

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
White River Field Office  
220 E Market St  
Meeker, CO 81641

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-CO-110-2010-0176-EA

**CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:**

**PROJECT NAME:** Dry Fork Well and Pipeline

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** T 1 N, R 97 W. Sec 36 SENE; Sec 25

**APPLICANT:** Mike Lopez

**ISSUES AND CONCERNS:** Currently cattle using the southwest part of the North Dry Fork allotment (#06005) must trail west down the county road along the fence and cross RBC #22 below or west of the cattle guard to access water in the ditch. The watergap is located in a low spot which is blind to drivers approaching from the east. Thus there is potential for motorists driving west on the county road to have a collision with watering livestock. This is a safety issue that could be avoided by having water available by drilling a water well. There are about 20 students/employees currently living at the Little Hills Experiment station who use this road on a daily basis.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:**

***Background/Introduction:*** The proposed well will be located on a previously disturbed site where there is an existing United State Geological Survey (USGS) monitoring well. New disturbance will be required to bury 4,200 feet of 1.5 inch water line and place a stock tank. Previous analysis for a similar project (water pipelines and tank) at a nearly identical site can be found in *North Dry Fork Water Development* (CO-110-2005-40-EA). The White River/Yampa Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) committee approved their cost share participation in this project on May 19, 2010. The project would be authorized under a Cooperative Agreement between the BLM, White River/Yampa HPP Committee, and the grazing permittee for Range Improvement.

**Proposed Action:**

- 1) Use a small truck mounted drill to drill a water well to the first adequate water for livestock watering. No new disturbance would be created for drilling purposes.
- 2) Equip the well with a pump and solar panels on the existing, previously disturbed site.

- 3) Trench and bury approximately 4,200 feet of 1.5 inch high density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe in the flat wide drainage bottom and place a 6-10 foot diameter stock tank at the north terminus of the pipeline.
- 4) In the future, the well would be seasonally pumped from around May 1st to June 10th. Maximum water use is estimated at 4,000 gallons per day. All areas of earthen disturbance will be re-contoured and re-vegetated with seed mix number three from the reclamation protocol as shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Seed Mix for Reclamation of the Project Area**

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	VARIETY	lbs PLS/ACRE
Western Wheatgrass	<i>Pacopyrum smithii</i>	Rosana	4
Bluebunch Wheatgrass	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicate</i>	Whitmar	3.5
Indian Ricegrass	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	Rimrock	3
Needle and Thread	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>		2.5
Lewis Flax	<i>Linum lewisii</i>	Maple Grove	1
Scarlet Globemallow	<i>Sphaeralcea coccinea</i>		0.5

**No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative would involve denying the proposal to drill a new well and install a waterline and stock tanks.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:** There was an alternative to use the existing USGS well for livestock water. Preliminary tests were done on the water from the well, and water quality was not adequate for watering livestock. There were also concerns about the integrity of the casing of the well, and logging will need to be done by the USGS to determine the condition of the casing and if it will need to be plugged and abandoned.

**PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE ACTION:** The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a dependable water source at the abandoned well site during the spring grazing period (approximately May 1 - June 10) in order to reduce cattle trailing into Dry Fork proper, thereby improving livestock distribution on this part of the allotment and eliminating the need for cattle to trail about 0.6 miles. A water source at the well would also eliminate the need for cattle to trail to the water gap thereby reducing the potential for a vehicle – livestock collision which is presently a safety hazard. The need for the action is outlined by the BLM’s responsibility to respond to applications for range improvements under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA).

**DECISION TO BE MADE:** The BLM will decide whether or not to approve the new water development, and if so, under what conditions.

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-25

Decision Language: “Rangeland improvements will be identified in activity plans. Range improvements are necessary to control livestock use and improve rangeland condition.”

