



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Colorado River Valley Field Office  
2300 River Frontage Road  
Silt, Colorado 81652  
www.co.blm.gov



## CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NEPA LOG NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2014-0109-CX

### Background

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM) OFFICE: Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO), Silt, Colorado

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC27874 (Oil and Gas Lease)

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Proposal to Conduct Emergency Stabilization Work above the Existing GV 8-14 Pad (Rockfall Mitigation) in the South Grand Valley Field West of Parachute, Colorado Authorized by Sundry Notice.

LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: Township 7 South (T7S), Range 96 West (R96W), Section 14, NE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>NE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, Sixth Principal Meridian. Emergency stabilization work is planned to stabilize rockfall generated from a slump located on the ridgetop directly above the GV 8-14 pad on Federal lease COC27874 (Figure 1). The slump site is located on BLM land near an existing BLM field development road; the project site is approximately 1 mile west of the town of Parachute.

APPLICANT: WPX Energy Rocky Mountain LLC (WPX) is the Leasehold Operator.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: On September 22, 2014, large boulders (up to 3 feet in diameter) rolled down the long slope east of the GV 8-14 pad while personnel were working at the site. Rocks and soil continued to intermittently fall throughout the day. The GV 8-14 pad supports eight producing Federal wells. There is an aboveground pipeline valve directly below the slump/rockfall area near the pad at the base of the slope. Since the rockfall occurred, WPX has installed an upright corrugated pipe around and over the valve to protect it from future damage from rolling debris. WPX operates a 12-inch diameter welded steel surface gas pipeline in the vicinity of the GV 8-14 pad; the gas line is buried along the eastern side of the pad which is a fortunate occurrence since the rockfall debris has collected in the area where the main gas line is buried (Figures 2 and 3).

Upon inspection of the slump area later on 9/22/14 by WPX and BLM personnel, multiple deep cracks were witnessed across an area of approximately 75 feet wide by 100 feet long at the top of the ridge with a western aspect. No evidence of water could be found in the slump area. It appears the slump has developed over time based on "healing" or weathering of cracks. It is likely that the above-normal rainfall this summer and fall has "lubricated" the soil and the deep cracks resulting in the mass movement found at the site.

In the short term, WPX has contracted with a qualified, permitted explosives company to set charges within the cracks of the slump in an effort to settle the slump mass and "cap" or close the cracks across

