

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Royal Gorge Field Office  
3028 E. Main Street  
Canon City, CO 81212**

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-200-2013-020 CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: East Antelope Transplant Harvest Areas

PLANNING UNIT: Waugh Mtn./Tallahassee Subregion #6

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principle Meridian, T.16 S., R.73 W., Sections 4, 9, 10, 15, and 22.

APPLICANT: BLM

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: The Proposed Action is to commercially harvest ponderosa pine saplings that are encroaching on the parks and meadows on 143 acres in the East Antelope Mtn. area through special forest product sales. The trees typically harvested as transplants are young, in the 4 to 10 foot range, with good form and full healthy crowns. Transplants are typically dug in the spring and fall when the trees are dormant or near dormancy.

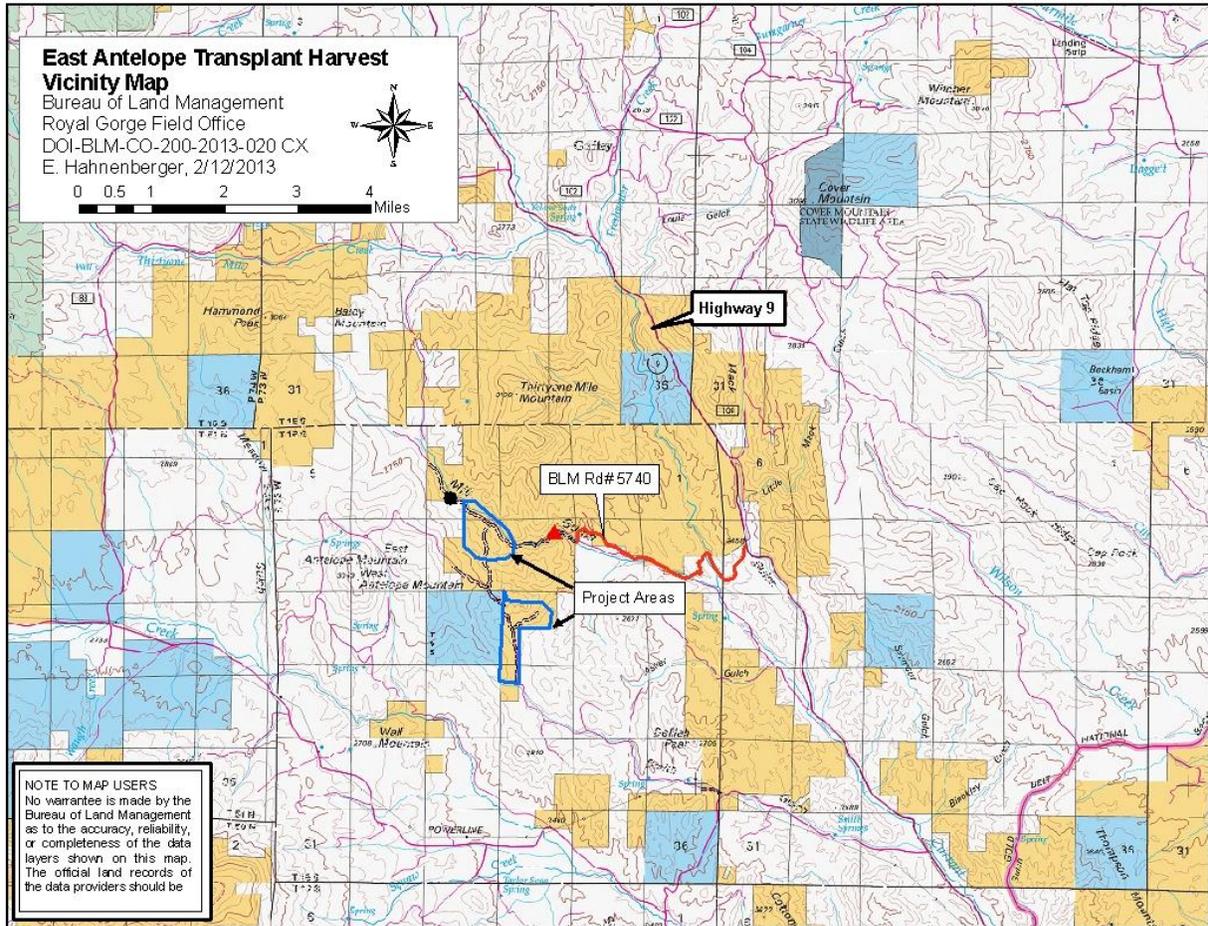
The harvesting of transplants, posts, and Christmas trees are forest management actions to reduce tree encroachment into the parks and meadows, thin the young trees where past forests management activities have occurred, and generate income for the Federal government, as well as create jobs for local tree harvesters, nurseries, landscapers that help support the local economy. By removing these trees encroaching on openings or meadows, forage will be improved for both wildlife and cattle.

