

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA**

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**December 2011**

**Uintah County's Proposed Road Upgrades**

***Location:*** Salt Lake Meridian,  
T. 7 S., R. 20 E.,  
sec. 26, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
sec. 35, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ , W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

***Applicant/Address:*** *Uintah County Commission  
152 East 100 North  
Vernal, Utah 84078*

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Vernal Field Office  
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**Uintah County Road Right-of-Way to  
Upgrade County Roads #00807A, 00807B, 00807D  
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA**

**CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

**INTRODUCTION**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to analyze the Uintah County's proposal to obtain a right-of-way to upgrade the existing two-track, class D access roads (#00807A, 00807B, 00807D) which would provide access for Axia Energy's well locations on State Lands (Three Rivers #2-11-820 and 36-11-720) and also provide public access to the federal lands located north of the well location (Appendix A-Maps).

The EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of a proposed action or alternatives to the proposed action. The EA assists the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any "significant" impacts could result from the analyzed actions. "Significance" is defined by NEPA and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1 508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI). A FONSI statement is a document that briefly presents the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative would not result in "significant" environmental impacts (effects) beyond those already addressed in the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan (October 2008). If the decision maker determines that this project has "significant" impacts following the analysis in the EA, an EIS would be prepared for the project. If not, a Decision Record may be signed for the EA approving the alternative selected.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The BLM's need is to consider approval of the application. BLM's purpose is to avoid or reduces impacts on sensitive resource values associated with the project area and prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands.

**CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)**

The proposed action would be in conformance with the Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (October 2008). The RMP/ROD decision allows ROWs on public lands in accordance with the Realty Decisions. It has been determined that the proposed action and alternative(s) would not conflict with any decisions throughout the plan.

## **RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS**

This EA was prepared by the BLM in accordance with NEPA of 1969 and in compliance with all applicable regulations and laws passed subsequently, including the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations, U.S. Department of Interior requirements and guidelines listed in the BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1. This EA assesses the environmental effects of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.

The proposed action is also consistent with the Uintah County General Plan 2011-as amended. The Uintah County General Plan contains specific policy statements addressing public land, multiple-use, resource use and development, access, and wildlife management. In general, the plan indicates support for development proposals through its emphasis on multiple-use public land management practices and responsible use and optimum utilization of public land resources. The County, through the Plan, supports the development of natural resources as they become available, as new technology allows.

## CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the Proposed Action Alternative, as submitted by the Uintah County Commission, as well as, the No Action Alternative.

### PROPOSED ACTION

#### **Project Description**

Uintah County and Axia Energy propose to upgrade the existing County Class "D" roads #00807A, #00807B and #00807D across federal lands to access the proposed Three Rivers #2-11-820 and Three Rivers #36-11-720 wells on State of Utah mineral leases managed by the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). Both wells are located on Ouray National Wildlife Refuge (Wildlife Refuge) surface with an existing memorandum of understanding between the two parties in place and affidavit of surface use agreement. Access would begin at the existing Aurora Federal 26-33 and continue approximately 8,443 feet (1.6 miles) to the Wildlife Refuge boundary across entirely federal surface. The requested access right-of-way corridor width is 30-feet.

Axia is proposing to upgrade, utilize and maintain the Uintah County Class "D" roads #00807A, #00807B and #00807D. Upgrade activities associated with the proposed access road project are anticipated to take approximately one week to complete and would include blading and grading of the proposed right-of-way (ROW). The access corridor would be utilized on a continuous basis to transport personnel, equipment and supplies to and from the proposed Three Rivers #2-11-820 and Three Rivers #36-11-720 and future oil and gas operations in and around the existing Axia leasehold.

#### **Road Construction**

Gravel for road surfacing would be obtained from private or state lands in conformance with applicable regulations, and would be of sufficient size, type, and amount to allow all weather access and alleviate dust. The running surface width could vary from 18 to 24 feet, but would typically be 18-feet wide throughout the project area with safety, site distance, grade, topography, anticipated traffic flow, and visual resource management concerns being factors in the actual width determination.

Road construction would include clearing and grubbing of brush by a grader and placing gravel on surface of road, as needed. Construction of the access road corridor would require approximately one week. Road maintenance would be performed, as needed, to ensure safe travel and control fugitive dust.

Activity proposed in the immediate area of the access road would consist of routine inspections and maintenance of the associated access corridor and the ongoing oil and gas activities of Axia Energy and other operators with interests in the area.

### **Right of Way Location**

The route crosses federal lands within Uintah County, Utah as reflected on the attached map in Appendix A.

### **Road Specifications**

Construction equipment requirements: Equipment needed for the road improvement project would include graders, water trucks, and pick-up trucks to transport personnel. Vehicle traffic during the construction phase would include the transportation of road materials, heavy equipment, and vehicles used for transporting workers to the project area. Signs providing traffic control would be installed, if needed.

Operations and maintenance: Axia Energy would be responsible for all maintenance of the access road corridor and weed control. All maintenance activities would be confined to the proposed access corridor.

### **Proposed Best Management Practices**

Visual Resources: No Cuts and fills would be necessary.

Human Health and Safety: To protect and minimize the possibility of fires during the construction phase, all equipment would be equipped with fire extinguishers.

Air Quality: Members of the road construction crew would car pool to and from surrounding cities and towns to minimize vehicle-related emissions. Axia Energy would control fugitive dust evolving from the access corridor during the period of construction.

Reclamation: No reclamation activities are proposed since these roads are Uintah County Class "D" roads and are a part of the Uintah County Transportation System Map.