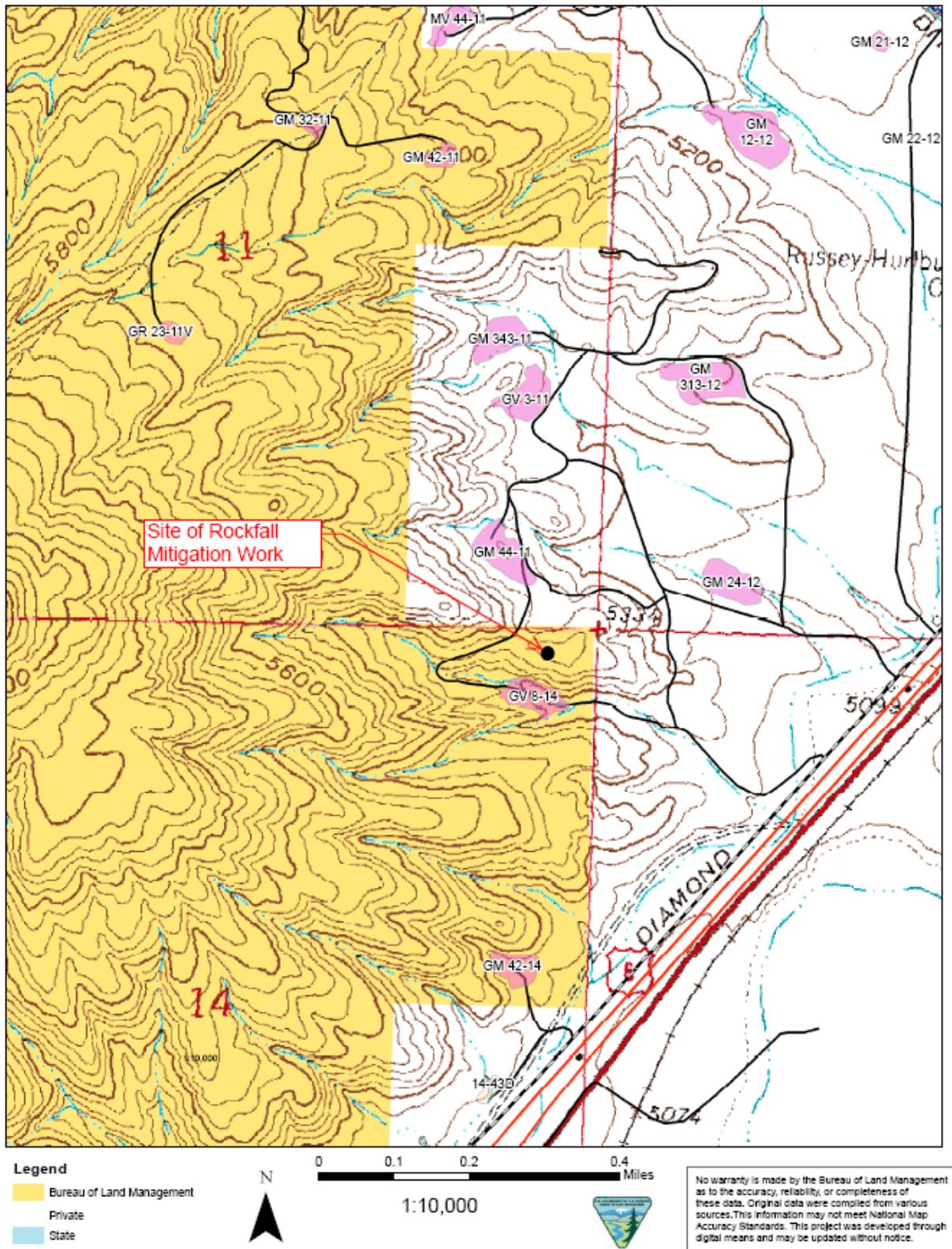
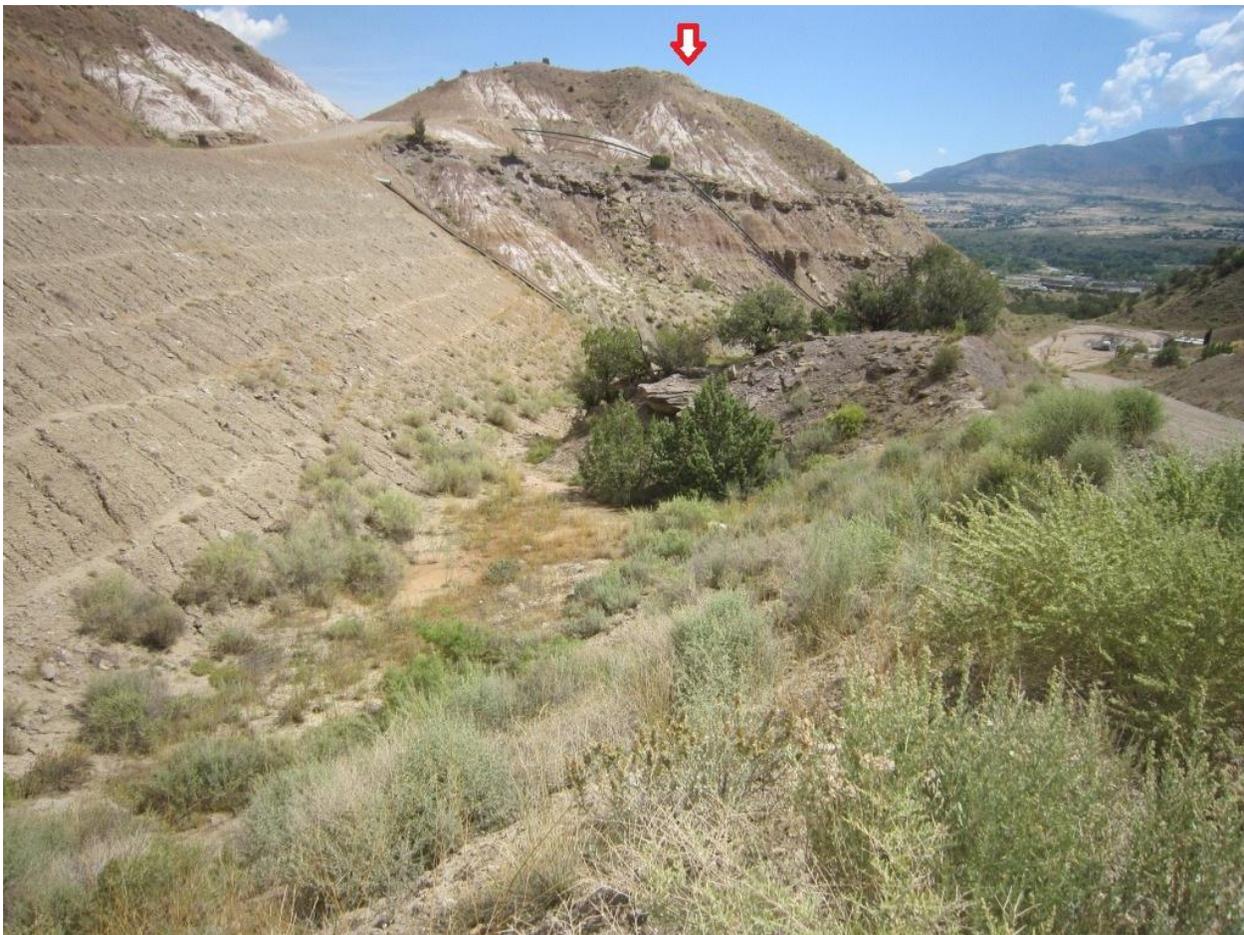


