

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-110-2011-0182-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC75107

PROJECT NAME: Access Road to Private Lands off Co. Rd. 23

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian
T1 N., R.102 W.,
Sec. 13, S½
Sec. 24, NW¼

APPLICANT: Lottie Redmon

PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE ACTION: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide Lottie Redmon with access to her private property. The need for this action is established by the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA to respond to the applicant's request to construct, operate and maintain a road to access private property across public lands.

Decision to be Made: The BLM will decide whether or not to issue authorization for the access road, and if so, under what conditions.

SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND ISSUES:

Scoping: Scoping was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues. Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the White River Field Office (WRFO) interdisciplinary team on 8/30/2011. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 9/13/2011.

Issues: No issues were identified during public scoping.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: Lottie Redmon has recently purchased a landlocked parcel of land located in T1N, R101W. Sec 18, Lot 3.

Proposed Action: The applicant has requested authorization from White River Field Office to construct a one lane road (running surface 12 feet wide) approximately 1,117 feet in length from an unnumbered, unmaintained BLM road referred to as Dragon Road. This road connects to County Road 23, south of Rangely. The right-of-way length would be approximately 5,496 feet of BLM road with an additional 1,117 feet proposed to be constructed by the applicant, for a total of 6,613 feet, containing 1.83 acres. (See Exhibit A) The road is designed for four-wheel type vehicles with a travel speed of 15 mph or less. The portion to be constructed by the applicant will not require any taking of trees to construct the road. Some trees will be trimmed. The road is not to be bladed, especially the sections from Station 18.59 to 54.96. Portions of the road may be bladed to remove ruts, however, only where water bars are placed. The applicant would be responsible for safety and maintenance.

At the pull-out of CO. RD. 23, there is a mound of dirt. This berm will be de-compacted and reseeded. Rocks will be placed to restrict travel. From the pull-out, to the top of the hill where this road intersects with the Dragon Road, four water bars are needed. The water bars should be approximately 2 ft deep by 4 ft wide at a 30 degree angle. The excavated earth should be piled on the downhill side of the water bar. At the top of the hill where this road connects with the Dragon Road there are two road connections with one being steep and the other U-shaped, each about 100 feet long. The short, steep section of the road (ending at Station 18.59) will be de-compacted so it can be reseeded by BLM. Between the intersection of the Dragon Road at the top of the hill and the entrance to the subject property, there is an area of road that is eroded. Two water bars are needed, with the same specifications as cited above. One piece of equipment, road grader or small dozer, for a half day or full day depending on operator will be required to complete the job.

No Action Alternative: The road would not be authorized or constructed.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

Two driveway access points were considered off of Rio Blanco County Road #23 at Mile Marker (MM) 2.6 and 3.5. Clint Chappell from the Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge inspected both sites. He looked at existing BLM road configurations as they enter the County road and more importantly sight distance in both directions. His recommendation would be to use the first driveway access at MM 2.6, across from the radio tower entrance.

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 (White River ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-49

Decision Language: To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, the Colorado BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, special status 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 (EA). These findings are located in specific elements listed below.

Cumulative Effects Analysis Assumptions: Cumulative effects are defined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1508.7) as “...the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions.” Table 1 lists the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the area that might be affected by the Proposed Action; for this project the area considered was the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 5th Level Watershed. However, the geographic scope used for analysis may vary for each cumulative effects issue and is described in the Affected Environment section for each resource.

Table 1. Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Action Description	STATUS		
	Past	Present	Future
Livestock Grazing	X	X	X
Recreation	X	X	X
Invasive Weed Inventory and Treatments	X	X	X
Range Improvement Projects : Water Developments Fences & Cattle guards	X	X	X
Wildfire and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation	X	X	X
Wind Energy Met Towers			X
Oil and Gas Development: Well Pads Access Roads Pipelines Gas Plants Facilities	X	X	X
Power Lines	X	X	X
Oil Shale	X	X	X
Seismic	X	X	X
Vegetation Treatments	X	X	X

Affected Resources:

The CEQ Regulations state that NEPA documents “must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail” (40 CFR 1500.1(b)). While many issues may arise during scoping, not all of the issues raised warrant analysis in an environmental assessment (EA). Issues will be analyzed if: 1) an analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or 2) if the issue is associated with a significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact, or where analysis is necessary to determine the significance of the impacts. Table 2 lists the resources considered and the determination as to whether they require additional analysis.