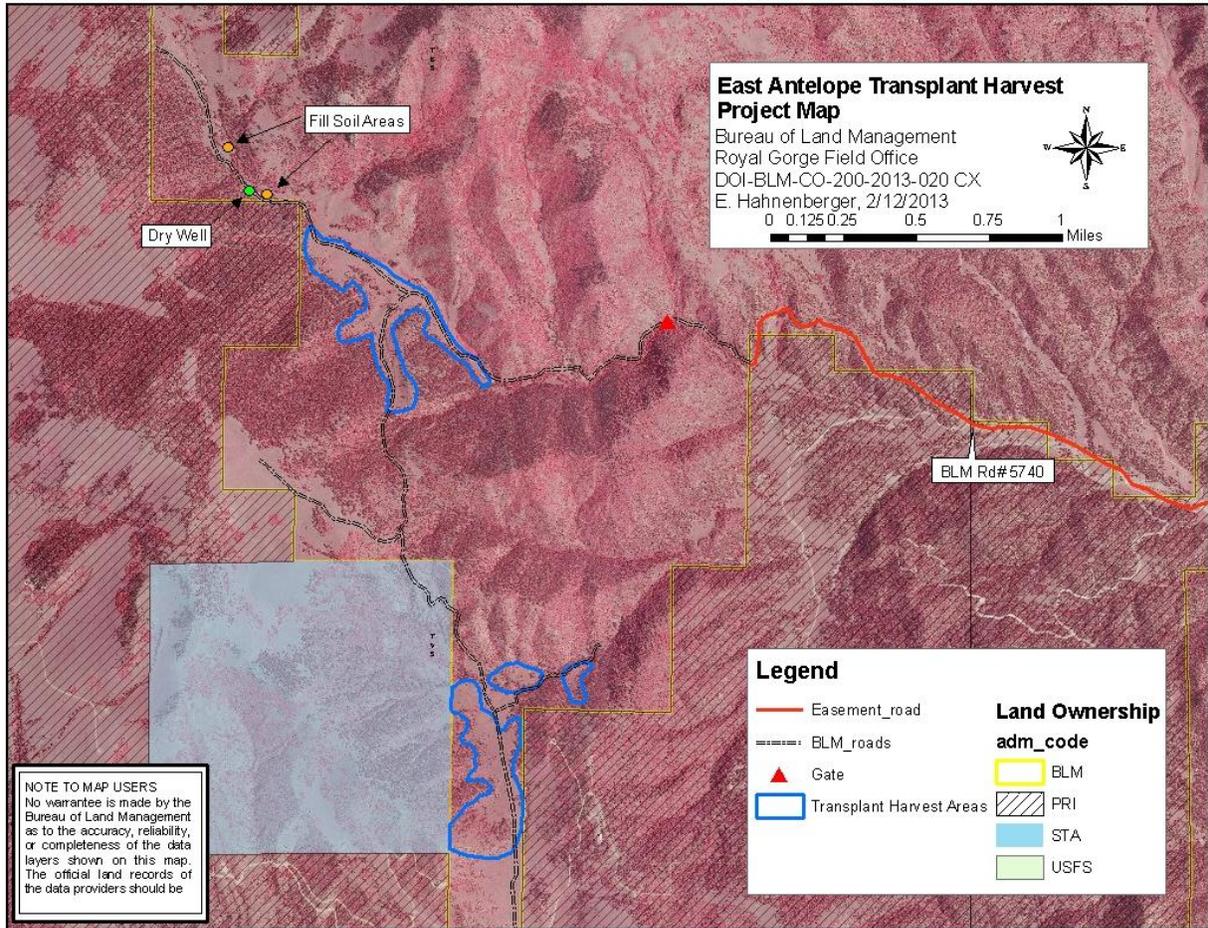
The proposed activity will result in short term ground disturbance associated with off road travel. There would also be short term ground disturbance where the holes from trees are removed and backfilled from surrounding soil. The harvest areas will be monitored and posted to prevent the creation of any new roads. Providing local transplant harvest opportunities will promote native tree planting along the Front Range of Colorado rather than exotics or non-natives.