Figure 1. Location of Emergency Stabilization (Rockfall Mitigation), GV 8-14 Well Pad

the site thereby reducing the avenues for future rain and winter snow events. WPX has taken precautionary measures to protect the producing wells and the pad site by staging 2 frac tanks along the east-side of the wellheads. The berming established along the ephemeral drainage east of the pad also serves as a coincidental catch basin for any rock and debris that may develop with the explosives effort.

The long-term outlook for the slump is to periodically monitor the site by visual means and photos. Hiking to the site is possible from the saddle along the GV 8-14 access road. The frac tanks would remain staged on the pad until it is determined the slump has stabilized and rockfall dangers have passed. It is likely that this slump will continue to creep, crack and deposit debris in the vicinity of the pad for the life of the producing wells. It is not feasible or desirable, particularly from a safety and visual standpoint due to the steep sideslopes, to place equipment in vicinity of this site in effort to stabilize it. WPX has indicated that they can accept the initial risk of allowing the slump to release rock and debris over time knowing that the berming and frac tank staging will be needed to control the rolling debris.



**Figure 2. Slump at Ridgetop (arrow) Directly East of GV 8-14 Well Pad (far right).**



**Figure 3. Extent of West-facing Slump Block Located Near Top of Ridge Above GV 8-14 Well Pad.**

### **Land Use Plan Conformance**

The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for and is in conformance with (43 CFR §1610.5 and § 2800, BLM 1617.3) the following plan:

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: The current land use plan is the *Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan* (RMP) (BLM 1984, revised 1988). Relevant amendments include the *Oil and Gas Plan Amendment to the Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan* (BLM 1991) and the *Oil & Gas Leasing & Development Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendment* (BLM 1999).

Date Approved/Amended: *Oil and Gas Plan Amendment to the Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan* (BLM 1991) – approved November 27, 1991; *Oil & Gas Leasing & Development Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendment* (BLM 1999) – approved March 24, 1999.

Determination of Conformance: The 1991 plan amendment for oil and gas (BLM 1991) included the following at page 3: “697,720 acres of BLM-administered mineral estate within the Glenwood Springs Resource Area (GSRA) are open to oil and gas leasing and development, subject to lease terms and (as applicable) lease stipulations” (BLM 1991, page 3). This decision was carried forward into the 1999 plan amendment for oil and gas. The 1999 plan amendment for oil and gas (BLM 1999) included the

following at page 2-4: “The BLM transfers to the lease holder the right to explore and develop all the oil and gas resources, subject to the stipulations attached to the lease” (BLM 1999, page 2-4). Exploration activities are provided for under the current plans and amendments above for the public domain lands involved. The action would not result in land use allocation decisions and would not limit the choice of reasonable alternative actions relative to the land use decisions being examined. Therefore, the project conforms to the current LUP, as amended.

