U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
San Luis Valley Field Office
1313 E. Hwy. 160
Monte Vista, CO 81144

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-F03-2015-0023 CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: Saguache County Exploratory Pits

PLANNING UNIT:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

New Mexico Principal Meridian, Saguache County, Colorado
T. 46 N., R. 9 E., sec. 34, N1/2.

APPLICANT: Saguache County Road and Bridge

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Saguache County Road and Bridge has proposed digging 12 test pits. They will be dug with a small back hoe to a depth of approximately 8 feet and a diameter of 10 feet. The first two feet of soil will be removed from each pit and separated from the remainder of the material. When the pits are filled in, the topsoil will be put into each pit last. The exploration program is to determine if there is suitable decomposed granite material. The track hoe will be transported along the road, unloaded and track from south to north, digging the pits at the coordinates listed in table 1.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

Name of Plan: San Luis Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: December 18, 1991

Decision Number: ROD #1 1-4, page 13

Decision Language: Federal mineral estate will be open on 486,240 acres (99 percent) and will be available for disposal of mineral materials except in riparian zones.

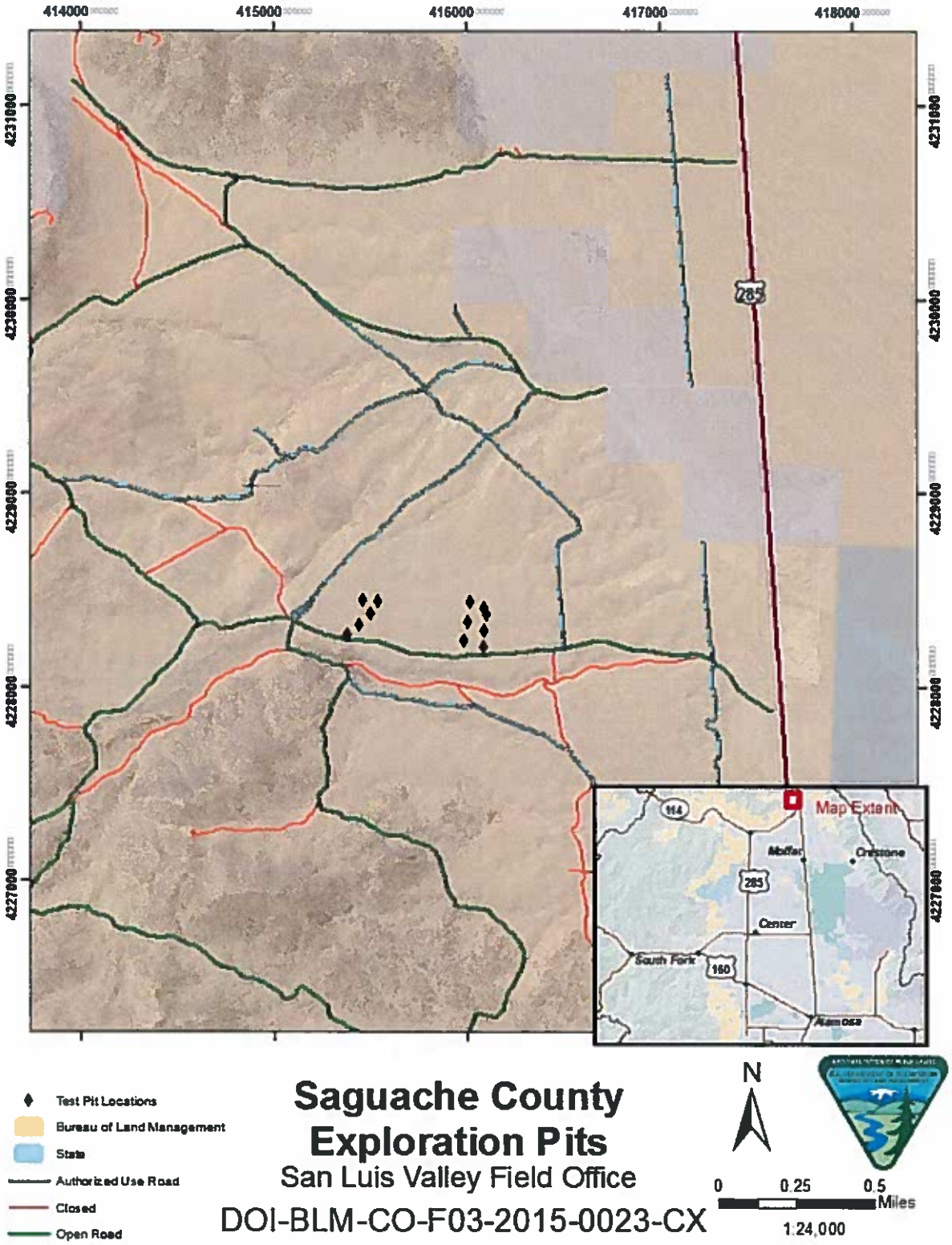

Figure 1. Location of test pits

Pit	NAD83 E	NAD83 N
1	415375	4228273
2	415442	4228324
3	415498	4228381
4	415460	4228446
5	415538	4228443
6	416079	4228206
7	416081	4228290
8	416093	4228371
9	416084	4228404
10	416010	4228436
11	415996	4228334
12	415977	4228241

Table 1. UTM coordinates of test pit locations

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: This proposed action is listed as a Categorical Exclusion in DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11 F (9). 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**
Joel Humphries	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds, Fisheries	JTH 11/2/2015
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	JW 10/13/2015
Eduardo Duran	NRS	Riparian, T&E species	END 10/29/15
Rebecca Morris	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	RM 10/9/2015
Negussie Tedela	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils, Air Quality	NT 10/27/2015
Sean Hines	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	SJH 10/15/2015
Clayton Davey	Park Ranger	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers,	CBD 10/15/15
Martin Weimer	NEPA Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Noise, SocioEconomics	mw, 10/15/15
Brian Fredericks	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	BAF 11/3/2015
Leon Montoya	Realty Specialist	Realty	LM 10/13/2015

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: Although cultural resources were found near the area of potential effect [see report 16-SLVFO-004], 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). If new cultural or paleontological resources are discovered during operations, all work in the vicinity of the resource will cease and the Authorized Officer with the BLM will be 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 BLM representative. Within 48 hours of the discovery, the State Historic Preservation Office and other interested 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.

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: This CX was prepared in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in accordance with the Endangered Species Act, was not required. The Proposed Action would have no effect on any threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species that is listed under the Endangered Species Act. Consultation would be initiated if the Proposed Action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to a listed species or critical

habitat that was not considered in this analysis, or a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by this action.

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.

An exception to this timing limitation will be granted if nesting surveys conducted within 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.

COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional):

NAME OF PREPARER: Rebecca Morris

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Martin Weimer

DATE: 11/3/2015

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: _____
Sam Dearstyne, Acting Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 11/4/15