

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Little Snake Field Office  
455 Emerson Street  
Craig, CO 81625-1129

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**EA-NUMBER:** CO-100-2007-103 EA

**CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER/LEASE NUMBER:** COC71506

**PROJECT NAME:** Questar Natural Gas Pipeline ROW for Carl Allen #25 Well

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** T12N, R97W, Sec. 32, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , 6<sup>th</sup> PM, Moffat County, Colorado

**APPLICANT:** Questar Gas Management Company (Questar)

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The proposed action is subject to the following plan:

Name of Plans: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (ROD)

Date(s) Approved: April 26, 1989

Remarks: The proposed natural gas transportation pipeline and produced water pipeline right-of-way would be located within Management Unit 2, Northern Central (Little Snake Resource Management Plan). The objectives of Management Unit 2 are to provide for the potential for development of oil and gas resources. Realty actions such as rights-of-way, leases and permits can be allowed on public land consistent with the management objectives for this unit.

Results: The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3). The proposed action is in conformance with the objectives for this management unit.

**NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:** The purpose of the proposed action is to allow Questar to construct, operate and maintain 1,250 linear feet of natural gas transportation pipeline from a producing well.

**PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS:** The NEPA log is posted on the Little Snake Field Office web site and published in the Craig Daily Press before the grant is issued to the applicant.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:** The proposed action is to issue a right-of-way grant, pursuant to the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 and regulations found at 43 CFR 2880, to Questar for a buried 3½-inch natural gas transportation pipeline across Federal land. The pipeline would connect to an existing Questar gas pipeline, COC44228.

The proposed right-of-way would be a total of 1,250 feet in length and 30 feet wide (0.86 acre). A temporary construction width of 50 feet is requested for the first 3 years, which would result in total surface disturbance of 1.43 acres on Federal surface.

All construction materials would be hauled to the job site by truck on existing roads. A trench 3 feet in depth would be dug for the pipeline. Any road crossings would be buried to a depth of 4 feet. The pipeline corridor would be cleared of vegetation and above-ground obstacles within the designated width. Topsoil would be conserved for reclamation purposes where possible. An appropriate seed mix would be used for reclamation.

A Plan of Development (POD) was submitted with the application. The POD addresses construction and reclamation methods. Mitigation not included in the POD would be addressed by BLM as stipulations.

**NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE:** The “no action” alternative is that the right-of-way application would be denied. However, since the proposed action is consistent with the Little Snake Resource Management Plan and ROD, rejection of the ROW application was considered, but will not be analyzed further in this EA.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **CRITICAL RESOURCES**

#### **AIR QUALITY**

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences: Short-term, local impacts to air quality from dust would result during and after pipeline construction. Construction operations would produce air emissions such as exhaust from diesel engines that power construction equipment. Air pollutants may include nitrogen oxides, particulates, ozone, volatile organic compounds, fugitive natural gas and carbon monoxide. The proposed action would not adversely affect regional air quality.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Roy McKinstry, 08/02/07

## AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 8/2/07

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Cultural resources, in this region of Colorado, range from late Paleo-Indian to Historic. For a general understanding of the cultural resources in this area of Colorado, see *An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources, Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, *An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin*, Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed project, Carl Allen No. 25 pipeline, has undergone a Class III cultural resource survey:

Darlington, David  
2007 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for the Questar Exploration and Production Company Carl Allen No. 25, Moffat County, Colorado (BLM #12.31.07)

No historic properties were identified during this survey. The proposed project may proceed as described in this EA with the following mitigative measures in place.

Mitigative Measures: The following standard stipulations apply for this project:

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5000. Within five working days, the AO will inform the operator as to:

- Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- The mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for project activities again; and
- Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone at (970) 826-

5000, and with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

2. If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation costs. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 08/10/07

## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area of isolated dwellings. Ranching, farming and oil and gas development are the primary economic activities.

