

Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Royal Gorge Field Office

3028 E. Main

Cañon City, CO 81212

OFFICE: Royal Gorge Field Office

PROJECT NUMBER: DOI-BLM-COF02-2014-0040 DN

CASEFILE: (if applicable)

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Sand Gulch ROW Thinning

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T49N, R11E, Sections 9, 10, 11, 15 & 16

APPLICANT (if any):

A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures

Historically, the forests of the Rocky Mountain West were known to be less dense, consisting of larger and older trees than the forests of present times. There were dense stands of trees, but these were intermixed in a mosaic pattern of diverse forest age classes and openings. Whereas, the forests of today are characterized as even-aged stands with little age class diversity and many are overstocked with too many trees per acre. During the settlement of the Arkansas River drainage most of the larger trees were removed for infrastructure and energy, thereby altering the natural processes. Consequently, most of the old growth trees are gone and the older/larger trees seen today were probably too small to be utilized at settlement times. These facts serve as a historical reminder of how different the forests of today are compared to those prior to settlement.

The proposed action is to commercially thin 125 acres of mixed conifer forest adjacent to the powerline right-of-way (ROW) at the top of Sand Gulch which is north of Howard, Colorado. The project objectives are to improve forest health conditions by reducing tree densities and removing unhealthy trees such as those with dwarf mistletoe, under attack by bark beetles, or with declining crowns. Additionally, reducing the forest density adjacent to this powerline should reduce the potential for intensive wildfires within the project area and therefore work towards protecting this important infrastructure. The BLM utilizes maintained energy transmission and pipeline corridors and roadways to aid in wildfire operations and to protect communities, resource values and infrastructure.

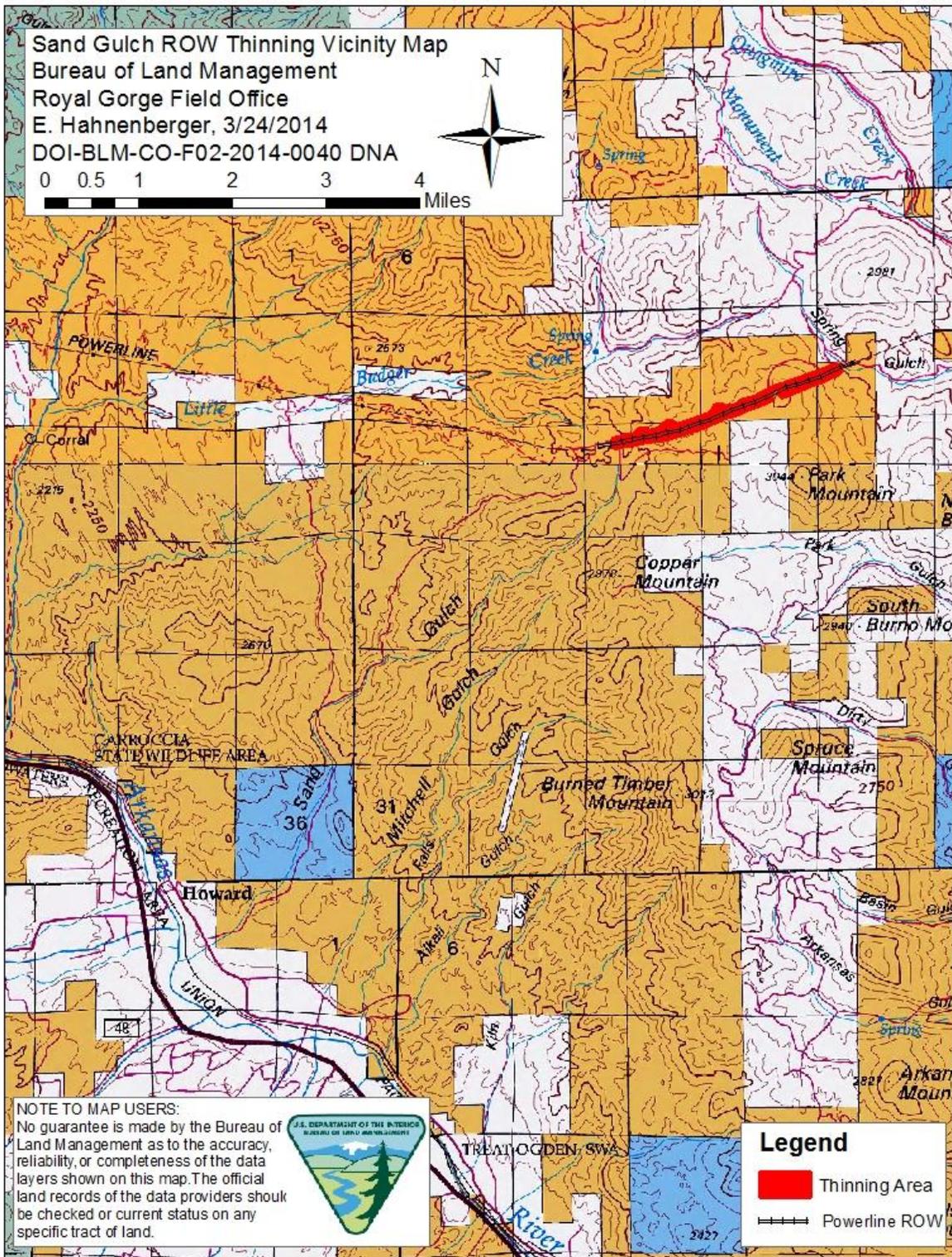
The proposed treatment is a thinning. Thinning is an intermediate treatment method that involves the removal of a portion of the larger conifer trees within the project area to meet a desired spacing which relates to the number of trees per acre. All aspen shall be considered protected reserve trees. A representation of all age classes and species shall be reserved for forest diversity purposes.