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

**STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:** In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

**TABLE 2: INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS RECORD CHECKLIST**

<b>DETERMINATION OF STAFF:</b>		
<b>Determination</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Rationale for Determination*</b>
<b>Natural, Biological and Cultural Resources</b>		
NI	Air Quality	Construction and drilling will be short-term, less than a month and confined to localized areas. Dust and emissions would be similar to what could be expected from casual use.
PI	Soils	See below.
PI	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	See below.
NI	Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	This well will be completed within the Unita formation and will be relatively shallow, therefore impacts are unlikely. The surface disturbance will be minor and short-term mostly related installing the pipelines and therefore is unlikely to impact surface water quality.
NI	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	The riparian zone in the Dry Fork watergap is on Colorado Parks and Wildlife property. There are no riparian resources that would be directly affected by physical project features.
PI	Vegetation	See below.
PI	Invasive, Non-native Species	See below.
NP	Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plant Species	There are no plant species listed, proposed, or candidate to the Endangered Species Act, or plants considered sensitive by the BLM,

<b>DETERMINATION OF STAFF:</b>		
<b>Determination</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Rationale for Determination*</b>
		that are known to inhabit areas influenced by the Proposed Action.
NP	Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Animal Species	Special status animals potentially influenced by this project and its subsequent operation are the BLM-sensitive Brewer's sparrow (addressed in the Migratory Bird section), and BLM-sensitive mountain and flannelmouth suckers and northern leopard frog (addressed in the Aquatic Wildlife section).
PI	Migratory Birds	See below.
NI	Aquatic Wildlife	Construction and shorter term operation of this project would have no measurable influence on downstream aquatic habitats that exist in the Dry Fork of Piceance Creek and the mainstem of Piceance Creek. These perennial systems are strongly influenced by agricultural uses but persist in supporting populations of the BLM-sensitive mountain and flannelmouth suckers and the northern leopard frog. Construction-derived sediments are expected to be minor in quantity and short-term in duration and would represent discountable additions to current sediment loads. Possible long-term declining trends in bottomland ground cover communities are more appropriately addressed and resolved during periodic review of grazing management decisions.
NI	Terrestrial Wildlife	The project area is encompassed by extensive mule deer and elk winter ranges that are occupied primarily from October through mid-May. A very small number of elk make use of the project area during the summer months. In the short term, the expansion of livestock grazing influences on 42 acres of bottomland sagebrush community beginning in early May would have little influence on the availability or quality of herbaceous forage for spring and fall big game use. Possible long-term declining trends in bottomland ground cover communities and its cumulative influence on big game forage supplies are more appropriately addressed and resolved during periodic review of grazing management decisions. Project-related effects on small mammal communities would likely parallel those discussed for migratory birds, i.e., population abundance and composition would remain static on the lower 19 acres of bottomland habitat and, with declining quantities of herbaceous ground cover as a forage and cover base, would likely decline in the upper 23 acres.
PI	Cultural Resources	See below.
NP	Paleontology	Project is in the drainage bottom alluvium, and should not affect any scientifically important fossils.
NP	Wild Horses	The Proposed Action is located in the area locally known as Dry Fork of the Piceance. This area is not part of the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area which manages for wild horses. However, in the area south of this project location (locally known as Magnolia Bench) it is currently estimated that there are 13 to 18 head of wild horses utilize. The last unsuccessful attempt at gathering all of the wild horses in this area occurred in 2002.

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for impact analyzed in detail in the EA

### **NATURAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

## SOILS

*Affected Environment:* The classifications of soils that are within 30 meters of the proposed disturbance for the well and the pipeline and may be impacted by the project are shown in Table 3. There are no fragile soils or lands prone to landslides on Federal lands within the proposed disturbance.

**Table 3: Soil Classifications within 30 Meters of the Project**

Soil Classification	Range Site Description	Potentially Impacted Acres
Rentsac channery loam, 5-50% slopes	Pinyon Juniper Woodlands	2
Barcus channery loamy sand, 2-8% slopes	Foothills Swale	17

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The majority of the pipeline will be in Barcus channery loamy sand following an ephemeral draw up to the location of the trough.

