

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Royal Gorge Field Office  
3170 E. Main Street  
Canon City, CO 81212**

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

NUMBER: CO-200-2008-0003 CE

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: Rosita Hills Salvage and Restoration Thinning

PLANNING UNIT: Other Lands Subregion #10

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T.22 S., R. 71 W., Sections 18 and 19.

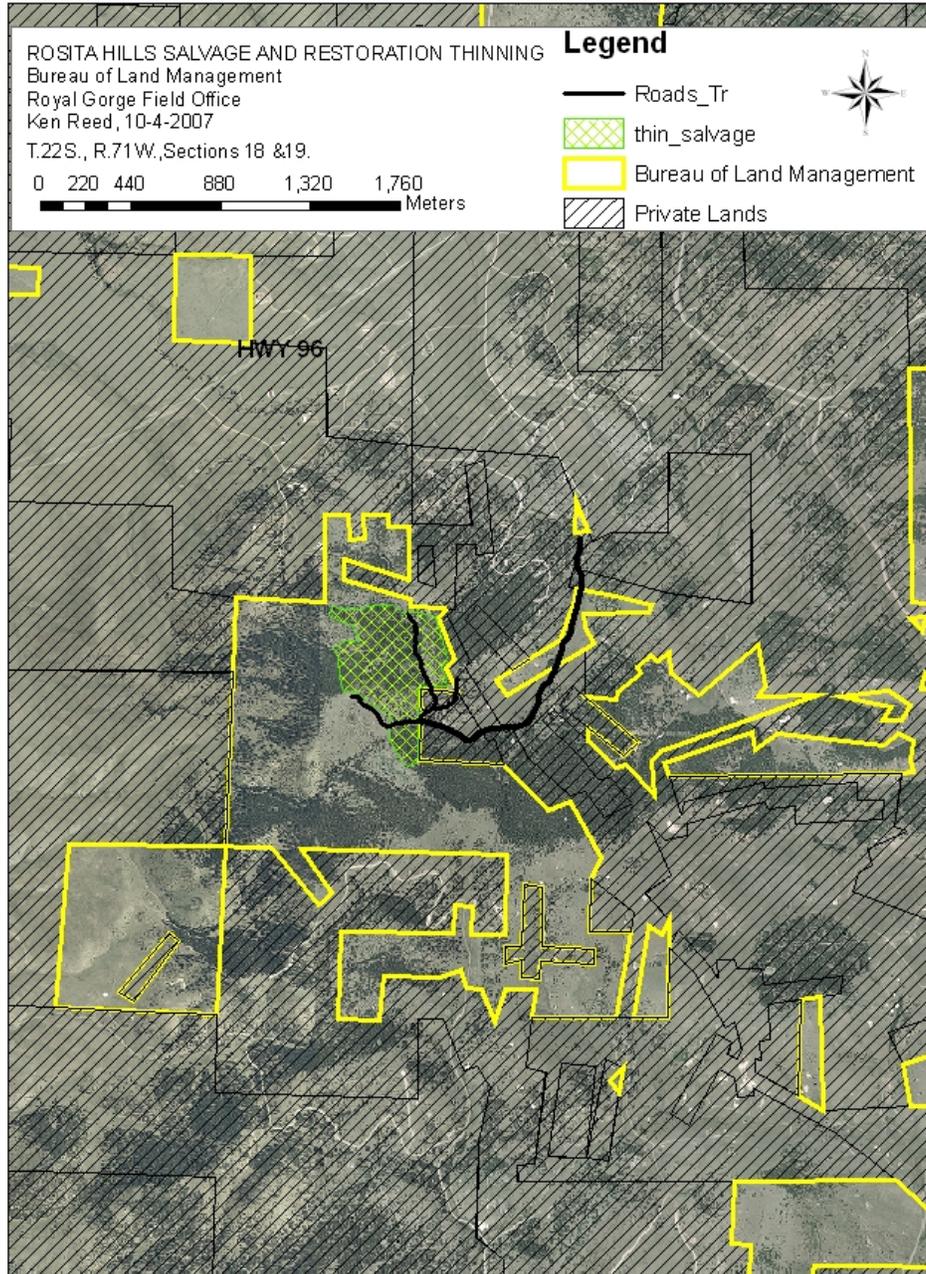
APPLICANT: BLM

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION The project area is 61 acres and located approximately 4 miles east of Silver Cliff, Colorado. There are subdivisions adjacent to the project with scattered homes throughout the area. The project lies approximately 2 miles west of the Tyndall Gulch wildfire which burned 541 acres and threatened private structures. The forest in the project is characterized as second growth mixed conifer with small stands of aspen. The conifer species are mainly Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. Trees were harvested from the area during the settlement of the nearby towns at the time minerals were discovered.

