

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Categorical Exclusion
2015 RGFO Planting**

PREPARING OFFICE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



Categorical Exclusion

2015 RGFO Planting

DOI-BLM-CO-FO20-2015-0029 CX

Prepared by
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office
Canon City, CO

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Table of Contents

1. Name 1

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List of Maps

Map 1.1. 3
Map 1.2. 4
Map 1.3. 5
Map 1.4. 6

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List of Tables

Table 1.1. Exclusion Criteria 7
Table 1.2. Interdisciplinary Team Review 8

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Chapter 1. Name

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A. Background

In 2013 the Royal Gorge Wildfire burned 3,218 acres of pinyon and juniper forest. A majority of the burn area was on lands owned by Canon City Royal Gorge Park but there are adjacent BLM lands that were impacted.

The East Peak Wildfire burned approximately 12,060 acres of forested lands southwest of Walsenberg, Colorado. There are two 40 acre isolated BLM parcels within the wildfire area. Estimates are 60-70% large tree mortality on these BLM parcels and live trees have severe crown scorch.

In 2011 and 2012 timber harvests were conducted on Jack Hall Mountain. These harvests were followed a few years later by the Spruce Beetle epidemic currently sweeping across the state. Englemann spruce and Douglas-fir seedlings will be planted within these patch cut areas to improve and assist in forest recovery, especially in light of the on-going beetle epidemic.

BLM Office:

RGFO

Lease/Serial/Case File No.:

Proposed Action Title/Type:

Location of Proposed Action:

Royal Gorge Burn Area: T.18S., R.71W., Section 33, 6th PM.

East Peak Burn Area: T.30S., R.67W., Sections 9 & 10, 6th PM

Jack Hall Timber Sale Area: T.50N., R.11E., Sections 20, 21, 22, 28, 29, NMPM

Applicant:

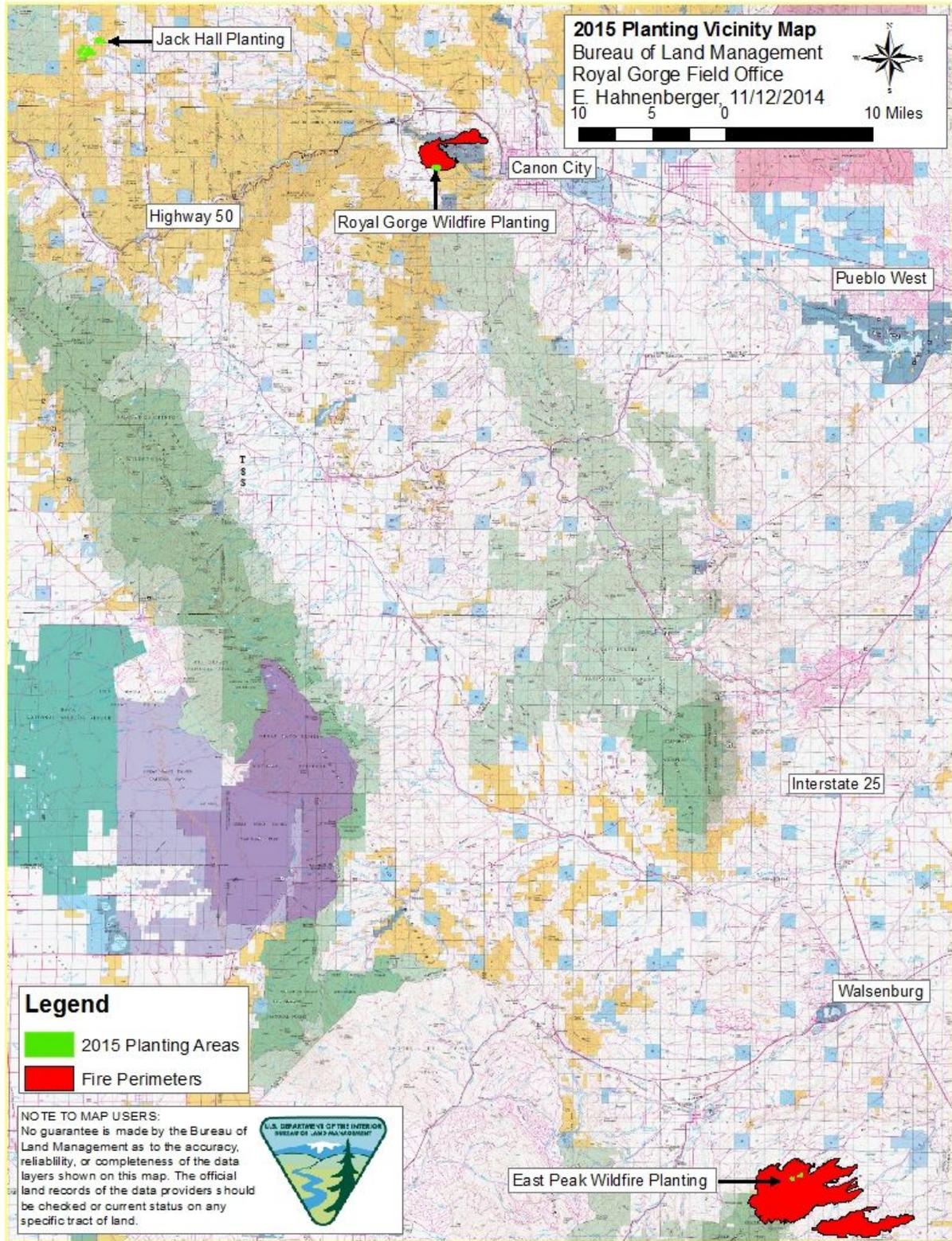
Description of Proposed Action: The proposed action is to plant tree seedlings in disturbed areas that need reforestation. The planting will be done by hand with shovels or plant bars by the RGFO forester, BLM employees, students, volunteers, and possibly Boy Scouts. All planting efforts will occur on BLM managed Public Lands.