Environmental Consequences: The project area is relatively isolated from population centers, so no populations would be affected by physical or socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action. The proposed action would not directly affect the social, cultural or economic well-being and health of Native American, minority or low-income populations.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Mike Andrews, 07/30/07

## **FLOOD PLAINS**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Mike Andrews, 08/06/07

## **INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES**

Affected Environment: Invasive species and noxious weeds occur within the affected area. Downy brome (cheatgrass), yellow alyssum, blue mustard and other annual weeds are common along roadsides, on well pads and on other disturbed areas. Canada thistle and several species of biennial thistles are known to occur in this area. Halogeton, Russian

knapweed and hoary cress (whitetop) are present in the vicinity of the pipeline right-of-way. Other species of noxious weeds are not known to be a problem in this area, but they can always be introduced by vehicle traffic, livestock and wildlife. The BLM, Moffat County, livestock operators, pipeline companies and oil and gas operators have formed the Northwest Colorado Weed Partnership to collaborate their efforts on controlling weeds and finding the best integrated approaches to achieve these results.

**Environmental Consequences:** The surface disturbing activities and associated traffic involved with installing the pipeline and other subsequent activities would create an environment and provide a mode of transport for invasive species and other noxious weeds to become established. Construction equipment and any other vehicles and equipment brought onto the site can introduce these weed species. Wind, water, recreation vehicles, livestock and wildlife would also assist with the distribution of weed seed into the newly disturbed areas. The annual invasive weed species (yellow alyssum, blue mustard and other annual weeds) occur on adjacent rangelands and would occupy the disturbed areas; the bare soils and the lack of competition from a perennial plant community would allow these weed species to grow unchecked and can affect the establishment of seeded plant species. Establishment of perennial grasses and other seeded plants is expected to provide the necessary control of invasive annual weeds within 2 or 3 years. Additional seeding treatments of the disturbed areas may be required in subsequent years if initial seeding efforts have failed. The operator will be required to control any invasive and/or noxious weeds that become established within the disturbed areas involved with the pipeline. All principles of Integrated Pest Management should be employed to control noxious weeds on public lands.

**Mitigative Measures:** Mitigation attached as stipulations to minimize disturbance and obtain successful reclamation of the pipeline right-of-way, as well as weed control utilizing integrated practices, including herbicide applications would help to control the noxious weed species. All principles of Integrated Pest Management should be employed to control noxious and invasive weeds on public lands

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 08/02/07

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

**Affected Environment:** Brewer's sparrow and sage sparrows are two birds listed on the USFWS's 2002 Birds of Conservation Concern list that could be found within the project area.

**Environmental Consequences:** Installation of a pipeline outside of the nesting season would not impact either species. If conducted during the nesting season (May – August), there is a slight chance a nest could be present and impacted by the activity. Chance of take is considered moderate.

Mitigative Measures: All open vent stack equipment such as heater treaters, separators, dehydration units and flare stacks shall be designed and constructed to prevent birds and bats from entering or nesting in or on such units, and to the extent practical, to discourage birds from perching on the stacks.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

**NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

A letter was sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Tribal council and the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs on January 21, 1999. The letter listed the projects that BLM would notify them on and projects that would not require notification. No comments were received (letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office.) This project requires no additional notification.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 08/10/07

**PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Mike Andrews, 08/06/07

**T&E SPECIES – ANIMALS**

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered or special status species or their habitat within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

**T&E SPECIES – PLANTS**

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered plant species within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 07/30/07

### **T&E SPECIES - SENSITIVE PLANTS**

Affected Environment: There are no sensitive plant species within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 07/30/07

### **WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

Affected Environment: If a release does occur, the environment affected would be dependent on the nature and volume of material released. If there are no releases, there would be no environmental impact.