Operations and Maintenance: Axia Energy would be responsible for all maintenance activities associated with the road corridor. All maintenance activities would be confined to the existing disturbed width/requested right-of-way. No new or expanded access would be needed for operation and maintenance.

### **NO ACTION**

Under this action, BLM would not approve the ROW grant. Uintah County and Axia Energy would not be allowed to upgrade this road on federal land. The No Action Alternative would deny the application to improve the road as proposed.

## CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING

The Interdisciplinary Team Checklist provides a brief description of the affected environment. The affected environment and environmental consequences of the alternatives were considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in Appendix B. The analysis indicates that resources of concern are either not present in the project area, or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis. The analysis and rationale for this conclusion is provided in Appendix B. The below information describes the current state of the potentially affected resources in the project area.

### FISH AND WILDLIFE, EXCLUDING USFWS DESIGNATED SPECIES

#### **Migratory Birds**

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was implemented for the protection of migratory birds. Unless permitted by regulations, the MBTA makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, including the feathers or other parts, nests, eggs, or migratory bird products. In addition to the MBTA, Executive Order 13186 sets forth the responsibilities of Federal agencies to further implement the provisions of the MBTA by integrating bird conservation principles and practices into agency activities and by ensuring that Federal actions evaluate the effects of actions and agency plans on migratory birds.

Those migratory bird species that are BLM sensitive or are otherwise of special interest that may occupy the proposed project area are addressed below. This section identifies all other migratory birds that may inhabit the project area, including those species classified as High-Priority birds by Utah Partners in Flight (Parrish et al 2002). High-Priority species are denoted by an asterisk (\*).

#### *Sagebrush -Steppe*

Migratory bird species commonly associated with the sagebrush-steppe community within the project area include: the mountain bluebird\*, grasshopper sparrow\*, Brewer's sparrow\*, sage sparrow\*, sage thrasher\*, green-tailed towhee\*, gray vireo\*, horned lark, juniper titmouse\*, gray flycatcher\*, loggerhead shrike, western kingbird, broad-tailed hummingbird\*, northern mockingbird, vesper sparrow, and western meadowlark (Parrish et al 2002).

### VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS

Vegetation in the vicinity of the proposed project consists of Indian ricegrass and fourwing saltbush dominated plant communities. Common native plants in the vicinity of the proposed project include: fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), ephedra (*Ephedra* sp.), winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), needle and thread grass (*Hesperostipa comata*), galleta grass (*Pleuraphis jamesii*), dropseed (*Sporobolus* sp.), milkvetch (*Astragalus* sp.), and globemallow (*Sphaeralcea* sp.).

Invasive non-native plants present in the vicinity of the proposed project include cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*), halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola* sp.),

### **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, PROPOSED, OR CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES**

#### **Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus wetlandicus*)**

Uinta Basin hookless cactus is perennial and a member of the cactus family. It is federally listed as threatened and is endemic to the Uinta Basin. It consists of a perennial succulent shoot, solitary or rarely branching, globose, ovoid or cylindrical. Individuals are usually 3 to 9 centimeters in diameter and 4 to 12 centimeters tall. Each spine cluster, areoles, usually consists of one large (15 to 29 millimeters) central spine, three to four lateral central spines and six to ten radial spines. From late April to May, Uinta Basin hookless cactus produces 2.5 to 5-centimeter high pink to violet flowers.

The ecological amplitude of Uinta Basin hookless cactus is wide, being found from clay badlands up to the pinyon-juniper habitat. The preferred habitat occurs on river benches, valley slopes, and rolling hills consisting of xeric, fine textured, clay soils, derived from the Duchesne River, Green River, Mancos, and Uinta formations, overlain with a pavement of large, smooth, rounded cobble. The typical plant community in Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitat is the salt desert shrub community.

A portion of the proposed project is located within an area that the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) identified as being potential habitat Uinta Basin hookless cactus. Rana Environmental Consulting, Inc. surveyed the proposed project area to a distance of 300 feet from the edge of the proposed surface disturbance excluding the adjacent cultivated lands in section 26. During this survey no cactus individuals were identified.

## **CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

### **DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS**

This chapter describes the direct and indirect impacts that would be expected to occur upon the implementation of each of the considered alternatives. It also discloses the expected cumulative impacts, which are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed action to those resources described in the affected environment section 3 above.

### **FISH AND WILDLIFE, EXCLUDING USFWS DESIGNATED SPECIES**

#### **Migratory Birds**

The proposed action would result in a loss of habitat including fragmentation for migratory birds. Direct impacts to nesting and breeding migratory may occur, depending upon the time of construction and location(s). If construction occurs in the spring, during the nesting season, impacts would be greater than if ground disturbing activities occurred between late summer and late winter. Impacts to birds during the spring could include nest abandonment, reproductive failure, displacement, and destruction of nests. Construction would likely have a greater impact on Utah Partners in Flight high-priority migratory bird species that may be utilizing the project area due to their declining populations, habitat requirements dependence in restricted or vulnerable habitats and limited distribution.

The impacts from amount of new disturbance would be minimal along the existing two-track road. Traffic along the road would increase for the construction and drilling phase of the project, being about 6-7 weeks. It is also anticipated that the construct and drilling phase will be completed during the winter months which will greatly reduce any impacts.

### **VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS**

The proposed project would result in the creation of up to 5.7 acres of surface disturbance on BLM managed lands and additional associated disturbance on lands leased by the USFWS from SITLA. The surface disturbance associated with the proposed project will provide suitable habitat for the continued spread of non-native plant species already found in the vicinity of the proposed project and the introduction of additional non-native plants.