Construction equipment used to install the pipeline will disturb soils within the ephemeral draw, compact soils, and damage vegetation. Soil impacts are likely to be direct and isolated to the project area. The applicant has not specified the depth of the trench for the pipeline. Assuming that the pipeline will be installed at an average of two feet below the surface, it may become exposed at some time in the future due to channel migration and erosion. The trench will likely be the width of a backhoe excavator and would likely be about 18 inches wide. Most of the route will be along an ephemeral draw that is scoured annually during afternoon thunderstorm events. Based on the condition of a similar pipeline in the drainage just to the east of this drainage, it is likely that the trench will be indistinguishable from undisturbed soils within two years due to annual high water events. Vegetation recovery is likely to be longer but on the order of 5-10 years due to the narrow area of surface disturbance.

Periodic repairs may be necessary in the years to come to repair sections of the pipeline exposed through scour and channel migration. Repairs will require construction equipment access and will redisturb sections of the pipeline.

Concentrated use of the area around the trough by cattle is likely to lead to annual disturbance from trampling. Soils along the drainage are likely to be disturbed due to cattle trailing to the trough location. Whether there would be more or less trailing and trampling as compared to the No Action Alternative is difficult to determine. However, since the proposed water source is closer to forage and cover for cattle, impacts will likely be less than what may be expected under the No Action Alternative. Impacts from cattle use are likely to be short-term due to the relatively short period grazing is approved for this area and most areas are expected to recover annually.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* Under this alternative livestock will continue to trail to the Dry Fork of the Piceance for stockwatering. There will be no new disturbance to soils to lay a pipeline or place a stock-tank.

*Mitigation:* None.

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils:* With the design feature for re-vegetation in the Proposed Action, this action is unlikely to reduce the productivity of soils impacted by surface disturbing activities.

## **WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

*Affected Environment:* There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored, or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The proposed activities will use regulated materials and will generate some solid and sanitary wastes. The potential for harm to human health or the environment is presented by risks associated with spills of fuel, oil and/or hazardous substances during drilling operations. Accidents and mechanical breakdown of machinery are also possible.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the No-Action Alternative.

*Mitigation:*

1. Construction sites shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times; all waste materials will be disposed of promptly at an appropriate waste disposal site. "Waste" means all discarded matter including, but not limited to, human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, oil drums, petroleum products, ashes, and equipment.

## **VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)**

*Affected Environment:* The entire project is located on the foothill swale range site/ecological site. Vegetation associated with this ecological site consists of western wheatgrass, basin wildrye, Indian ricegrass, and big sagebrush. Smaller amounts of needle and thread, rubber rabbitbrush, fourwing saltbush, and winterfat commonly are present in the potential plant community.

The project area would generally be classified as early to mid seral and is currently dominated by big sagebrush in the overstory with an understory of western wheatgrass, sandberg bluegrass, needle and thread, Indian ricegrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail. Cheatgrass, a non-native invasive is scattered throughout the area, and is present in high amounts along the lower portion of the project area. The upper half of the project area has a much lower percent cover of cheatgrass in the understory and is meeting land health standards.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The proposed project would disturb a small amount of vegetation. The majority of disturbance will occur within a raw drainage bottom that is sparsely vegetated. There will be disturbance to vegetation between the

well pad and the drainage bottom, as well as from the drainage bottom to the stock tank. Placement of the stock tank will create an area of common livestock congregation which will result in heavy use of vegetation and trampling within an approximately 100 meter radius around the tank. The disturbance to vegetation is estimated to be less than 0.5 acres. The proposed project will result in complete removal of vegetation along the trench. Disturbance to soils and vegetation within the project area does increase the potential for cheatgrass to become a dominate part of the vegetative community and therefore not meet land health standards. This disturbance would be a short-term, and with proper reclamation with the seed mix in the Proposed Action, would have little effect on the vegetative community.