Environmental Consequences: Consequences would be dependent on the volume and nature of the material released. In most situations involving hazardous materials, there are ways to remediate the area that has been contaminated. Short-term consequences would occur, but they can be remedied and long-term impacts would be minimal.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Mike Andrews, 07/30/07

### **WATER QUALITY - GROUND**

Affected Environment: The surface formation is the Wasatch Formation. This formation has strong vertical fracturing and is known to produce potable groundwater. The water producing zones are ephemeral as the groundwater-producing sandstones thicken and thin laterally. No groundwater-producing sandstones would be affected by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences: Minor runoff from construction activities may result in sedimentation to nearby drainages.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Marilyn D. Wegweiser, 08/09/07

## **WATER QUALITY - SURFACE**

Affected Environment: The proposed action would be constructed near an unnamed ephemeral drainage to Powder Wash. Any runoff from the pipeline would drain toward the ephemeral drainage. All stream segments near the pipeline corridor are presently supporting classified beneficial uses. No impaired stream segments occur in the vicinity of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences: Runoff water from the pipeline corridor would drain toward Powder Wash, which is an ephemeral tributary to the Little Snake River. Increased sedimentation to Powder Wash during spring runoff or from high intensity rainstorms is the most likely environmental consequence for the proposed action. Although some sediment may be transported off site and eventually reach perennial waters, the mitigation provided in the Plan of Development and stipulations will reduce the potential impacts caused by surface runoff.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Roy McKinstry, 08/02/07

## **WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES**

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian zones within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

## **WILD & SCENIC RIVERS**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 08/02/07

## **WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 08/02/07

## **NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS**

### **PALEONTOLOGY**

Affected Environment: Paleontological resources in Sec. 32, T12N, R97W are comprised of rocks of the Eocene Wasatch Formation, overlain by Quaternary alluvium. It is about 1,200 ft thick in vicinity of Lookout Mountain, CO. The upper contact of Cathedral Bluffs Tongue of the Wasatch Formation has been revised in Moffat Co, CO and adjoining WY on the east side of the Washakie basin of the Greater Green River basin. The Cathedral Bluffs Tongue underlies a 200-324 ft thick gray and green mudstone that is interbedded with brown oil-shale, gray-brown silty kerogenaceous shale, gray or tan sandstone and siltstone and gray shale named Godiva Rim Member of Green River Formation.

Environmental Consequences: *PYFC: Class 3b* – Unknown Potential. Units exhibit geologic features and preservational conditions that suggest significant fossils could be present, but little information about the paleontological resources of the unit or the area is known. This may indicate the unit or area is poorly studied, and field surveys may uncover significant finds. It is the intent that the units in this Class will eventually be placed in another Class when sufficient survey and research is performed. The unknown potential of the units in this Class should be carefully considered when developing any mitigation or management approaches.

(1) Management concern for paleontological resources is moderate; or cannot be determined from existing data.

(2) Surface-disturbing activities may require field assessment to determine appropriate course of action.

Mitigative Measures: Unusual occurrences of plant and invertebrate fossils should be recorded, and representative examples may be collected if appropriate. Concentrations of common plant or invertebrate fossils that may be suitable for public hobby collection areas should also be noted and reported to the Field Office paleontology program coordinator or paleontology program lead. Additional mitigation measures may be appropriate in some cases for these types of localities.

If vertebrate fossil material is discovered during construction activities, surface disturbing actions shall halt until an assessment of the find is completed and appropriate protection measures taken. The Authorized Officer should be notified as soon as possible of the discovery and any mitigation efforts that were undertaken. If the find cannot be mitigated

within a reasonable time, the concurrence of the Authorized Officer or official representative for a longer work stoppage must be obtained. Work may not resume until approval is granted from both the PI or Field Agent and the Authorized Officer.

During operations, if any vertebrate paleontological resources are discovered, in accordance with Section 6 of Form 3100-11 and 43 CFR 3162.1, all operations affecting such sites shall be immediately suspended, and all discoveries shall be left intact until authorized to proceed by the Authorized Officer. The appropriate Authorized Officer of the Little Snake BLM office shall be notified within 48 hrs of the discovery, and a decision as to the preferred alternative/course of action will be rendered.