### **Compliance with NEPA**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 (I) Emergency Stabilization. The specific categorical exclusion narrative is stated as follows:

#### **I. Emergency Stabilization**

1. Planned actions in response to wildfires, floods, weather events, earthquakes, or landslips that threaten public health or safety, property, and/or natural and cultural resources, and that are necessary to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management-approved condition as a result of the event. Such activities shall be limited to: repair and installation of essential erosion control structures; replacement or repair of existing culverts, roads, trails, fences, and minor facilities; construction of protection fences; planting, seeding, and mulching; and removal of hazard trees, rocks, soil, and other mobile debris from, on, or along roads, trails, campgrounds, and watercourses. These activities:
  - a. Shall be completed within one year following the event.
  - b. Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides.
  - c. Shall not include the construction of new roads or other new permanent infrastructure.
  - d. Shall not exceed 4,200 acres.
  - e. May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources.
  - f. Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment by artificial or natural means, or vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract

This CX is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 applies (Table 1). Any “Yes” answers in Table 1 preclude use of the CX.

| <b>Table 1. Extraordinary Circumstances</b>   |     |           |
|---|-----|-----------|
| 1. May have significant impacts on public health and safety.  | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 2. May have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild and scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 119880; national monument; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 3. May have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA Section 102 (2) (E)).   | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 4. May have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.  | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 5. May establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.  | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 6. May have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.  | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 7. May 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.   | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 8. May 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.  | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 9. May violate a Federal law, or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.  | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 10. May have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).  | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 11. May 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 (Executive Order 13007).   | Yes | <u>No</u> |
| 12. May contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weed 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 (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).  | Yes | <u>No</u> |

**Persons and/or Agencies Consulted**

WPX – Brad Moss, Wally Hammer, Robert Rutkowski  
 Gardner Excavation – Daniel Gardner

**Interdisciplinary Review**

BLM staff from the CRVFO listed in Table 2 participated in the preparation of this SCX, including review of survey results submitted by the Operator’s consultants, evaluation of impacts likely to occur from implementation of the Proposed Action, and identification of appropriate COAs.

| <b>Table 2. BLM Interdisciplinary Team Authors and Reviewers</b> |                                   |   |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Name</i>  | <i>Title</i>                      | <i>Areas of Participation</i>             |
| Jim Byers  | Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) | Project Lead, Coordination and Inspection |
| Allen Crockett, Ph.D., J.D.                                      | Supervisory NRS.                  | NEPA Review                               |

**Remarks/Mitigation:** Conditions of approval to be attached to the individual NOI are listed in Attachment A.

Name of Preparer: Jim Byers, Natural Resource Specialist

Date: October 1, 2014

**Decision and Rationale:** I have reviewed this categorical exclusion record and have decided to implement the Proposed Action.

I have reviewed Section B, Land Use Plan Conformance, and Section C, Compliance with NEPA, and have determined that the Proposed Activity is in conformance with the applicable land use plan(s) and referenced NEPA documents. This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 12 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

**Signature of Authorized Official:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist

**Date Signed:** 10-9-14



**Surface-Use Conditions of Approval**  
**Emergency Stabilization (Rockfall Mitigation)**  
**GV 8-14 Well Pad**  
**DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2014-0109-CX**

1. Scope of Emergency Work (Rockfall Mitigation). No vehicles or heavy equipment are authorized to leave the GV 8-14 access road to complete the planned mitigation work. Such work shall focus on setting sufficient explosive charge(s) to settle and cap the slump block and encourage loose rockfall and debris to fall westerly down the slope to the berms and frac tank barrier established at the GV 8-14 well pad.
2. Cultural Education/Discovery. All persons in the area who are associated with this project shall be informed that if anyone is found disturbing historic, archaeological, or scientific resources, including collecting artifacts, the person or persons would be subject to prosecution.

If subsurface cultural values are uncovered during operations, all work in the vicinity of the resource will cease and the Authorized Officer with the BLM notified immediately. The operator shall take any additional measures requested by the BLM to protect discoveries until they can be adequately evaluated by the permitted archaeologist. Within 48 hours of the discovery, the SHPO and consulting parties will be notified of the discovery and consultation will begin to determine an appropriate mitigation measure. BLM in cooperation with the operator will ensure that the discovery is protected from further disturbance until mitigation is completed. Operations may resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on Federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the authorized officer, or until the authorized officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first.

Antiquities, historic ruins, prehistoric ruins, and other cultural or paleontological objects of scientific interest that are outside the authorization boundaries but potentially affected, either directly or indirectly, by the Proposed Action shall also be included in this evaluation or mitigation. Impacts that occur to such resources as a result of the authorized activities shall be mitigated at the operator's cost, including the cost of consultation with Native American groups.

Any person who, without a permit, injures, destroys, excavates, appropriates or removes any historic or prehistoric ruin, artifact, object of antiquity, Native American remains, Native American cultural item, or archaeological resources on public lands is subject to arrest and penalty of law (16 USC 433, 16 USC 470, 18 USC 641, 18 USC 1170, and 18 USC 1361).