Royal Gorge Burn Area: Pinyon pine seedlings will be planted in suitable locations on the southeast side of the wildfire area and in clumps away from the edge of the wildfire or green trees. The goal of reforestation will be to reduce the amount of time needed for the site to return to an open pinyon forest condition.

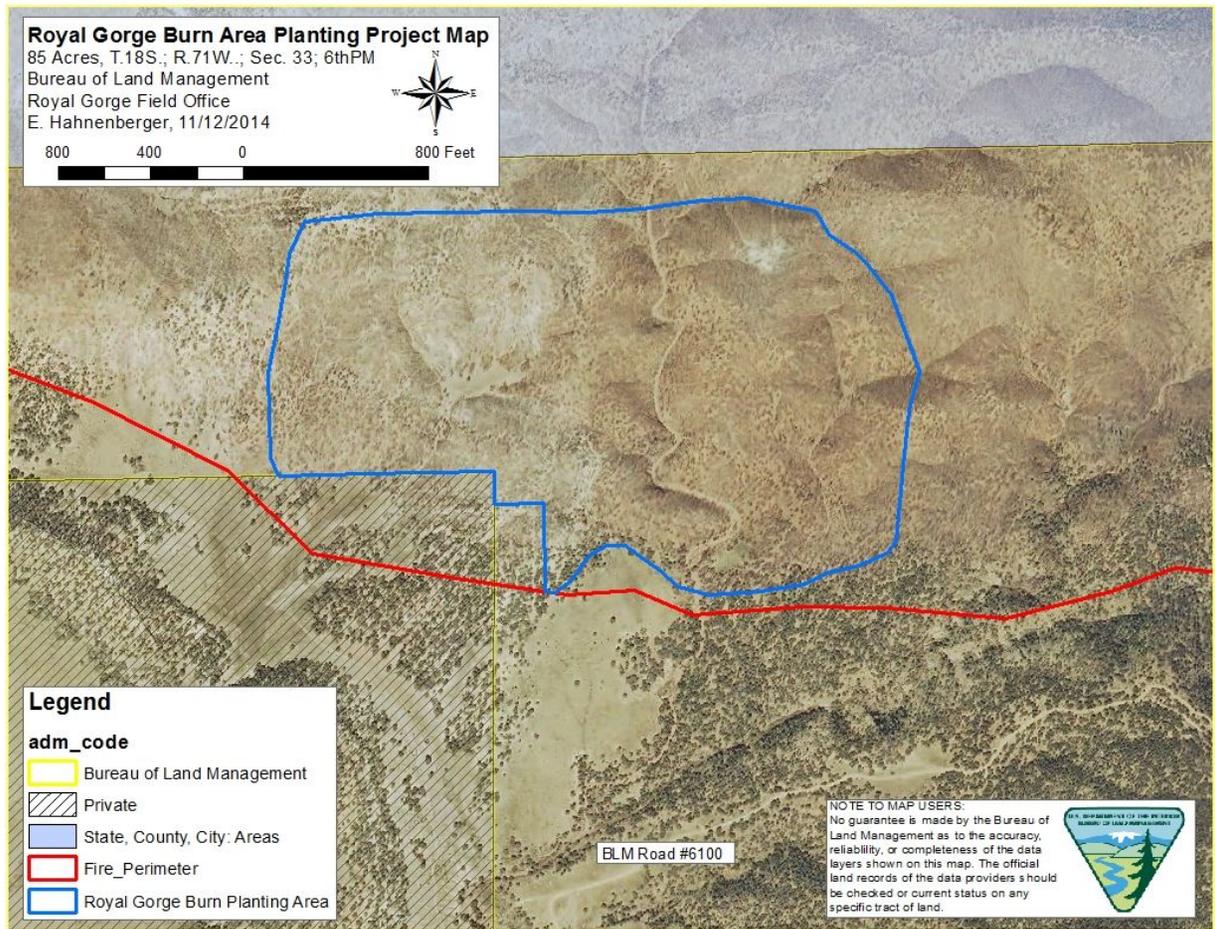
East Peak Burn Area: Ponderosa pine seedlings will be planted on these BLM parcels to accelerate forest recovery and prevent the site transitioning to Gambel oak. Due to widespread fire-caused mortality in these units, residual ponderosa seed sources will be extremely limited. In order to prevent colonization by early succession shrub species following this disturbance that will choke-out and slow forest regeneration, the forestry program will jump-start the process by planting ponderosa seedlings.

Jack Hall Timber Sale Area: Existing forest cover on Jack Hall is predominantly mixed Englemann spruce and Douglas-fir with a few patches of Quaking aspen. The proposed action