Name of specialist and date: Marilyn D. Wegweiser, 08/09/07

## **SOILS**

**Affected Environment:** The proposed action would be located within the Tresano-Hiatha-Kandaly association loam soil-mapping unit. These very deep soils are well drained and found on hills, toe slopes, and alluvial fans. Slopes within this unit average 2 to 20 percent. These soils formed in alluvium derived from sandstone and shale. Runoff is rapid and the hazard of wind and water erosion is moderate to high.

**Environmental Consequences:** The construction of the Carl Allen Well #25 pipeline would affect soils within and immediately adjacent to the proposed action. Increased soil erosion from wind and water would occur during construction of the pipeline. Erosion would continue throughout the operation life of the pipeline. Loss of topsoil, soil compaction and possible increases in sediment loads to drainages are the impacts most likely to occur.

Vegetation and soil would be removed from about 1.43 acres of land. Soil productivity would decline due to reduced soil microbial activity, impaired water infiltration, mixing of soil horizons, topsoil loss and introduction of weeds. Soil loss from construction would be greatest shortly after project start and would decrease in time as a result in stabilization through re-vegetation and reclamation of disturbed areas. Soil erosion would be reduced to an acceptable level with the mitigation described in the Plan of Development and stipulations in the right-of-way grant. This mitigation would reduce the potential for excess sediments and salts in runoff water from the pipeline.

**Mitigative Measures:** Additional mitigation measures will be employed to prevent or reduce accelerated erosion if it begins to occur within or on constructed drainages and diversion ditches or surface drainages affected by the pipeline.

Name of specialist and date: Roy McKinstry, 08/02/07

## UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline would be located in a saltbush plant community that is interspersed with sagebrush and grasses. Dominant plants present include Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*), basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata tridentata*), Nuttall's saltbush (*Atriplex nuttallii*), green rabbitbrush (*Crysothamnus viscidiflorus*), prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.), *Eriogonum* spp., *Allium* spp., winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*), western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Indian ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenodites*), squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*) and Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa sandbergii*). High levels of non-native halogeton are also present.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed pipeline would completely remove the vegetation from 1.43 acres. While this removal would be relatively minor in the larger landscape, it would be in addition to numerous other impacts such as the dense road network, well pads and the Powder Wash Camp. This area is highly susceptible to invasion by haologeton, even in adjacent undisturbed areas. Aggressive control efforts, as required, would minimize the spread of this invasive plant.

Mitigative Measures: Applicant will adhere to the reclamation and stabilization measures as described in the Plan of Development.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 07/30/07

## WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: There is no aquatic wildlife species or aquatic wildlife habitat within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

## WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: The proposed project area provides productive habitat for pronghorn antelope, except during the most severe winters. A variety of reptiles, small mammals and songbirds can be found within the project area as well.

Environmental Consequences: Construction activities associated with the installation of the proposed action would displace wildlife from the project area. Pronghorn antelope would be capable of avoiding the construction. Most small mammals and reptiles would be able to avoid construction activities. It is possible that some small mammals and reptiles would be trapped within the trench during construction. If construction occurs during nesting season

(May – July), it is possible that nests would be destroyed or abandoned as a result of this project. Surrounding undisturbed habitat would be sufficient to support displaced wildlife during construction. Most displaced wildlife would be capable of returning to the area once construction is complete.

Mitigative Measures: Escape ramps will be installed in open trenches to allow wildlife to leave if they fall into the trench.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

**OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS:** For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Fluid Minerals		MDW 08/09/07	
Forest Management	MAA 07/30/07		
Hydrology/Ground			See Water Quality
Hydrology/Surface			See Water Quality
Paleontology			See Paleontology
Range Management		KM 07/30/07	
Realty Authorizations		MAA 07/30/07	
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		RS 08/02/07	
Socio-Economics		MAA 07/30/07	
Solid Minerals	JAM 08/03/07		
Visual Resources		RS 08/02/07	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	MAA 07/30/07		

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:** Cumulative impacts may result from the development of this pipeline when added to non-project impacts that result from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. The potential exists for future oil and gas development throughout the Powder Wash Field. Currently numerous producing wells and associated rights-of-way exist within a one-mile radius of the proposed well. Other past or existing actions near the project area that have influence on the landscape are wildfire, recreation, hunting, grazing, and ranching activities.