#### *Mitigation*

To minimize the potential for invasive plant establishment and spread the following mitigation measures from the Vernal Surface Disturbance Weed Policy will be adhered to, namely:

- All vehicles and equipment shall be cleaned either through power-washing or other approved methods prior to entering the project area when entering from outside the Uinta Basin
- Weeds shall be controlled within the disturbance areas.
- All disturbance areas shall be monitored for noxious weeds annually, for a minimum of three growing seasons following completion of the project.

## **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, PROPOSED, OR CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES**

### **Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus wetlandicus*)**

As no individuals were identified within 300 feet of the proposed surface disturbance, there would be no physical damage to Uinta Basin hookless cactus individuals.

Possible dispersed direct and indirect negative impacts which may result from implementation of the Proposed Action include: increased competition for space, light, and nutrients with invasive and noxious weed species introduced and spread due to the Proposed Action; accidental spray or drift of herbicides used during invasive plant control; and altered photosynthesis, respiration, and transpiration due to increased fugitive dust resulting from the surface disturbance and project related traffic.

Due to these indirect negative impacts the Proposed Action warrants a “*May Affect, Is Not Likely To Adversely Affect*” determination for the cactus and Uinta Basin hookless cactus.

The BLM has initiated informal section 7 consultation with the USFWS (see Appendix C) and is awaiting concurrence with the above determination. In accordance with the consultation process, BLM would apply any additional conservation measures required by the USFWS prior to the approval of the proposed action.

*Discovery Stipulation:* Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the USFWS will be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for Pariette cactus or Uinta Basin hookless cactus is anticipated as a result of project activities.

## **NO ACTION**

## **FISH AND WILDLIFE, EXCLUDING USFWS DESIGNATED SPECIES**

### **Migratory Birds**

Under the no action alternative, there would be no direct disturbance and mortality, indirect or cumulative effects to threatened, endangered, and proposed, candidate, or sensitive wildlife species/habitat from surface disturbing activities associated with the construction of the proposed action.

## **VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS**

Under the no action alternative, there would be no direct disturbance or indirect effects to vegetation from surface disturbing activities associated with the proposed project.

## **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, PROPOSED, OR CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES**

### **Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus wetlandicus*)**

Under the no action alternative, there would be no direct disturbance or indirect effects to threatened or endangered plant species from surface disturbing activities associated with the proposed project.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Cumulative impacts are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.

## **GENERAL FISH AND WILDLIFE**

### **Migratory Birds**

Impacts to migratory birds/habitat would continue by construction activities. Habitat fragmentation and destruction across the landscape would increase. Harassment to wildlife would increase by noise and activities associated with construction.

## **VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS**

The Cumulative Impact Analysis Area (CIAA) for invasive plants/noxious weeds, soils, and vegetation is the 18,515-acre Pelican Lake sub-watershed. Within the CIAA 7,228 acres have been converted to development and agricultural cover types (39.1% of the CIAA). Within the CIAA, there is one active approved field development NEPA document, QEP Energy Company's Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region EIS (260 of the 98,785 acre project area is the CIAA, with most of the remainder of the project on the east side of the Green River). In total approximately 4,561 acres of surface disturbance was authorized across the analysis area of this document. If the disturbance is relatively uniform throughout these project areas, then approximately 12.2 acres of surface disturbance has occurred or will occur within the CIAA (0.06% of the CIAA). Within the CIAA there also are numerous oil and natural gas wells that do not tie to either of these NEPA documents that are not located on lands converted to agriculture or development. As of 10/26/2011, there are three abandoned oil and gas locations outside of the scope of the field development documents. Using the assumption of 5.0 acres of disturbance per well (including associated roads and pipelines), as per the Vernal Resource Management Plan, 15 acres of the CIAA were disturbed some point in the past and are in various stages of reclamation (0.08% of the CIAA). There are currently three well pads that serve as platforms for actively producing wells not permitted under these documents. Using the above assumption, this has resulted in 15 acres of surface disturbance (0.08% of the CIAA). Finally, two wells are currently proposed that do not tie to these documents that will result in 10 acres of surface disturbance (0.05% of the CIAA). Currently there are no proposed field developments within the CIAA. Thus, in total 52.2 acres (0.3% of the CIAA) have been or will be disturbed within the CIAA due to energy development activities. Within the CIAA, there are approximately 73.5 miles of roads. The Proposed Action on BLM would add 5.8 acres of surface disturbance. The No Action alternative would not result in an additional accumulation of impacts.

