

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

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2010-0243-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC-57190 Logical Mining Unit (LMU)

PROJECT NAME: Minor Revision Service Hole SH-3 and Rosana Variety of Western Wheatgrass (MR 144)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T3N, R101W, 6<sup>th</sup> PM  
Section 27, NW

APPLICANT: Blue Mountain Energy (BME)

BACKGROUND: Deserado is an existing underground coal mine that utilizes longwall mining techniques. It was permitted in 1981 and is the sole supplier of coal to the Bonanza Power Plant in Bonanza, Utah. The coal is shipped 37 miles via electric train from the mine to the power plant.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: BME is requesting permission to add a service hole, SH-3, to access underground workings. The completed hole will be 7 5/8 inch in diameter and approximately 1,100 feet deep. Access is directly off the east side of the refuse haul road approximately 1.5 miles north of the intersection of the haul road and Rio Blanco County Road 65. The estimated pad disturbance is 0.83 acres.

BME is also proposing to change the variety of western wheatgrass from Arriba to Rosana for their approved reclamation seed mix. The change is requested due to better success rate of Rosana variety.

SH-3 will remain in place until mining in the northern portion of the lease tract is complete and the area is abandoned. Reclamation standards for SH-3 is located in the reclamation portion of the approved mine plan.

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

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

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: 2-7

Decision Language: “Ensure that federal coal resources identified as acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing, are available for exploration, leasing and development.”

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, Number (F-8). “Approval of minor modifications to or minor variances from activities described in an approved underground or surface mine plan for leasable minerals.”

The proposed action has been reviewed with the list of extraordinary circumstances described in the table below. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

<b>Exception</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
1. Have significant adverse effects on public health and 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; 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, in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau of office.		X
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects 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

<b>Exception</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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 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 REVIEW:**

The proposed action was presented to, and reviewed by the White River Field Office interdisciplinary team on 09/07/2010.

Date

A list of resource specialists who participated in this review is available upon request from the White River Field Office.

**REMARKS:**

*Cultural Resources:* The project area has recently been inventoried for cultural resources at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level. The project area and its environs were, additionally, part of a large block inventory in 1979 (Davenport 2010). No cultural resources were identified in or near the project's area of potential effect by either inventory. (GH 9/28/2010)

*Native American Religious Concerns:* No Native American Religious Concerns are known in the area and none have been noted by Northern Ute tribal authorities. Should recommended inventories or future consultations with Tribal authorities reveal the existence of such sensitive properties, appropriate mitigation and/or protection measures may be undertaken.

*Paleontological Resources:* The project area appears to only impact Quaternary alluvium and colluvium, categorized as a PFYC 2 formation by the BLM Colorado State Office (draft 7.5' USGS geologic map: Cactus Reservoir; cf. 2009 NAIP images). Due to the low potential for scientifically-valuable fossil resources and the low impact of anticipated disturbance to *in situ* bedrock, no inventory or monitoring will be required. (GH 9/28/2010)

*Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species:* The project area is located within big game severe winter range. Construction and drilling activity associated with the project is subject to big game winter timing limitations, such that no such activity is authorized from 1 January to 30 April. Although the project area is located within sage-grouse overall range, recent sage-grouse use of the Red Wash drainage south of Coal Reef has been extremely limited and is thought to be confined to dispersed winter use. Because project construction is of short duration and located beside an existing, regularly used access road, there is no practical utility in imposing activity restrictions for the birds' winter or breeding season functions.

There are no wildlife concerns associated with the use of the alternate variety of western wheatgrass. (EH 9/8/2010)

*Special Status Plant Species:* There are no known special status plant species or associated habitats located in the proposed action area. (JKS 9/8/2010)

REFERENCES CITED:

Davenport, Barbara

2010 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for Three Irregular Survey Areas (~22 acres) Related to Drill Pad and Access Road Construction in Rio Blanco County, Colorado, for Blue Mtn. Energy. [GRI 2010-63]. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado.