Other impacts to vegetation would include increased livestock use within the drainage around the stock tank. Currently vegetation around the stock tank is dominated by cool-season perennial grasses and is meeting land health standards. Placement of a stock tank in this area will create an area of livestock congregation that will target these vegetative communities. Implementation of the allotment management plan (AMP) to provide adequate rest/rotation in these areas will be critical to maintain these plant communities, and prevent them from becoming dominated by non-native annual species such as cheatgrass.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* No disturbance to vegetation would occur.

*Mitigation:* None.

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities* (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The lower half of the project area near the Dry Fork is currently dominated in the understory by cheatgrass. Disturbance to soils in this area could increase the density of cheatgrass, however successful reclamation along the pipeline could actually increase the density of desirable cool-season perennial grasses and forbs. The upper half of the project area is currently meeting land health standards. Cheatgrass is present in small amounts in the plant community, but with proper re-vegetation and monitoring, it is not expected to increase in cover and the area will continue to meet land health standards.

## **INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES**

*Affected Environment:* There are two state of Colorado noxious weeds known to be present in the immediate project area. The alien annual cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) occurs in project area and along the Piceance creek bench as a result of un-vegetated soil disturbance and historic livestock overuse. Common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) is present along the access road and on the existing well pad around the project area. Both of these species are classified as List C noxious weeds on the state of Colorado noxious weed list.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The proposed project will create no more than 0.5 acres of earthen disturbance. The actual disturbance will be much likely significantly less than this amount. The areas of earthen disturbance could provide safe sites for the establishment of noxious and invasive species. With prompt revegetation and monitoring,

there is little likelihood that noxious weed or invasive species establishment and proliferation will take place over the short or long term.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There will be no change from the present situation.

*Mitigation:*

1. The project area will be monitored on a yearly basis for the occurrence of noxious weeds and/or invasive species.
2. All such species which occur will be eradicated using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

*Affected Environment:* The project area consists primarily of an unnamed draw that bisects woodland slopes and encompasses about 42 acres of basin big sagebrush habitat at elevations between 6,000-6,500 feet. The ground cover associated with the lower half of this draw (i.e., ~19 acres in closer proximity to the Dry Fork water gap) is generally dominated by cheatgrass. Based on a site visit in mid-September 2010, perennial bunchgrasses that were present showed little regrowth and very limited seedhead development after the 2010 period of use. Bunchgrass expression gradually improves to the north, such that the upper 23 acres of sagebrush bottomlands are represented by well-developed herbaceous understories that presently receive light to slight use by ungulates and retains substantial amounts of residual from the previous growing season and little cheatgrass. The proposed water tanks are centered in and are intended to exploit these conditions.

A companion project in next drainage to the east, Ernie Howard Gulch (established in 2005 or later), showed substantial use around the water tanks during a site visit in mid-September 2010, again with very little regrowth and limited seedhead production subsequent to the 2010 season of use. These effects appear to be confined primarily to bottomlands within about 500 meters of the water. In this area of livestock concentration, it appears that current livestock use patterns are prompting localized declines in herbaceous density, composition, and vigor. Although localized declines in ground cover conditions are expected, the proposed project would establish an opportunity to implement a use-rotation scheme in the future that would allow reductions in the duration or frequency of growing season use and thereby avoid declining trends in herbaceous ground cover and the proliferation and long-term entrenchment of invasive annuals in these bottomland habitats.