## THREATENED, ENDANGERED, OR CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES

### *Uinta Basin hookless cactus (Sclerocactus wetlandicus)*

The area delineated by the USFWS as potential habitat for Uinta Basin hookless cactus covers approximately 517,631 acres on BLM, Ute tribal, state of Utah, and privately held lands. Within the CIAA, there are 11 active approved field development NEPA documents, Newfield Production Company's Castle Peak and Eightmile Flat Oil and Gas Expansion EIS, EOG Resources, Inc. North Chapita Natural Gas Well Development Project EA, Enduring Resources, LLC's West Bonanza Area Natural Gas Well Development Project EA, Gasco Production Company's Proposed Natural Gas Well Drilling Project Riverbend Unit EA, Kerr-McGee Oil & Gas Onshore LP's Bonanza Area EA, Petro-Canada Resources Rye Patch EA, Gasco Production Company's Wilkin Ridge Unit EA, Enduring Resources, LLC's Saddletree Draw Leasing and Rock House Development Proposal EA, QEP Energy Company's Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region EIS, EOG Resources, Inc. Chapita Wells-Stagecoach EIS, and Bill Barrett Corporation's West Tavaputs Plateau Natural Gas Full Field Development Plan EIS. In total approximately 13,419 acres of surface disturbance was authorized across the analysis areas of these documents. If the disturbance is relatively uniform throughout these project areas, then approximately 4,979 acres of surface disturbance has occurred or will occur within the CIAA (1.0% of the CIAA). Within the CIAA there also are numerous oil and natural gas wells that do not tie to either of these NEPA documents. As of 3/28/2011, there are 527 abandoned oil and gas locations outside of the scope of the field development documents. Using the assumption of 5.0 acres of disturbance per well (including associated roads and pipelines), as per the Vernal Resource Management Plan, 2,635 acres of the CIAA were disturbed some point in the past and are in various stages of reclamation (0.5% of the CIAA). There are currently 3,331 well pads that serve as platforms for actively producing wells not permitted under these documents. Using the above assumption, this has resulted in 16,655 acres of surface disturbance (3.2% of the CIAA). Finally, 761 wells are currently proposed that do not tie to these documents that will result in 3,805 acres of surface disturbance (0.7% of the CIAA). Currently proposed field developments, if all approved as proposed (either the estimated disturbance presented in the proposal or an estimate of 5-acres of disturbance per well if an estimate is not yet available) would result in 40,486 acres of surface disturbance throughout the entirety of the project areas. If it assumed that disturbance would be relatively uniform throughout, then there will be about 22,134 acres of disturbance with the CIAA due the projects (4.3% of the CIAA). Thus, in total 50,208 acres (9.7% of the CIAA) have been or will be disturbed within the CIAA due to energy development activities. Within the CIAA, there are approximately 1,828 miles of roads. The Proposed Action on BLM would add 5.8 acres of surface disturbance. The No Action alternative would not result in an additional accumulation of impacts.

Due to inclusions of areas of unsuitable habitat within the potential habitat area, the total acreage of suitable habitat is less than 517,631 acres. However, a complete survey of suitable habitat has not been performed and thus the amount of suitable habitat has not been quantified. Impacts to the species from past, current, and reasonably foreseeable actions may be greater or smaller than those described for the total area depending upon the exact distribution of actions relative to suitable habitat.

## CHAPTER 5 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

The proposed action was posted to the public Environmental Notification Bulletin Board with its assigned NEPA number on September 20, 2011. To date, no questions or comments have been received. A public comment period was offered starting December 5, 2011 and ending on December 20, 2011. No comments were received regarding this proposal.

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings and Conclusions
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Information on Consultation, under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1531).	A request for concurrence was sent to USFWS on November 28, 2011.  See Appendix C for concurrence letter.

### LIST OF PREPARERS

See Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist (Appendix B).

### LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THIS EA:

AO	Authorized Officer
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
DR	Decision Record
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ENBB	Environmental Notification Bulletin Board
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
ID	Interdisciplinary
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	Right-of-Way

### REFERENCES

Parrish, J.R., F.P. Howe and R.E. Norvell. 2002. Utah Partners in Flight Avian Conservation Strategy Version 2.0. Utah Partners in Flight Program, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, 1594 West North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84116. UDWR Publication Number 02-27. i – xiv + 302 pp.