In the past, roads have been damaged due to hauling and harvesting during wet ground conditions. Transplant, post, or Christmas tree harvesters will be required to cease work during the wet periods. All gates will be closed after entering each area and any fences damaged will be repaired. Harvesting will take place in the selected areas (See project area maps) over the next several years. Existing roads will be repaired if damaged by the activity. All temporary roads

created to remove forest products shall be closed to motor vehicles upon completion of the project. Equipment used for the activity includes hand tools or shovels, mechanical tree spades, chainsaws, trailers and pickup trucks.

There is an old open dry water well next to one of the cabins in the northern portion of the tree harvest area (See project map). This well is uncovered and about 30 feet deep which creates a safety hazard. While the transplant harvester is working in this area they will be approached about utilizing their equipment to fill in this safety hazard by taking soil from a nearby dry pond bottom or dry wash to fill in this well with the nearby soil.





### Required Transplant Harvesting Stipulations

1. Harvesters are required to have their permit on their person while digging or transporting trees.
2. Harvesters are required to fill the hole to a minimum of 4 inches of the natural terrain surface with surrounding soil or rocks after the tree has been dug.
3. Harvesters are required to remove all trash or refuse they brought onto public lands.
4. No hauling or digging is permitted when weather or ground conditions are such that damage to the roads and ground will occur.
5. Harvesters will respect other forest user's rights, no blocking of public roads with equipment. This is especially true during hunting seasons. No hindering other potential on-going contracts.
6. Harvesters will protect fences, open and close gates when entering and leaving transplant areas.

7. The permit is only good for lands administered by the Royal Gorge Field office. The contractor is responsible for knowing BLM/private land boundaries and is responsible for any tree removal or damage to private lands.
8. Harvesters will inspect each tree for bird nests or wildlife use and leave the tree as a reserve if wildlife use is discovered.
9. Avoid damaging reserve trees or trees not being harvested.

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:**

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/96

Decision Number: 6-1, 6-13, 6-14

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:** This proposed action is listed as a Categorical Exclusion in DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11.9 (C.5). None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Exclusion Criteria	YES	NO
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; lands with wilderness characteristics; 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.		X
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
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.		X
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.		X
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		X
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.		X
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.		X

### INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW

NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Matt Rustand	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds	MR, 2/22/2013
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	JW, 2/21/2013
Chris Cloninger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	NA
John Lamman	Range Management Spec.	Weeds	JL, 02/22/2013
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands	DG 2/22/2013
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	SSC, 3/5/13
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology	-----
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils	JS, 2/21/13
Ty Webb	Prescribed Fire Specialist	Air Quality	TW, 2/22/13
Jeff Covington	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	JC, 2/22/2013
Kalem Lenard	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers,	KL, 2/26/2013
John Nahomenuk	River Manager	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers	NA
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry	2/21/2013
Martin Weimer	NEPA Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Noise, SocioEconomics	mw, 2/21/13

Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	MMW, 5/7/13
Erin Watkins	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	NA
Vera Matthews	Realty Specialist	Realty	vm, 2/28/2013
Steve Craddock	Realty Specialist	Realty	NA
Steve Cunningham	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement	NA

**REMARKS:**

**Cultural Resources:** Although cultural resources were found near the area of potential effect [see reports CR-RG-13-36 (P) and CR-RG-13-122 (P)], no sites determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were found. Therefore, the proposed project will have no impact on any historic properties (those eligible for 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 records of T&E species in the transplant area; therefore, there will be no impacts to T&E species as a result of the proposed action.

**Migratory Birds:** In order to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which requires that BLM avoid actions that “take” migratory birds, it is usually recommended that vegetation disturbance be avoided from May 15 thru July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds. If transplants are to be removed during this time period it is recommended that the permit holder be required to inspect trees for the presence of bird nests. If a nest is present the tree should be left in place. If this preventative action is followed, the risk of “take” of migratory birds is extremely low with the proposed action.

**Wastes, Solid or Hazardous:** If the project involves oil or fuel usage, transfer or storage, an adequate spill kit and shovels are required to be onsite during project implementation. The project proponent will be responsible for adhering to all applicable local, State and Federal regulations in the event of a spill, which includes following the proper notification procedures in BLM’s Spill Contingency Plan.

**COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional):**

**NAME OF PREPARER:** Ken Reed

**SUPERVISORY REVIEW:** Melissa K.S. Garcia

**NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** /s/ Martin Weimer

**DATE:** 3/11/14

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this Categorical Exclusion and have decided to implement the Proposed Action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 10 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:

/s/ Keith E. Berger  
Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 3/13/14