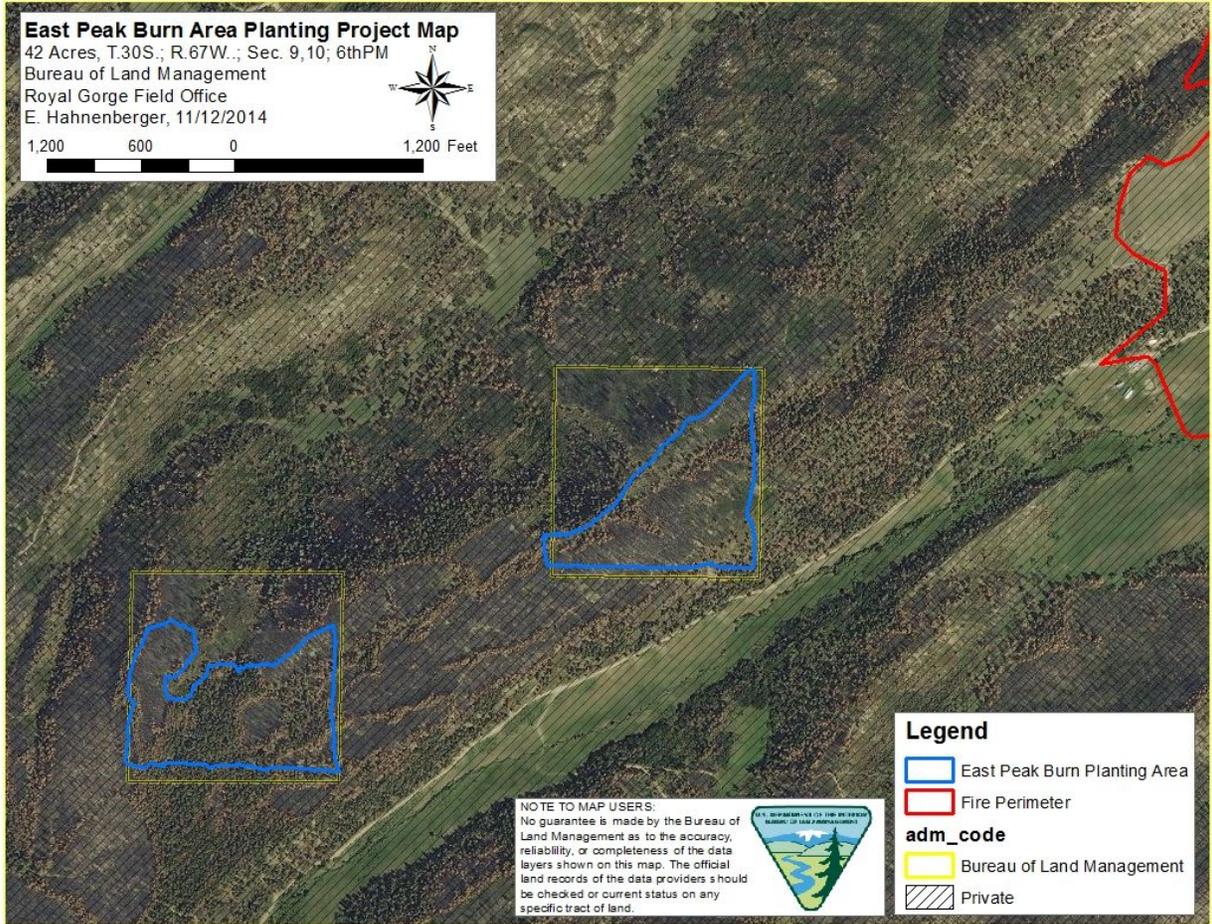
seeks to mimic the natural successional trajectory by maintaining the area's most common tree species. Due to the onslaught of the spruce beetle in mature spruce, the re-establishment of spruce seedlings is especially important to provide for future forest conditions. Douglas-fir and Englemann