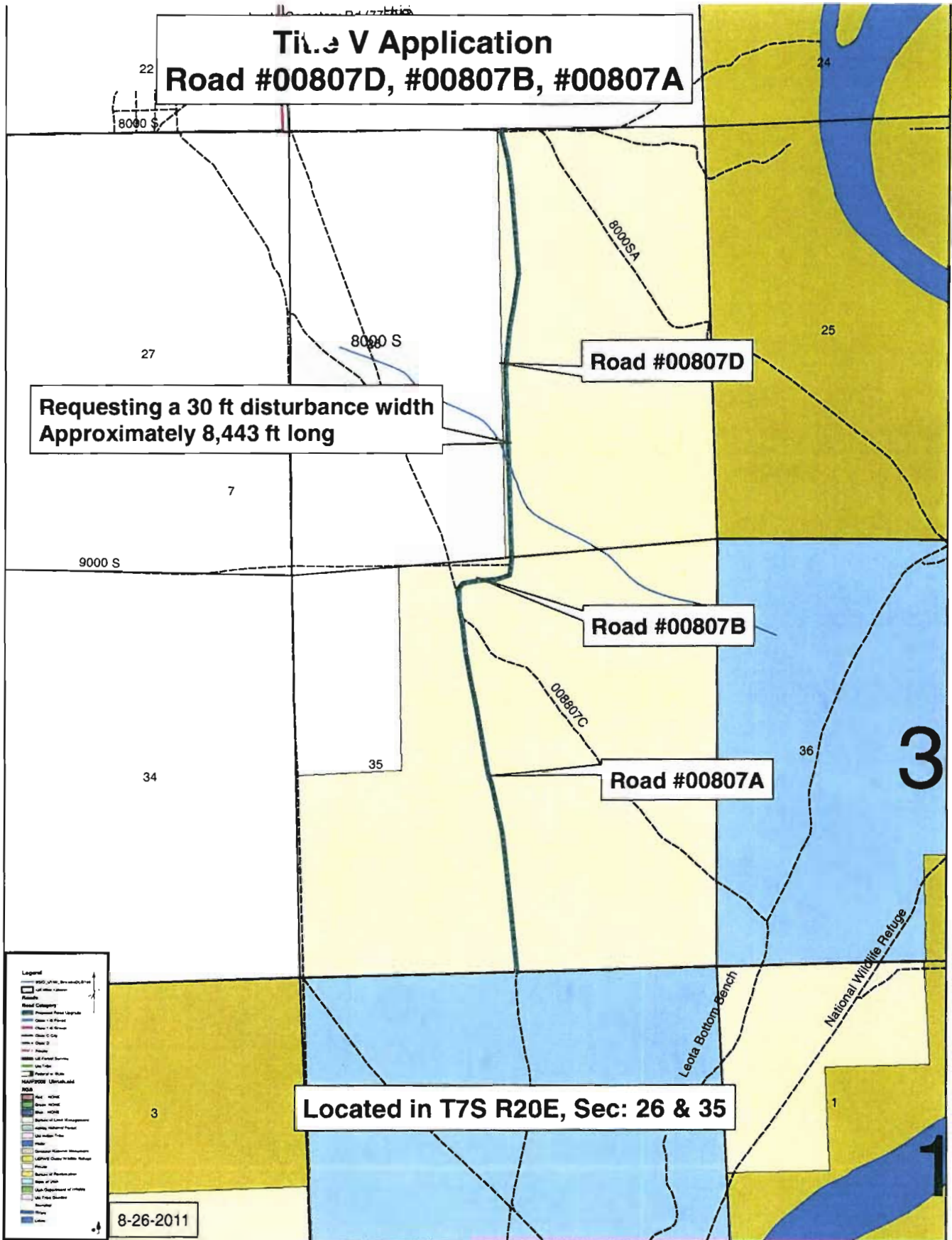
### APPENDICES

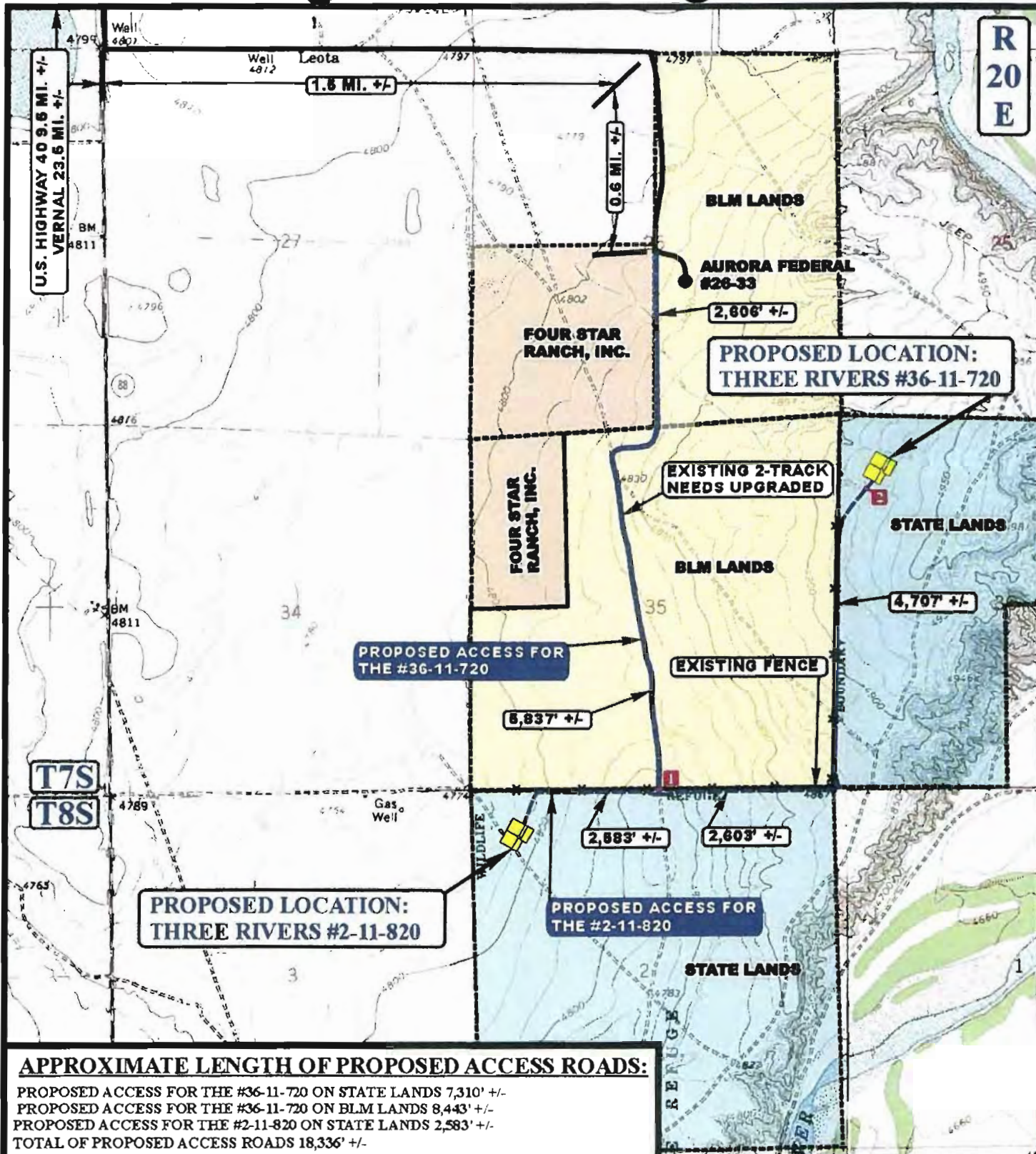
APPENDIX A: Maps

APPENDIX B: Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist

APPENDIX C: USFWS Section 7 Consultation Letters

APPENDIX A: Maps





**APPROXIMATE LENGTH OF PROPOSED ACCESS ROADS:**

- PROPOSED ACCESS FOR THE #36-11-720 ON STATE LANDS 7,310' +/-
- PROPOSED ACCESS FOR THE #36-11-720 ON BLM LANDS 8,443' +/-
- PROPOSED ACCESS FOR THE #2-11-820 ON STATE LANDS 2,583' +/-
- TOTAL OF PROPOSED ACCESS ROADS 18,336' +/-