Surface disturbance associated with oil and gas activity would increase the potential for erosion and sedimentation. Displacement of hunters and recreationists during the short-term construction and drilling periods would occur. Contrasts in line, form, color, and texture from development would impact the visual qualities on the landscape.

Cumulative impacts to the plant communities within the gas lease and adjacent areas include an incremental reduction of continuity in the plant communities in terms of acreages that remain undisturbed. Loss of continuity results in smaller and smaller areas of undisturbed native vegetation and the potential for loss of integrity within the larger plant community. Fragmented plant communities can lose resilience to natural and man-made disturbance due to isolation of areas from seed sources necessary for proper age class distribution of plants, and subsequently, a greater opportunity for stressors such as drought to have a more severe impact on the plant community as a whole. The increased disturbance also makes native plant communities more susceptible to invasion by annual weeds as vectors for increasing weeds. Even with weed control measures applied, the potential for weeds to move further into undisturbed remnant areas increases as these remnants become smaller and more isolated from larger undisturbed areas.

Cumulative impacts to the livestock grazing operations in the area are also increased through the Proposed Action. The growth in wells, roads, and human activity has reduced the availability of forage in this area far beyond direct impacts caused by construction. Halogeton which has increased among the new roads and well pads is toxic to sheep. The resulting impact to grazing activities permitted in the area is a loss of available Animal Unit Months (AUMs), i.e. a loss of the amount of livestock that the allotment can reasonably carry. Due to recent years of drought, the livestock operator has only lightly used this allotment, so direct impacts to grazing activities have not been fully felt.

Habitat fragmentation from well pad construction and the associated roads have likely decreased the nesting suitability for migratory birds in Powder Wash. Ingelfinger (2001) found that roads associated with oil and gas development have a negative impact on passerines bird species. Bird densities were reduced within 100m of each road. Due to the amount of new road construction and an increase in traffic on these roads, passerine populations in the area are likely decreasing.

Although big game species are able to adapt to disturbances better than other wildlife, increased development would still have impacts to antelope. Timing stipulations adequately protect big game species during critical times of the year; however, continued oil and gas development would lead to decreased use of the habitat due to increased human activity. A significant amount of vehicle traffic occurs with oil and gas development. Impacts to big game may be vehicle-animal collisions, as these are a major cause of mortality for big game species.

#### References:

Ingelfinger, F. 2001. The Effects of Natural Gas Development on Sagebrush Steppe Passerines in Sublette County, Wyoming. University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY.

#### **STANDARDS:**

**PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD:** The project area currently provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Big game animals as well as small mammals, songbirds and reptiles can be found in and around the project area. The proposed action would result in the loss of 1.4 acres of habitat and the displacement of many individual animals during

construction. Most individual animals would be able to return to the area once construction activities are completed. This standard is being met and will continue to be met in the future.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

**SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal)**

**STANDARD:** There are no threatened, endangered or special status species or habitats for such species present within the project area. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

**PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD:** The proposed action would completely remove 1.43 acres of native vegetation. As long as the stabilization and rehabilitation measures discussed in the Plan of Development are faithfully adhered to, the native plant community would eventually return and weeds such as houndstongue would be kept in check, and thus meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 07/30/07

**SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant)**

**STANDARD:** There are no special status or threatened or endangered species within the proposed project area. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 07/30/07

**RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD:** There are no wetlands or riparian zones within the proposed project area. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 07/31/07

**WATER QUALITY STANDARD:** The proposed action would meet the public land health standard for water quality. Reclamation of the pipeline corridor would be completed immediately after installation to minimize sheet and rill erosion from the corridor. Interim reclamation of the unused area of the pipeline corridor would be completed to minimize sheet and rill erosion from the pipeline. When the pipeline is no longer needed for production, the disturbed pipeline corridor would be reclaimed to approximate original contours, topsoil would be redistributed and adapted plant species would be seeded. These Best Management Practices would help to reduce accelerated erosion of the corridor.