spruce seedlings will be planted on these sites to jump-start forest regeneration and maintain forest cover. The main planting effort will take place in Jack Hall 1 (see Map 1.4) which was harvested in 2011. Any extra or leftover seedlings will be planted in Jack Hall II.



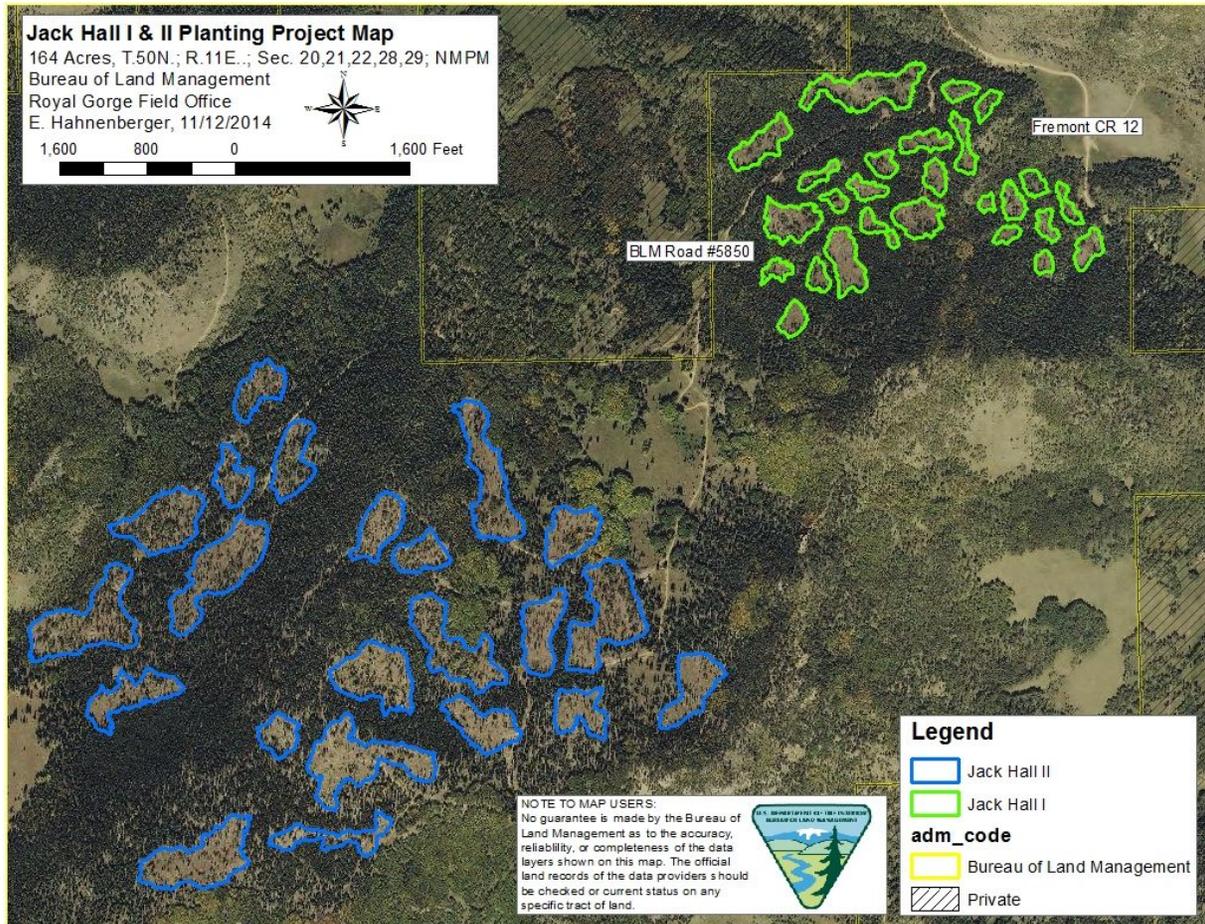
Map 1.1.