**LEGEND:**

- EXISTING ROAD
- PROPOSED ACCESS ROAD
- EXISTING 2-TRACK NEEDS UPGRADED
- FEE LANDS
- BLM LANDS
- STATE LANDS
- INSTALL GATE
- LOW WATER CROSSING

**AXIA ENERGY**

**THREE RIVERS #2-11-820 & #36-11-720  
SECTION 2, T8S, R20E, S.L.B.&M. &  
SECTION 36, T11S, R20E S.L.B.&M.**

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**ACCESS ROAD MAP**  
08 MONTH 19 DAY 11 YEAR  
SCALE: 1" = 2000' DRAWN BY: C.I. REVISED: 00-00-00 **1** TOPO

**APPENDIX B:  
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST**

**Project Title:** *Uintah County Road Right-of-Way to Upgrade County Roads #00807A, 00807B, 00807D*

**NEPA Log Number:** *BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA*

**File/Serial Number:** *UTU-69125-84*

**Project Leader:** *Katie Nash*

**DETERMINATION OF STAFF: (Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)**

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions  
 NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required  
 PI = present with potential for significant impact analyzed in detail in the EA; or identified in a DNA as requiring further analysis  
 NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section C of the DNA form.

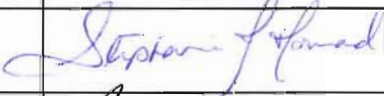

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Air Quality	Dust emissions currently occur from vehicles utilizing the subject roads. Those air quality impacts are encompassed within the Uinta Basin Air Quality Study (UBAQS) that was conducted in 2009. Overall, air quality in the Basin was modeled as being within attainment of the NAAQS. The 2012 horizon showed isolated modeled exceedances of the ozone NAAQS, which are thought to be residual effects from utilizing Wasatch Front monitors (which are 120 miles away in a non-attainment area) to calibrate the model. An additional model was run for the Greater Natural Buttes project. The results of that model correspond with the results of the UBAQS model. There are no regulatory monitoring data for the project area to verify and calibrate the results of either model, although monitoring is ongoing beginning in July 2009. Preliminary monitoring results are showing exceedances of the ozone NAAQS in the Uinta Basin during the winter when snow cover is present. However, ozone formation from its component parts (NOx and VOCs) is a non-linear, photo-reactive process, and no models exist to predict the formulation of winter-time ozone. It is anticipated that the incremental change from this project's alternatives would be so small as to be undetectable by both models and monitors.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	The project area does not fall within the boundaries of an ACEC as shown in the Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD and GIS database.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	BLM Natural Areas	The project area does not fall within the boundaries of a BLM Natural Area as shown in the Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD and GIS database.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	Cultural Resources	A class III cultural resource inventory located no cultural resources within the project's area of potential effects (APE).	Cameron Cox	11/9/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Environmental Justice	No minority or economically disadvantaged communities or populations would be disproportionately adversely affected by the proposed action or alternatives.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NI	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	No prime or unique farmlands, as identified by the NRCS, based on soil survey data for the county are located in the project area.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFWS Designated Species	BLM does not have designated crucial big game habitat within the surrounding areas.	Daniel Emmett	11/07/2011
NP	Floodplains	The project does not fall within any known floodplains as shown in the Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD and GIS database.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NI	Fuels/Fire Management	No conflicts with BLM fuels treatments are present, as per the Vernal GIS data base. The mitigation guidelines for invasive plants and noxious weed spread should limit the risk of hazardous fuels establishment.	Blaine Tarbell	11/8/11
NI	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production	No geology or mineral resources would be adversely impacted by this project.	Elizabeth Gamber	10/28/2011
NI	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	No standards have been set by EPA or other regulatory agencies for greenhouse gases. In addition, the assessment of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change is still in its earliest stages of formulation. Global scientific models are inconsistent, and regional or local scientific models are lacking so that it is not technically feasible to determine the net impacts to climate due to greenhouse gas emissions. It is anticipated that greenhouse gas emissions associated with this action and its alternative(s) would be negligible.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NI	Hydrologic Conditions (stormwater)	The development of the proposed access road would alter surface water flow characteristics due to the change in topographic features and compaction of the soils at the developed area. However this is an upland area with similar roads in the near vicinity which has not demonstrated concerns to the change in hydrologic conditions. The proposed access is for energy development and is exempt from Section 402 (stormwater) of the Clean Water Act as approved in the 2005 Energy Act.	Stan Olmstead	11/10/11
PI	Invasive Plants/Noxious Weeds (EO 13112)	The proposed project will provide suitable habitat for the establishment or spread of existing invasive plants in the vicinity of the proposed project	Aaron Roe	10/18/11
NI	Lands / Access	No existing land uses would be changed or modified by the implementation of the proposed action; therefore, there would be no adverse effect.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NI	Livestock Grazing	This project is unlikely to affect livestock grazing in the Twelve Mile Allotment. The new disturbance area would be small and would remove less than one AUM of forage from the allotment.	Jannice Cutler	10/26/2011
PI	Migratory Birds	Migratory birds (PIF species, passerines, etc.) are present.	Daniel Emmett	11/07/2011