This project's influence on migratory birds would be confined primarily to those birds associated with the basin big sagebrush bottoms. A number of migratory birds, including green-tailed and spotted towhee, blue-gray gnatcatcher, and vesper sparrow, are associated with these bottomland habitats from early May through July, with the core nesting season spanning mid-May through mid-July. Brewer's sparrow, a BLM-sensitive species and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Bird of Conservation Concern, are common to abundant and well distributed in these habitats throughout the WRFO.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* In the event project construction were to occur coincident with migratory bird nesting activity, May 15 – July 15, nesting attempts in close proximity to the pipeline route, tank, and well location would be subjected to disturbance (a single construction year only) capable of causing absences of adult birds of sufficient duration to cause egg or chick mortality. Adverse levels of nest disruption would be expected to extend to about 20 acres, about half of which are generally in a degraded state (cheatgrass-dominated understory) and the other half possessing well developed understories showing little ungulate grazing influence (near-optimal state for most resident shrubland birds). Based on average nest densities, these effects may involve as many as 15-20 total nests, including up to a half-dozen Brewer's sparrow nests.

In the longer term, and assuming this project would be managed in a manner similar to the Ernie Howard water system, reductions in ground cover through the first half of the nest season and sporadic, generally limited redevelopment of that ground cover in areas formerly receiving little livestock use would likely prompt reductions in nest densities of up to 50 percent for most birds nesting in these bottomland habitats. Nest densities in the more degraded lower half of the drainage would remain static. It is expected that under these circumstances, overall reductions in breeding bird density would approach 40 percent (15-20 fewer pair) for the project drainage.

Although localized declines in ground cover conditions are expected, the proposed project would establish an opportunity to implement a use-rotation scheme in the future that would allow reductions in the duration or frequency of growing season use and moderate declining trends in nest habitat conditions.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There would be no action authorized that would alter current nest habitat conditions or that would have potential to disrupt localized migratory bird reproductive activities. Conversely, the opportunity to develop a grazing strategy that might allow for reductions in the duration or frequency of growing season use and moderate declining trends in nest habitat conditions in this series of lower elevation drainages would be foregone.

*Mitigation:* None.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

*Affected Environment:* The proposed project area was inventoried at the Class III, 100 percent pedestrian, level (Bowen 2010). One historic not eligible site and one historic isolated find were located in the project area. No sites eligible to the National Register will be affected by the proposed project.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The direct effects of the project are the ground disturbance associated with construction of the pipeline, pump, and stock tank. No sites eligible to the National Register will be directly affected by the proposed project. Indirect affects to sites in the area could be caused by cattle starting trails to the new stock tank. The area around the drainage was surveyed as that was the only area currently foreseeable that may

receive additional impacts, and no sites eligible to the National Register were located in this area either.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* Under this alternative there would be no surface disturbance resulting in no impacts to cultural resources.

*Mitigation:*

1. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.
  
2. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM WRFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The applicant will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The applicant, under guidance of the BLM, will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.

**ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:**

No flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern exist within the area affected by the Proposed Action. There are no environmental justice concerns associated with the Proposed Action. There are also no known Native American religious concerns, and the Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation has expressed the desire to not be consulted with on small range projects such as this.

**TABLE 4: OTHER ELEMENTS:** For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Other Elements	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Visual Resources			X
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations			X

Other Elements	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Recreation		X	
Access and Transportation			X
Geology and Minerals		X	
Areas of Environmental Concern	X		
Wilderness	X		
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X		
Cadastral	X		
Socio-Economics	X		
Law Enforcement	X		

## VISUAL RESOURCES

*Affected Environment:* The Proposed Action is within a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The Proposed Action is small in scale relative to activities in the surrounding landscape. Any modifications will be unseen to the casual observer which travels RBC 5 or 22 corridors. Newly disturbed soils will be in contrast with the surrounding vegetation. Prompt reclamation and revegetation activities will lessen the contrast and the objectives of the VRM III classification would be retained.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* Under this alternative, there would be no impact on visual resources.

*Mitigation:* None.

## HYDROLOGY/WATER RIGHTS

*Affected Environment:* The range improvement is located in an unnamed tributary to the Dry Fork of the Piceance and will be completed in the Unita Formation. Water use will only occur when cattle are on the allotment from around May 1 to June 10. Maximum water use is estimated at 4,000 gallons per day.