Name of specialist and date: Roy McKinstry, 08/02/07

**UPLAND SOILS STANDARD:** The proposed action would not meet the upland standard for land health and it is not expected to while the pipeline is in operation. The pipeline corridor would not exhibit the characteristics of a healthy soil. Several Best Management Practices have been designed into the project or are attached as mitigation measures to reduce impacts to and

conserve soil materials. Upland soil health would return to the pipeline corridor disturbance after reclamation practices have been successfully achieved.

Name of specialist and date: Roy McKinstry, 08/06/07

**PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:** Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**  
**EA CO-100-2007-103**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA and all other available information, I have determined that the proposal and the alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.
9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.

10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

**DECISION AND RATIONALE:** I have determined that construction of the buried natural gas transportation pipeline is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to issue the right-of-way grant with the mitigation measures to Questar Gas Management Company. The grant is for construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a buried, 3½-inch natural gas transportation pipeline located on public land in T12N, R97W, Sec. 32, SW¼SE¼NE¼, NE¼NE¼SE¼, NW¼NE¼SE¼, NE¼NW¼SE¼, 6<sup>th</sup> PM, Moffat County, Colorado. The ROW is 1,250 feet long and 30 feet wide (50 feet wide for the first 3 years). The ROW grant is issued for 30 years with the right of renewal. The ROW is subject to rental pursuant to 43 CFR 2806. The project will be monitored as stated in the Compliance Plan outlined below.

It is the policy of the Bureau of Land Management to grant R/W to occupy and use public land where such is consistent with resource values, the Bureau’s planning system, and local government concerns. To this effect, no conflicts were found; the action does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. The action is consistent with the Little Snake Resource Management Plan. The proposed use, as planned and mitigated, is a suitable use of the land, which will not conflict with the present or known future use of the area. The action is consistent with Section 28 of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended (30 U.S.C. 185) and the regulations authorizing use of federal land under 43 CFR 2800.

**MITIGATION MEASURES:** See Exhibit B, Stipulations.

**COMPLIANCE PLAN(S):**

**Compliance Schedule:** Compliance will be conducted during the construction phase and reclamation phase to insure that all terms and conditions specified in the right-of-way grant and stipulations are followed. The pipeline grant will be on a five-year compliance schedule after completion of the project.

**Monitoring Plan:** The pipeline ROW will be monitored during the term of the right-of-way for compliance with the grant, stipulations, POD, and pertinent regulations until final abandonment is approved; monitoring will help determine the effectiveness of mitigation and document the need for additional mitigative measures.

**Assignment of Responsibility:** Responsibility for implementation of the compliance schedule and monitoring plan will be assigned to the realty staff in the Little Snake Field Office. The primary inspector will be the Realty Specialist.

**SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:**

**DATE SIGNED:**

**SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:**

**DATE SIGNED:**

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:**

**DATE SIGNED:**

Exhibit B  
Stipulations  
CO-100-2007-103 EA

1. The holder shall construct, operate and maintain the facilities, improvements and structures within this right-of-way in strict conformity with the plan of development (POD), which was approved and made part of this grant. Any relocation, additional construction or use that is not in accordance with the POD shall not be initiated without prior approval of the authorized officer. A copy of the complete right-of-way grant, including all stipulations regarding construction, operation, approved POD and termination shall be made available on the right-of-way area during construction, operation and termination to the Authorized Officer (AO). Noncompliance with the terms above will be grounds for an immediate suspension of activities, if it constitutes a threat to public health and safety or the environment.
2. The Little Snake Field Office will be given 48-hour notification prior to commencing construction and/or reclamation work. Contact the Little Snake Field Office (970) 826-5000 to report when work will commence.
3. No hazardous materials/waste or trash shall be disposed of on public lands. If a release does occur, it shall be reported immediately to the AO at (970) 826-5000. Any spills shall be cleaned up to applicable standards and in accordance with federal, state and local laws.
4. Topsoil shall be salvaged to a depth of 4 inches and stockpiled during excavation and construction and replaced over the trench.
5. Backfilled soil shall be compacted in the first few feet above the pipeline sufficiently to prevent excessive settling of soil and channelization of surface water, but not to the extent to significantly inhibit percolation of water. The backfilled soil should be firm and allow good infiltration of water.
6. All construction activities shall be conducted within the limits of the right-of-way as granted.
7. All open vent stack equipment such as heater treaters, separators and dehydration units and flare stacks shall be designed and constructed to prevent birds and bats from entering or nesting in or on such units, and to the extent practical, to discourage birds from perching on the stacks.
8. Escape ramps shall be installed in unattended open trenches to allow wildlife to exit if they fall into the trench.
9. The holder shall comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations existing or hereafter enacted or promulgated. In any event, the holder shall comply with the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, as amended (15 U.S.C. 2601, et seq.) with regard to any toxic substances that are used, generated or stored on the site or facilities authorized under this grant. Additionally, any release of toxic substances (leaks, spills, etc.) in excess of the reportable quantity established by 40 CFR § 117, shall be reported as required by the Comprehensive Environmental Response,

Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, Section 102b. A copy of any report required or requested by any Federal agency or state government as a result of a reportable release or spill of any toxic substance shall be furnished to the Authorized Officer concurrent with the filing of the reports to the responsible Federal agency or state government.

10. Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the holder, or any person working on his behalf, on public or Federal land shall be immediately reported to the AO. Holder shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the AO. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the AO to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values. The holder will be responsible for the cost of evaluation and any decision as to proper mitigation measures will be made by the AO after consulting with the holder.

11. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5000. Within five working days, the AO will inform the operator as to:

- Whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- The mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for project activities again; and
- Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone at (970) 826-5000, and with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

12. If vertebrate fossil material is discovered during construction activities, all surface disturbance shall halt until an assessment of the find is completed and appropriate protective measures are taken. The AO shall be notified as soon as possible of the discovery and any mitigation efforts that were undertaken. If the find cannot be mitigated within a reasonable time, the concurrence of the AO or official representative must be obtained. Work may not resume until approval is granted by the AO or official representative.

13. If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation costs. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

14. The holder shall be responsible for weed control on disturbed areas with the limits of the right-of-way. The holder is responsible for consultation with the AO and/or local authorities for acceptable weed control methods (within limits imposed in the grant stipulations).

15. Use of pesticides shall comply with the applicable Federal and state laws. Pesticides shall be used only in accordance with their registered uses and within limitations imposed by the Secretary of the Interior. Prior to the use of pesticides, the holder shall obtain from the AO written approval of the plan showing the type and quantity of material to be used, pest(s) to be controlled, method of application, location of storage and disposal of containers, and any other information deemed necessary by the AO. Emergency use of pesticides shall be approved in writing by the authorized officer prior to such use.

16. The holder is required to use the reclamation practices necessary to reclaim all disturbed areas. Reclamation will ensure surface and subsurface stability, growth of a self-regenerating permanent vegetative cover and compatibility with post land use. The vegetation will be diverse and of the same seasonal growth as adjoining vegetation. Post land use will be determined by the authorized officer but normally will be the same as adjoining uses.