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	No Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) are identified within the proposed project area. Project will not hinder access to or affect Native American religious sites.	Cameron Cox	11/9/2011
NP	Paleontology	No fossils were found. However, if any excavation is necessary, it is recommended that a permitted paleontologist be present during excavation (Three Rivers 2-11-820 report, 09/17/2011, Uintah Paleo, Bilbey) & (Three Rivers 36-11-720 report, 09/17/2011, Uintah Paleo, Bilbey).	Betty Gamber	10/28/2011
NI	Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines	In 2005 Rangeland Health Assessments were conducted on the Twelve Mile Allotment. It was determined that the allotment meets the Utah Standards for Rangeland Health. The new	Jannice Cutler	10/26/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		disturbance from this project would be small and occur along side of an existing road so it is unlikely it will affect the rangeland health of the Twelve Mile Allotment.		
NI	Recreation	No impact to recreation as the proposed project utilizes and upgrades and existing road in the Vernal Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). Pelican lake is the nearest recreation asset; however, based on linear distance from the proposed project to the lands on the south/ south west side of pelican lake, the road will not be noticeable to the casual recreator.	Jason West	11/16/2011
NP	Socio-Economics	No impact to the social or economic status of the county or nearby communities would occur from this project due to its small size in relation to ongoing development throughout the Basin.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NI	Soils	There is expected to be a small increase in soil erosion and sedimentation during the construction phase of the road upgrading. Once the road is upgraded and graveled then erosion and sedimentation rates are expected to return to the rates that were occurring when the road was a two track.	Steve Strong	10/28/2011
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	GIS layers and field data was reviewed and found no federally listed species and / or habitat within the proposed project area. In addition, water depletion is not anticipated to occur.	Daniel Emmett	11/07/2011
PI	Threatened, Endangered, Proposed or Candidate Plant Species	The proposed project is located within the 2011 potential habitat polygon for Uinta Basin hookless cactus.	Aaron Roe	10/18/11
SSP: NI	Vegetation. (excluding USFWS designated species)	SSP: As per BLM GIS layers and a site visit there are no UT BLM sensitive plants in the vicinity of the proposed project	SSP: Aaron Roe	10/18/11
Veg: PI		Veg: Up to 5 acres of native and non-native vegetation on BLM managed lands will be disturbed by the proposed project	Veg: Aaron Roe	10/18/11
NI	Visual Resources	Class III VRM area. VRM worksheet not required as per Recreation Planner Determination. Form, line texture and color will be mimicked for the existing road, only widened, with loss of minimal vegetation. Class III objectives are to, "To partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape." The existing two track road has a specific form and lines and associated colors. The upgrade of the road will attract the attention of the casual observer, but will not dominate the view of the casual observer as the proposal is in an open, panoramic landscape with long horizon views. Key Observation Points (KOPs) include recreation on pelican lake, and State Hwy 88 adjacent to the proposed project. From the Key observation point, short term impacts can be anticipated during construction due to dust, and heavy equipment use. Upon upgrade completion, the casual observer would notice the new wider structure, but would not have their attention drawn too it. St. Hwy 88 has a speed limit of 55 mpg, and the road based on time of year and vegetation would be in view less than one minute during travel along 88, and depending where you were on pelican lake, the road would be inferior to the lake surface and hidden by contours and/or vegetation by the surrounding private alfalfa fields, and marshlands.	Jason West	11/16/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NP	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	No chemicals subject to reporting under SARA Title III in amounts greater than 10,000 pounds would be used, produced, stored, transported, or disposed of annually in association with the project. Trash and other waste materials would be cleaned up and removed immediately after completion of operations.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
Surface: NI  Ground: NI	Water Resources/Quality (surface/ground)	Surface: The development of the proposed access road and the indirect development of energy facilities on non-federal land associated with the road would cause a change in surface water quality. Surface water flows would be altered and due to the loss of vegetation and compacted soils erosion would be different than the natural state and potential contamination could occur from industrial chemicals or vehicle fluids. However the Vernal Field Office is a multiple use land management agency and the proposed development is consistent with other industrial activities of the administered lands. These activities have not demonstrated a concern to water quality.  Ground: Surface disturbances will not adversely affect groundwater.	Surface: Stan Olmstead  G: Betty Gamber	Surface: 11/10/11  Ground: 10/28/2011
NP	Waters of the U.S.	Waters of the U.S. are not present as required by the U.S. Corp of Engineers.	Stan Olmstead	11/15/11
NP	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No riparian sites are inventoried at or in the vicinity of the project area. Based on personal knowledge of the area and confirmed by Field Office data from GIS information.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	The proposed project area is not within an identified Wild and Scenic Rivers area per the Vernal Field Office GIS Data Base.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	Wild Horses and Burros	The proposed project area is not within an identified Wild Horses and Burros area per the Vernal Field Office GIS Data Base.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	Wilderness/WSA/LWCs	The proposed project area is not within an identified Wilderness, WSA, or within a Land with Wilderness Characteristics unit per the Vernal Field Office GIS Data Base.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011
NP	Woodland/Forestry	None present per field review and review of GIS and aerial photos.	Katie Nash	09/20/2011