The treatment would involve salvaging the existing dead trees and trees currently under bark beetle attack. Thinning from below of green trees would be done where needed to improve the vigor of the reserve trees. Trees infected with dwarf mistletoe would be removed. Dwarf mistletoe is a parasitic plant that takes moisture and nutrients from the tree causing premature death. The large healthy trees would be reserved while maintaining a representation of all species and sizes. Conifers encroaching into the existing pockets of aspen would be removed to reduce competition. The work would be completed with chainsaws, skidders or tractors, small log trucks or trailers on slopes less than 35%. There has been a fair amount of bark beetle activity in this area. Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) killed many of the larger ponderosa pine approximately 3 to 5 years ago. The population is currently considered endemic, killing only a few trees each year. Douglas-fir beetle is also endemic, current killing small pockets of the larger Douglas-fir trees. Current forest densities are ideal for a bark beetle epidemic or catastrophic wildfire.

The benefits to the proposed treatment are reducing future tree mortality by removing trees under bark beetle attack or infected by dwarf mistletoe; improving forest health by reducing tree densities; and fuels reduction by removing heavy fuel which increases wildfire severity. The

BLM has legal access to the area utilizing the existing county road which travels to the tower located on top of Rosita Hill.



Text

No new roads would be created by the project, any temporary roads created to remove forest products will be closed and monitored to avoid creating new permanent roads. Slash would be piled in 10 foot diameter piles for burning under ideal conditions.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/96

Decision Number: 10-1, 10-12, 10-13.

Decision Language: Vegetation management will be as follows: vegetation will be managed to accomplish other BLM initiatives i.e., riparian, wildlife, etc.; management of forest lands will be for enhancement of other values. Productive forested lands will be managed for sustained yield. A portion of the forested lands will be available for intensive management.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: Action number C-7 is listed in Federal Register: Volume 72, Number 156 -August 14, 2007, pages 45503-45542. The full title is -- Notice of Final Action To Adopt Revisions to the Bureau of Land Management's Procedures for Managing the NEPA Process, Chapter 11 of the Department of the Interior's Manual Part 516. None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Exclusion	YES	NO
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.	_____	_____ <u>X</u> _____
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	_____	_____ <u>X</u> _____
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.	_____	_____ <u>X</u> _____
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	_____	_____ <u>X</u> _____
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	_____	_____ <u>X</u> _____
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	_____	_____ <u>X</u> _____
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.	_____	_____ <u>X</u> _____

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.  | _____ <u>X</u> |
| 9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.  | _____ <u>X</u> |
| 10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.   | _____ <u>X</u> |
| 11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.  | _____ <u>X</u> |
| 12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. | _____ <u>X</u> |

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Review Completed</u>
Martin Weimer	Archaeologist	11/1/08
Erik Brekke	Wildlife Biologist	10/9/2007
Tom Grette	Range	10/26/07
John Smeins	Fuels/Hydrology	10/12/07

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: Seven isolated finds were located during the cultural resource inventory that was conducted in the project area [see report CR-RG-08-69 (P)]. Therefore the proposed project will have no impact on any historic properties (those eligible to the NRHP).

Native American Religious Concerns: No possible traditional cultural properties were located during the cultural resources inventory (see above). There is no other known evidence that suggests the project area holds special significance for Native Americans.

Threatened and Endangered Species: There are no T&E species or their habitat for the project area therefore there will be no impacts.

COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional): RGFO Forestry staff will oversee compliance.

MITIGATION: 1) All wildlife snags with existing cavities will be left for snag dependent species. There are currently numerous snags outside of the treatment area to meet the need of the cavity nesters.

2) Avoid soil disturbance during periods of heavy rain/snow or when soils are wet. Skidding and yarding operations within the harvest units shall be restricted to minimize the potential for soil compaction

- 3) Use existing roads unless other options will produce less long-term sediment.
- 4) Maintain and protect all existing range improvements (fence) that exist within the treatment area. Repair fences that are damaged by this activity.
- 5) Inventory, treat, and monitor noxious weed infestations throughout the treatment area.

NAME OF PREPARER: Ken Reed

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Paul Trentzsch /S/ 11-02-2007

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: John Dow

DATE: 11/05/2007

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed Categorical Exclusion number CO-200-2008-0003 CE and have decided to implement the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action is to salvage the existing dead trees; trees currently under bark beetle attack; thin green trees infected with mistletoe; and thin from below of green trees to improve the vigor of the reserve trees on 61 acres. The large healthy trees would be reserved while maintaining a representation of all species and sizes. Conifers encroaching into the existing pockets of aspen would be removed to reduce competition to these aspen clones.

The decision is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR Subpart 5003 Administrative Remedies (a) and (b), protests of a decision may be made within 15 days of the publication date of the decision notice.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: \_\_\_\_\_  
Roy L. Masinton, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_