If you are aware of places of Traditional cultural or religious importance that may be impacted by the proposed project, we would be pleased to discuss them with you in person. For any concerns regarding cultural resources please contact Archaeologist Blaine Phillips at (435) 781-4438. We would appreciate hearing from you within 30 days of receipt of this letter so any information, comments or concerns you may wish to bring to our attention can be addressed promptly. Please let me know if you require additional time so that we may adjust our schedules accordingly.

We look forward to working with you to assure your concerns about places of traditional or religious importance are identified, considered, and protected during project planning and implementation.

Sincerely,

Tim Faircloth
Acting Associate Field manager for
Renewable Resources

Enclosure – as stated

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Governor
Santa Clara Pueblo
PO Box 580
Espanola, NM 87532

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B. Received by (Printed Name): Lori Gutierrez — C. Date of Delivery

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PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Governor
Laguna Pueblo
PO Box 194
Laguna, NM 87026

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature: X [signature] ☒ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name): Rebecca A. Bautista — C. Date of Delivery: 2-17-05

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ~~☒ Return Receipt for Merchandise~~
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label): 7005 1820 0002 6515 6532

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6570

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To Navajo
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

President
Navajo Nation
PO Box 9000
Window Rock, AZ 86515

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X Lee Muskett — ☑ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name): Lee Muskett — C. Date of Delivery: 2/17/06

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☒ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label): 7005 1820 0002 6515 6570

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6501

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To Northwestern Shoshone
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

Chairperson
Northwestern Band of Shoshone Nation
862 South Main, Suite 6
Brigham City, UT 84302

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X [illegible] — ☐ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name): Cori Ann Tackett — C. Date of Delivery

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☒ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label): 7005 1820 0002 6515 6501

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6549

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To Goshute
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Chairperson
Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation
PO Box 6104
Ibapah, UT 84034

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X Phyllis Narang — ☑ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) Phyllis Narang — C. Date of Delivery 2-17-04

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☑ No

3. Service Type
☑ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☑ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label) 7005 1820 0002 6515 6549

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6587

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To Ute Tribe
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Chairperson
Ute Indian Tribe
PO Box 190
Ft. Duchesne, UT 84026

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X Rod Cronover — ☐ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) Rod Cronover — C. Date of Delivery 2-21-04

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
☑ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☑ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label) 7005 1820 0002 6515 6587

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6686

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To White Mesa
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Councilperson
White Mesa Ute Council
PO Box 7096
White Mesa, UT 84511

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X Annie Rabbit
☐ Agent
☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) — C. Date of Delivery

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

PLANNING DEPT FEB 13 2006 USPS - 84511

3. Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☒ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article Number (Transfer from s 7005 1820 0002 6515 6686

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6563

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To Eastern Shoshone
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Chairperson
Eastern Shoshone Business Council
PO Box 538
Ft. Washakie, WY 82514

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X
☐ Agent
☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) — C. Date of Delivery

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

FEB 21 2006

3. Service Type
☒ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☒ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article N (Transfer 7005 1820 0002 6515 6563

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6556

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To: Southern Ute
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Chairperson
Southern Ute Tribal Council
PO Box 737
Ignacio, CO 81137

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label) 7005 1820 0002 6515 6556

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature: X Robert E. Waters ☐ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) | C. Date of Delivery

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
☑ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☑ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6679

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To: Ute Mountain Ute
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 — See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Chairperson
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
PO Box 248
Towaoc, CO 81334

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label) 7005 1820 0002 6515 6679

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature: X Buddy Shaffer ☐ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name): BUDDY C COPPE | C. Date of Delivery: 2-23-06

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
☑ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☑ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

PS Form 3811, February 2004 — Domestic Return Receipt — 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6693

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$ 5.36

Postmark Here

Sent To Hopi
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Chairman
Hopi Tribal Council
PO Box 123
Kykotsmovi, AZ 86039

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X Tiffany Kayayesva ☐ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) TIFFANY KOYAYESVA
C. Date of Delivery FEB 21 2006

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
☑ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☑ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Articl (Tran: 7005 1820 0002 6515 6693

DM

PS Form 3811, February 2004 Domestic Return Receipt 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6495

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To Paiute
Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.
City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 See Reverse for Instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
- Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

1. Article Addressed to:

Chairperson
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah
440 North Paiute Drive
Cedar City, UT 84720

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature
X Goldie Wall ☐ Agent ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) Goldie Wall
C. Date of Delivery 2-17-06

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
☑ Certified Mail ☐ Express Mail
☐ Registered ☑ Return Receipt for Merchandise
☐ Insured Mail ☐ C.O.D.

4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) ☐ Yes

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label) 7005 1820 0002 6515 6495

DM

PS Form 3811, February 2004 Domestic Return Receipt 102595-02-M-1540

7005 1820 0002 6515 6518

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Postage	$
Certified Fee	
Return Receipt Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Restricted Delivery Fee (Endorsement Required)	
Total Postage & Fees	$

Postmark Here

Sent To Zia Pueblo

Street, Apt. No.; or PO Box No.

City, State, ZIP+4

PS Form 3800, June 2002 See Reverse for Instructions