**FINAL REVIEW:**

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
NEPA / Environmental Coordinator		12-21-11	
Authorized Officer		12-21-11	

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Finding of No Significant Impact  
Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA**

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**December 2011**

**Uintah County Road Right-of-Way to  
Upgrade County Roads #00807A, 00807B, 00807D**

***Location:*** Salt Lake Meridian,  
T. 7 S., R. 20 E.,  
sec. 26, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
sec. 35, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ , W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

***Applicant/Address:*** *Uintah County Commission*  
*152 East 100 North*  
*Vernal, Utah 84078*

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Vernal Field Office  
170 South 500 East  
Vernal, Utah 84078  
Phone: (435) 781-4400  
Fax: (435) 781-3420

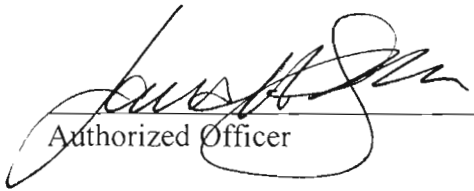


**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Environmental Assessment**

*Uintah County Road Right-of-Way to  
Upgrade County Roads #00807A, 00807B, 00807D  
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA*

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that Uintah County Commission's road right-of-way, will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Officer

*12.21.11*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

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Decision Record  
Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA

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December 2011

Uintah County Road Right-of-Way to  
Upgrade County Roads #00807A, 00807B, 00807D

*Location:* Salt Lake Meridian,  
T. 7 S., R. 20 E.,  
sec. 26, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
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*Applicant/Address:* Uintah County Commission  
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Vernal, Utah 84078

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
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## DECISION RECORD

### Environmental Assessment

#### *Uintah County Road Right-of-Way to Upgrade County Roads #00807A, 00807B, 00807D DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA*

It is my decision to authorize a ROW for UTU-69125-84 as modified by the attached terms, conditions and stipulations. A full description of the Selected Alternative is located in Chapter 2 – Proposed Action, EA No. DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0460-EA.

**Authorities:** The authority for this decision is contained in Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976, as amended through September 1999, (90 Stat. 2776; 43 U.S.C. 1761).

**Compliance and Monitoring:** *Compliance and monitoring is included with the Terms / Conditions / Stipulations section of the Decision.*

#### **Terms / Conditions / Stipulations:**

- Uinta Basin hookless cactus
  - *Discovery Stipulation:* Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the USFWS will be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for Parietate cactus or Uinta Basin hookless cactus is anticipated as a result of project activities.
- Weeds
  - To minimize the risk of invasive plant establishment and spread due to the proposed action the following mitigation measures will be followed in addition to those included within the proposed action:
  - All vehicles and equipment shall be cleaned either through power-washing or other approved methods prior to entering the project area when entering from outside the Uinta Basin
  - Certified noxious weed free seed and mulch shall be used in all reclamation.
  - Weeds shall be controlled within the disturbance areas.
  - All disturbance areas shall be monitored for noxious weeds annually, for a minimum of three growing seasons following completion of the project

#### **PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:**

The proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with one or more of the following BLM Land Use Plans and the associated decision(s):

Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (October 31, 2008). The RMP/ROD decision allows for processing applications, permits, operating plans, mineral exchanges, leases on public lands in accordance with policy and guidance and allows for management of public lands to support goals

and objectives of other resources programs, respond to public requests for land use authorizations, and acquire administrative and public access where necessary (RMP/ROD p. 86). It has been determined that the proposed action and alternative(s) will not conflict with other decisions throughout the plan.

The proposed action is also consistent with the Uintah County General Plan, adopted October 2007. The Uintah County General Plan contains specific policy statements addressing public land, multiple-use, resource use and development, access, and wildlife management. In general, the plan indicates support for development proposals through its emphasis on multiple-use public land management practices and responsible use and optimum utilization of public land resources. The County, through the Plan, supports the development of natural resources as they become available, as new technology allows.

### **Alternatives Considered:**

*No Action Alternative.* Under this action, BLM would not approve the ROW grant. Uintah County would not be allowed to upgrade the road for Axia Energy on federal land. The No Action Alternative would deny the application to improve the road as proposed. This alternative was not selected because it does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

### **Rationale for Decision:**

The Selected Alternative described in this document is in conformance with the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (BLM 2008). The ROD allows for the issuance of rights-of-way. The Selected Alternative will not conflict with other decisions throughout the plan.

The proposed project is consistent with the *Uintah County General Plan 2011-as amended*, that encompasses the location of the proposed ROW's. In general, the plan indicates support for development proposals such as the Selected Alternative through the plan's emphasis of multiple-use public land management practices, responsible use, and optimum utilization.

Onsite visits were conducted by Vernal Field Office Personnel. The onsite inspection reports do not indicate that any other locations be proposed for analysis. In addition, all proposed mitigation has been carried forward into the Decision.

### **Protest/Appeal Language:**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and the enclosed Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office (at the above address) within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

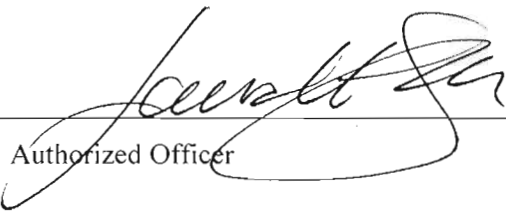
If you wish to file a petition (request) pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 2801.10 or 43 CFR 2881.10 for a stay (suspension) of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A

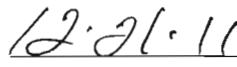
petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

  
Authorized Officer

  
Date