*Environmental Consequences the Proposed Action:* With proper permitting no impacts are expected to existing water rights and the hydrology of Yellow Creek is not likely to be impacted from this minor use. Assuming the cattle use only these stock tanks for water, with

evaporation from the tanks the consumptive use is expected to be about 2.8 acre-feet of water annually.

*Mitigation:*

1. Water rights and well permit applications should be filed by the BLM on the well to protect the water sources into the future.

**RANGELAND MANAGEMENT**

*Affected Environment:* This water development will take place within the North Dry Fork allotment (06005). The North Dry Fork allotment is used in common between Mike Lopez and Shults LLLP. The grazing schedule for the allotment is outlined in table 5 below.

**Table 5: Authorized Grazing within the North Dry Fork Allotment**

ALLOTMENT		LIVESTOCK		GRAZING PERIOD		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Number	Name	Kind	Number	Begin	End			
06005	North Dry Fork	Cattle	307	4/16	7/15	74/100	Active	781

Of the 307 cattle authorized on the allotment, 127 of them will belong to Mike Lopez and will use the proposed range improvement. The Shults LLLP livestock are further to the east and use a separate portion of the allotment.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The Proposed Action will improve livestock distribution by providing a dependable water source during the period of scheduled livestock use. This new water development along with the Open Gulch and Ernie Howard water systems will make it possible to rotate livestock use within the North Dry Fork pasture/allotment and allow for full establishment of desirable plants on the Greasewood burn, and rest/recovery within the allotment. The net effect of project implementation will be to facilitate achievement of vegetation management objectives of the Dry Fork AMP and the White River ROD/RMP.

Implementation of this project will prevent livestock from traveling all the way to RBC 22 to water. RBC 22 is a moderately used county road and there is potential for collisions between livestock and vehicles while livestock travel back and forth to water.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* Under the No Action Alternative, no water will be developed in this portion of the North Dry Fork allotment, limiting the amount of livestock dispersal within the allotment.

*Mitigation:* None.

## **ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION**

*Affected Environment:* Access to the project area would be to use RBC 22 to a two track north up the drainage to the project site. RBC 22 is a moderately used dirt road as it is the primary access into the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPAW) Little Hills complex. The two track road to the Proposed Action is a natural surfaced route that is seldom used and somewhat difficult to find from RBC 22. The route continues past the wellpad location up the drainage bottom to the proposed water stock tank site and beyond.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The Proposed Action will increase the disturbance at the intersection of RBC 22 and possibly raise awareness that the two track is travelable by full-sized vehicles. Currently this route is not open to the public as it is posted as a “Service Road” on a CPAW sign. If the public were to begin use of the two track, route degradation will increase which could increase fugitive dust during dry conditions. The continued use of the two track route after completion of the project will be minimal by the grazing permittee to monitor the water well. The pipeline is proposed to be placed in the road surface in the drainage bottom from the water well to the stock tank. This may cause the channel bottom to widen allowing for better motorized access up past the water well site. Travel in drainage bottoms or channels is not recommended due to the degradation to the channel and for the safety of the traveler in the event of a flash flood. With successful reclamation and revegetation of the project area, and by restricting access to the site, there will be reduced motorized traffic in the drainage. This reduction in traffic will limit the amount of road degradation and fugitive dust will be reduced.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* Under this alternative there would be no increase in route degradation.

*Mitigation:* If public begins to access beyond the CPAW gate at the intersection of RBC 22, place a pipe gate at the BLM/CPAW boundary with lock and post with “Authorized Use Only” sign.

## **REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS**

*Affected Environment:* The proposed well and associated water line are near an existing USGS monitoring well that is authorized in right-of-way (ROW) COC49117.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* To avoid impacts to the existing monitoring well, the applicant should notify the ROW holder prior to construction of the well and water line.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* None.

*Mitigation:* Notify USGS prior to construction of the well and water line.