Existing BLM and county roads shall be utilized for the forest product removal. The existing BLM roads shall be maintained and improved to facilitate the forest product removal. All temporary roads created to remove forest products shall be closed to motor vehicles upon completion of the timber harvest. Trees are likely to be harvested by a commercial logging company. The work is likely to be performed with chainsaws, skidders, mechanized harvesters, tractors, pickup trucks, trailers, log loaders and/or log hauling trucks.

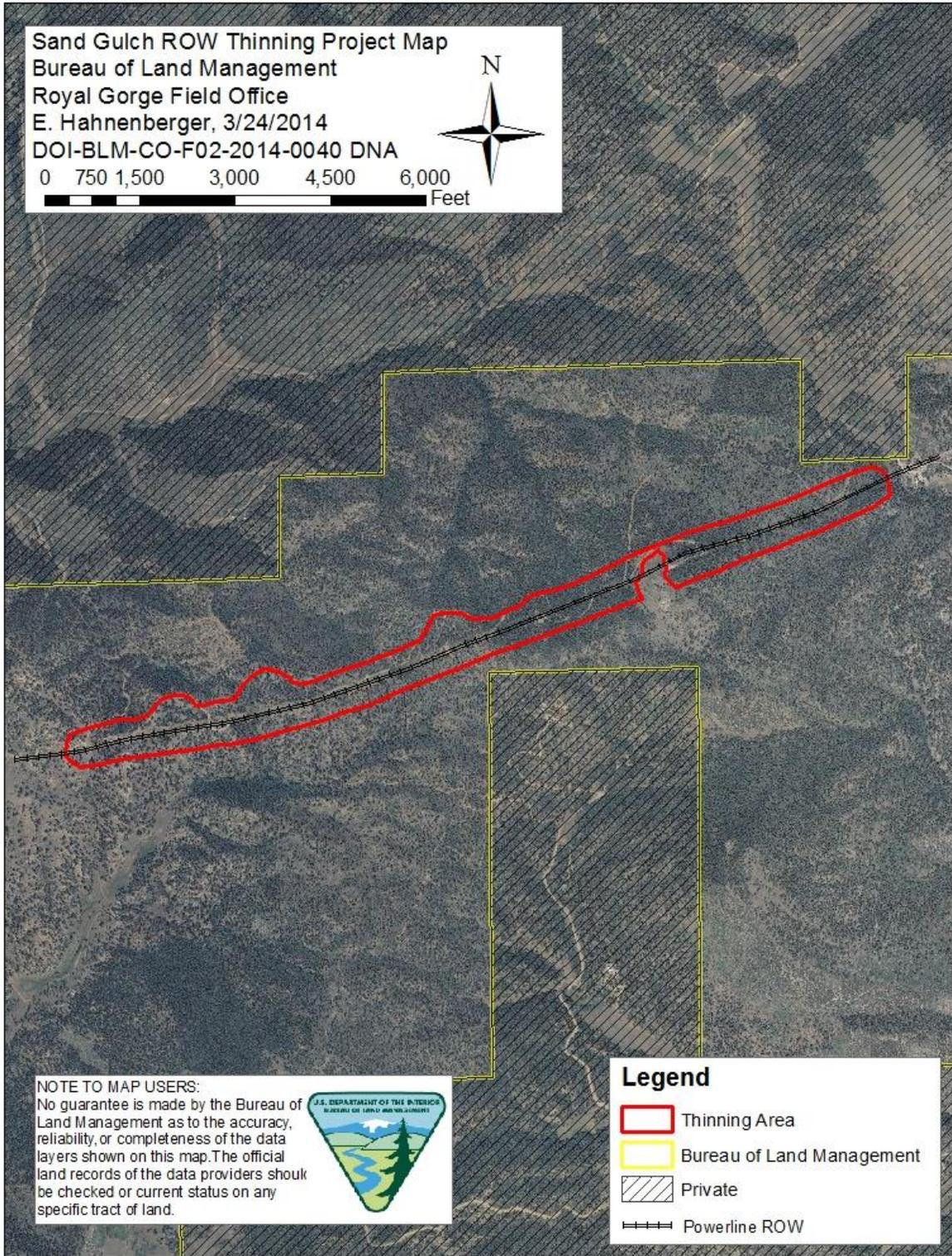
The slash created from the activity shall be piled where it can be burned effectively in suitable weather and not damage the reserve trees. The piles shall be created at the landings or within the harvest units. These piles should be approximately 10 feet in diameter in size. These piles shall be constructed to minimize the incorporation of dirt into the piles. Piles may be allowed to cure for a season to minimize emissions during burning activities.

All known improvements will be protected or repaired if damaged, including but not limited to fences, gates, watering facilities, property corners, etc. Livestock grazing is permitted in the area between June 1 and October 15. All gates will remain closed during this period except as necessary for entering and leaving the project.

Vicinity Map



Project Map



B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

LUP Name Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan	Date Approved 5/13/1996
Other Document	Date Approved
Other Document	Date Approved

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions: Badger Creek Subregion #3
3-1, Vegetation will be managed to accomplish other BLM initiatives i. e., riparian, wildlife, etc.
3-13, Productive forested lands will be managed for sustained-yield
3-14, A portion of the forested lands will be available for intensive management.

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the previous LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions).

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Fuels Management – Western Fremont County Fuels Planning EA

CO-200-2005-0021 EA

List by name and date other documentation relevant to the proposed action (e.g., biological assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, and monitoring report).

Badger Creek Land Health Assessment 2010

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Yes. The Proposed Action is within the same analysis area and will follow the guidelines that were established in the Western Fremont County Fuels Planning EA (CO-200-2005-0021 EA).

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?

Yes. Two alternatives were evaluated in the Western Fremont County Fuels Planning EA (CO-200-2005-0021 EA). The two alternatives that were analyzed included the proposed action and no action. The analysis appropriately considered current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values. The proposed action will work towards creating a healthy forest by removing trees with unhealthy characteristics.

Under the No Action Alternative, forest health or fuels reduction treatments would not occur. Forest health will continue to decline with trees dying due to competition with neighboring trees for limited soil moisture. The no action alternative, lacking forest health or fuels reduction treatments, fails to consider the need to protect adjacent land owners or the powerline, protect the area from potential beetle infestations, promote the growth of declining aspen stands and, in general, work towards a healthier forest.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Yes. The information in the existing EA (CO-200-2005-0021 EA) remains valid and relevant to the Proposed Action. There is no known new information or circumstances that would change the analysis.