Map 1.2.



Map 1.3.



Map 1.4.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name:

Name of Plan: RGFO

Date Approved: 5/13/1996

Decision Number: C-51, 1-1, 1-14, 1-15; 3-1, 3-13, 3-14; 10-1, 10-12, 10-13

Decision Language: Determine desired plant community in all disturbed sites. Vegetation will be managed to accomplish other BLM initiatives i.e., riparian, wildlife, etc. Productive forested lands will be managed for sustained yield. A portion of the forested lands will be available for intensive management.

Date Approved/Amended:

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

Chapter 1 Name
B. Land Use Plan Conformance

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, or 516 DM 11.9,

This categorical exclusion 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 apply.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: This proposed action is listed as a Categorical Exclusion in DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11.9 (C3). None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Table 1.1. Exclusion Criteria

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

Table 1.2. Interdisciplinary Team Review

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW			
NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Matt Rustand	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds	MR, 3/4/2015
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	JW, 2/9/15
Chris Cloninger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	N/A
John Lamman	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland, Weeds	JL, 02/13/2014
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands	DG, 2/17/2015
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	SSC, 3/16/15
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils	JS, 2/11/15
Ty Webb	Prescribed Fire Specialist	Air Quality	TW, 2/10/15
Dave Parker	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	DP 3/26/15
Linda Skinner	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers,	LS, 3/3/2015
John Nahomenuk	River Manager	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers	N/A
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry	KR, 2/9/15
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	N/A
Michael Troyer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	MDT 4/20/15
Rich Rotte	Realty Specialist	Realty	RAR.2/9/15
Steve Cunningham	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement	NA
Ty Webb	Fire Management Officer	Fire	TW, 2/10/15

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: No historic properties were found in the area of potential effect [see reports CR-RG-09-15 (N), CR-RG-13-150 (N), CR-RG-14-091 (N), and CR-RG-15-120 (P)]. Therefore, the proposed undertaking will have no effect 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: The action will cause no effect to threatened or endangered species.

Migratory Birds: The action will not affect migratory birds.

D. Approval and Contact Information**COMPLIANCE PLAN** (optional):

NAME OF PREPARER: T. Miles Spong

Chapter 1 Name

D. Approval and Contact Information

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: K. Reed for M. Garcia Assistant Field Office Manager

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

DATE: 4/23/15

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: 4/23/15