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:** This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP and the 1981 Grazing environmental impact statement (EIS). The cumulative impacts of rangeland improvements and livestock grazing are disclosed in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement for each resource value that would be affected by the Proposed Action. The White River ROD/RMP also identifies that range improvements, which include approximately 200 miles of fence and 700 water developments, will be needed to aid in livestock management. The short-term duration of construction activity and of impacts from the expected operation would result in negligible cumulative impacts for most resources and no long-term cumulative impacts following cessation and reclamation of the proposed project.

**REFERENCES CITED:**

Bowen, Kristin  
 2010 Class III Inventory for the Proposed Dry Fork Well and Pipeline, Rio Blanco County, CO (BLM #10-10-16). Bureau of Land Management, White River Field Office, Meeker, Colorado.

**PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:**

Colorado Division of Water Resources  
 Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
 United States Geological Survey

**INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Area of Responsibility</b>	<b>Date Signed</b>
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights, Soils	7/27/2011
Jill Schulte	Botanist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species	7/20/2010
Kristin Bowen	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources	8/23/2010 Recheck 7/12/2011
Matthew Dupire	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Vegetation , Rangeland Management, Wetlands and Riparian Zones	7/12/2011
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife,	9/27/2010 Recheck 7/5/2011
Christi Barlow	Natural Resource Specialist/HazMat Coordinator	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	7/27/2011
Jim Michels	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Access and Transportation, Recreation	9/14/2010 Recheck 7/8/2011
Jim Michels	Forester/ Fire / Fuels Technician	Fire Management, Forest Management	9/14/2010 Recheck 7/8/2011
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals	09/08/2010

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Area of Responsibility</b>	<b>Date Signed</b>
Stacey Burke	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations	09/16/2010 Recheck 07/18/2011
Jim Michels	Natural Resource Specialist / Outdoor Recreation Planner	Visual Resources	9/14/2010 Recheck 7/8/2011
Melissa J. Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horse Management	09/21/2010

# **Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)**

## **DOI-BLM-CO-110-2010-0176-EA**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE:** The environmental assessment and analysis of the environmental effects of the Proposed Action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed Action.

**DECISION/RATIONALE:** It is my decision to approve the drilling and construction of the North Dry Fork well and pipeline subject to the described mitigation measures because the project, in conjunction with other water developments within the allotment, will facilitate achievement of vegetation management objectives of the Dry Fork AMP, the White River ROD/RMP and the Greasewood Fire Rehabilitation Plan.

### **MITIGATION MEASURES:**

1. Construction sites and all facilities shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times; all waste materials must be disposed of promptly at an appropriate waste disposal site. "Waste" means all discarded matter including, but not limited to, human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, oil drums, petroleum products, ashes, and equipment.
2. The project area will be monitored on a yearly basis for the occurrence of noxious weeds and/or invasive species.
3. All weed species which occur will be eradicated using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.
4. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.
5. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM WRFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The applicant will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously

determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The applicant, under guidance of the BLM, will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.

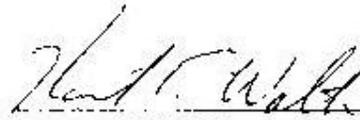
6. Water rights and well permit applications should be filed by the BLM on the well to protect the water sources into the future.
7. If public begins to access beyond the CPAW gate at the intersection of RBC 22, place a pipe gate at the BLM/CPAW boundary with lock and post with "Authorized Use Only" sign.

**COMPLIANCE/MONITORING:** Compliance and monitoring will be completed using the North Dry Fork long-term trend monitoring plots and by taking utilization measurements. Monitoring within the allotment is described in the North Dry Fork AMP.

**NAME OF PREPARER:** Matthew L Dupire

**NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** Heather Sauls

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:**

  
Field Manager

**DATE SIGNED:**

06/10/11

**ATTACHMENTS:** Figure 1: Map of the Proposed Well and Waterline

Figure 1: Map of the Proposed Well and Waterline