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action are the same and remain unchanged as those analyzed in the existing EA (CO-200-2005-0021 EA), both quantitatively and qualitatively.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes. The public involvement and review associated with the existing EA (CO-200-2005-0021 EA) remains adequate for the Proposed Action.

E. Persons/Agencies /BLM Staff Consulted

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW			
NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Matt Rustand	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds	MR, 4/1/2014
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation,	JW, 3/26/14

		Farmland	
Chris Cloninger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	NA
John Lamman	Range Management Spec.	Weeds	JL, 04/29/2014
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands	DG, 4/2/14
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	-----
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology	MJS, 4/14/2014
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils	JS, 3/31/2014
Ty Webb	Prescribed Fire Specialist	Air Quality	TW, 3/31/2014
Jeff Covington	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	JC, 3/26/2014
Kalem Lenard	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers	KL, 4/7/2014
John Nahomenuk	River Manager	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers	-----
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry	3/18/2014
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	NA
Michael Troyer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	MDT 9/2/14
Greg Valladares	Realty Specialist	Realty	08/26/2014
Ty Webb	Fire Management Officer	Fire Management	8/26/2014
Steve Cunningham	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement	NA

Other Agency Represented: None.

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: Although cultural resources were found near the area of potential effect [see report CR-RG-14-106 (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 any federally listed or BLM sensitive species within or near the project area. The Proposed Action will not result in impacts to TES species.

Migratory Birds: To be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Memorandum of Understanding between BLM and USFWS required by Executive Order 13186, BLM must avoid actions, where possible, that result in a “take” of migratory birds. Pursuant to BLM Instruction Memorandum 2008-050, to reduce impacts to Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), no habitat disturbance (removal of vegetation such as timber, brush, or grass) is allowed

during the periods of May 15 - July 15, the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds. The provision will not apply to completion activities in disturbed areas that were initiated prior to May 15 and continue into the 60-day period.

An exception to this timing limitation will be granted if nesting surveys conducted no more than one week prior to vegetation-disturbing activities indicate no nesting within 30 meters (100 feet) of the area to be disturbed. Surveys shall be conducted by a qualified breeding bird surveyor between sunrise and 10:00 a.m. under favorable conditions.

Management of Land Boundaries and Cadastral Services: The section lines in the proposed work area were dependently surveyed in 1930. The Public Land Survey System (PLSS-GCDB) point reliability within the project area is +/- 45 ft. The proposed work area is near several PLSS corner monuments which control Federal Interest land boundaries that will need monument protection in order to preserve the significant survey evidence.

From our records the boundaries and interior corners to sections 9, 10, 11 and 15 have not been ran and marked. With that being said the boundaries within these listed sections cannot be located without a Cadastral Investigation or Cadastral Survey.

I will provide corner descriptions and coordinates for the monuments, bearing trees, and boundary line markers in the area for the proper protection. If any bearing trees or line trees marking a boundary are found within the project area cut them above the blaze to preserve the location of this evidence. Notify the project lead of any cut bearing trees or line trees so that the project lead can notify Cadastral Survey so we can update our records. If any field work is required from Cadastral Survey, funding to perform the necessary work is required.

Wastes, Hazardous or Solid: 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.

Realty: Potential conflict with an authorized overhead electrical powerline right-of-way (COC-0-128242). The right-of-way is authorized to the Department of Energy Western Area Power Administration, Rocky Mountain Region and is 125 feet in width (62.5 feet either side of the centerline).

MITIGATION: None.

CONCLUSION

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Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

SIGNATURE OF PROJECT LEAD: Ken Reed

SIGNATURE OF NEPA COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

SIGNATURE OF NEPA SUPERVISOR: Melissa K.S. Garcia

SIGNATURE OF THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: /s/ Keith E. Berger
Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE: 9/18/14

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.