Reclamation practices which must be applied or accomplished are: re-grading to the approximate original contour, effectively controlling noxious weeds, separating, storing and protecting topsoil for redistribution during final abandonment, seeding and controlling erosion. If topsoil is not present, or quantities are insufficient to achieve reclamation goals, a suitable plant growth media will be separated, stored and protected for later use. Reclamation will begin with the salvaging of topsoil and continue until the required standards are met. If use of the disturbed area is for a short time (less than one year), practices which ensure stability will be used as necessary during the project, and practices needed to achieve final abandonment will commence immediately upon completion of the approved activity use and be completed, with the exception of vegetative establishment, within one year. If use of the area is for longer periods of time (greater than one year), interim reclamation is required on the unused areas. Interim reclamation of the unused areas will begin immediately upon completion of the permanent facility(s) and be completed, with exception of vegetative establishment, within one year. For both short and long term projects vegetative establishment will be monitored annually. If the desired vegetation is not established by the end of the second growing season, cultural practices necessary for establishment will be implemented prior to the beginning of the next growing season. Interim reclamation, unless otherwise approved, will require meeting the same standards as final abandonment with the exception of original contour, which may be only partially achievable.

Annual reports consisting of reclamation practices completed and the effectiveness of the reclamation will be provided to the Little Snake Resource Area. The first report will be due in January following initiation of reclamation practices and annually thereafter until final abandonment is approved.

There are numerous reclamation practices and techniques which increase the success rate of reclamation and stabilization. With the exception of those stated above, it is the lessees

prerogative to use those (s)he chooses to accomplish the objective. However, it is recommended that state-of-the-art reclamation, stabilization and management practices be used to achieve the desired objective in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The following definitions and measurements will be used to accomplish and determine if reclamation has been achieved.

- 'permanent vegetative cover' will be accomplished if the basal cover of perennial species, adapted to the area, is at least ninety (90) percent of the basal cover of the undisturbed vegetation of adjoining land or the potential basal cover as defined in the Soil Conservation Service Range Site(s) for the area.
- 'diverse' will be accomplished if at least two (2) perennial genera and three (3) perennial species, adapted to the area, make up the basal cover of the reclaimed area in precipitation zones thirteen (13) inches or less and three (3) perennial genera and four (4) perennial species in precipitation zones greater than thirteen (13) inches. One species will not make up more than fifty (50) percent of the perennial vegetation by basal cover.
- 'self-regenerating' and 'adapted to the area' will be evident if the plant community is in good vigor, there is evidence of successful reproduction and the species are those commonly used and accepted in the area.
- 'surface stability' will be accomplished if soil movement, as measured by deposits around obstacles, depths of truncated areas, and height of pedestalling, is no greater than three tenths (0.3) of an inch and if erosion channels (rills, gullies, etc.) are less than one (1) inch in depth and at intervals greater than ten (10) feet.

If this standard is not met by the end of the second growing season, two alternatives exist depending on the severity of the erosion:

- a. If erosion is greater than two (2) times the allowable amount, correctional action would have to be taken by the responsible company at that time.
  - b. If erosion is less than or equal to two (2) times the allowable amount, and it is determined the erosion occurred during vegetative establishment and the site may become stable, no correctional action would be required at that time. Another check (and measurement) would be performed a year later to determine if stability standards had been met. If the original measurements have not increased by more than the allowed standard, the standard would be considered met. However, if the increase is greater than the allowed standard, corrective action would be required.
- 'subsurface stability' (mass wasting event) is of concern if disturbance has included excavation over four (4) feet in depth and greater than 10,000 square feet in area on slopes thirty five (35) percent and greater, or on any erosion-prone slope (Danforth

Hills, Vermillion Bluffs and badland areas). When these conditions occur, length of liability for reclamation and final abandonment will continue for ten (10) years following recontouring to original contour or for such time that climatic patterns provide two (2) consecutive years in which measurable precipitation totals at least 120 percent of average from October 1 through September 30, as measured by data averaged from nearby regional weather stations.

This stipulation, or portions of it, may be waived by the AO. Such waiver will be documented and justified when not applicable or objectives are accomplished through another method.

17. Prior to termination of the right-of-way, the holder shall contact the AO to arrange a pre-termination conference. The conference will be held to review the termination provision of the grant.