MITIGATION: None

COMPLIANCE PLAN: Blue Mountain Energy, Inc., Mining Permit Application, Deserado Mine

NAME OF PREPARER: Paul Daggett

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Kristin Bowen

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this CX and have decided to approve 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 12 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

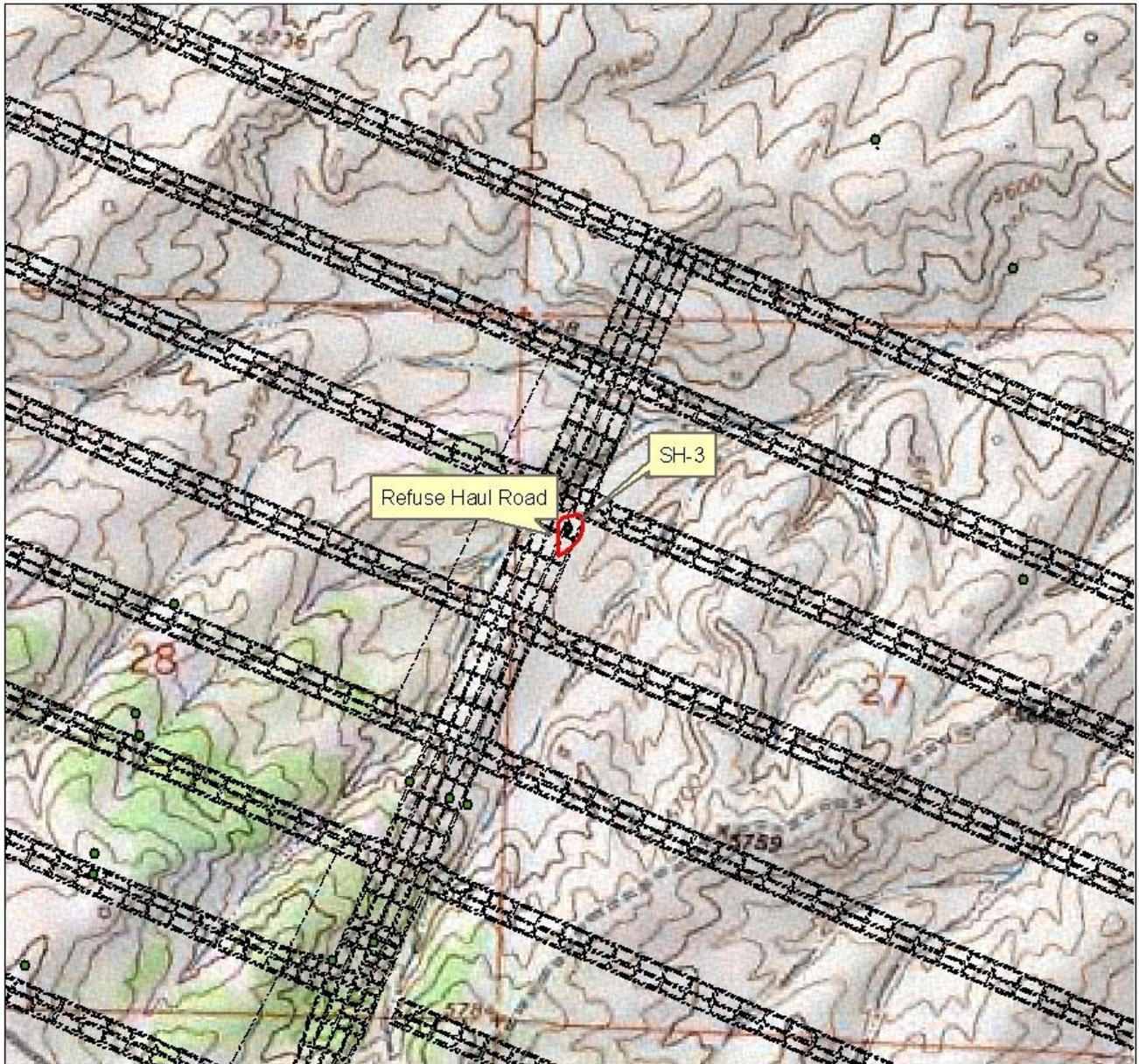
SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

  
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 10/1/2010

ATTACHMENTS: Maps

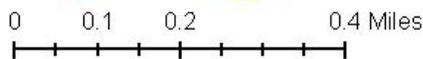
Minor Revision Service Hole SH-3 and Rosana Variety of Western Wheatgrass (MR 144)



T3N, R101W, 6th PM  
Sections 27, NW



09/07/2010

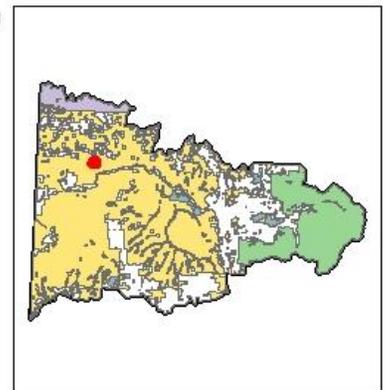


----- Underground Workings

Sources:  
BLM, USGS, CDDW, etc.



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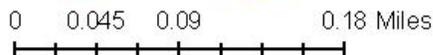
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