Table 2. Resources and Determination of Need for Further Analysis

Determination ¹	Resource	Rationale for Determination
Physical Resources		
NI	Air Quality	The limited amount of construction required to install water bars, grade portions of the road and de-compact unneeded portions to be seeded will take about one day and will result in minimal emissions from construction equipment.
NI	Geology and Minerals	Construction of the road would have no effect on the geologic or mineral resources..
PI	Soil Resources*	See discussion below.
NI	Surface and Ground Water Quality*	The road is located in a saddle between uplands of an ephemeral tributary to Douglas Creek and uplands to ephemeral tributaries to the White River. Due to the limited surface disturbance and the locations impacts to surface and ground water quality are very unlikely.
Biological Resources		
NP	Wetlands and Riparian Zones*	There are no riparian or wetland areas that would be impacted by the Proposed Action. The nearest system which supports riparian communities is Douglas Creek which is nearly 0.75 miles from the project area.
PI	Vegetation*	See discussion below.
PI	Invasive, Non-native Species	See discussion below.
NI	Special Status Animal Species*	There are no threatened, endangered or candidate animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area. The only special status species that may be present in the project area is Brewer’s sparrow (BLM sensitive). This species will be discussed in the Migratory Bird section.
NP	Special Status Plant Species*	There are no impacts to special status plant species associated with this project.
PI	Migratory Birds	See discussion below.
NP	Aquatic Wildlife*	There are no aquatic systems that would potentially be influenced by the Proposed Action. The nearest system which supports higher order aquatic vertebrate populations is Douglas Creek which is approximately 0.75 miles from the project area.
PI	Terrestrial Wildlife*	See discussion below.

Determination¹	Resource	Rationale for Determination
NP	Wild Horses	There are no Herd Management Areas or Herd Areas located within the project area.
Heritage Resources and the Human Environment		
NP	Cultural Resources	The road has been inventoried at the Class III (100 percent) pedestrian level (Martin 2011 compliance dated 12/1/2011) with no cultural resources identified. (11-11-38: SHPO #RB.LM.NR2285)
PI	Paleontological Resources	See discussion below.
NP	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.
NI	Visual Resources	The Proposed Action is consistent with current VRM Class III and IV management and is not anticipated to have an impact on the visual resources of the area.
NI	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	There are no known Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) disposal locations in the area of potential impacts. The proposal will utilize heavy equipment and machinery which increases the potential for accidental spills and leak of petroleum based materials. However, these would most likely be de minimis quantities. In addition the standard terms and conditions, of the ROW grant, the grant holder or their agent would notify BLM of any spills and they would be cleaned up and disposed of at an approved RCRA disposal facility.
NI	Fire Management	The Proposed Action will not cause a hazardous fuels load in the area and will provide a fuels break for future fires.
NI	Social and Economic Conditions	There would not be any substantial changes to local social or economic conditions.
NP	Environmental Justice	According to the most recent Census Bureau statistics (2000), there are no minority or low income populations within the WRFO.
Resource Uses		
NP	Forest Management	No trees will be removed for this project, therefore there will be no impact.
PI	Rangeland Management	See discussion below.
NP	Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights	No floodplains are impacted by this project. With the installation of water bars local surface hydrology may improve somewhat and no impacts would occur to water supplies.
PI	Realty Authorizations	See discussion below.
NI	Recreation	The Proposed Action is not anticipated to have a negative impact on recreation.
PI	Access and Transportation	See discussion below.
NP	Prime and Unique Farmlands	There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands within the project area.
Special Designations		

Determination ¹	Resource	Rationale for Determination
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	There are no ACECs in the project area.
NP	Wilderness	There are no WSAs in the project area.
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers in the WRFO.
NP	Scenic Byways	There are no Scenic Byways within the project area.

¹ NP = Not present in the area impacted by the Proposed Action or Alternatives. 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.

* Public Land Health Standard

SOIL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The classifications of soils within 30 meters of the proposed surface disturbance that may be impacted by the Proposed Action are shown in Table 3. There are no fragile soils, saline soils or lands prone to landslides on Federal lands that will be impacted by this project.

Table 3. Soil Classifications within 30 Meters of the Proposed Road.

Soil Classification	Range Site Description	Potentially Impacted Acres
Rentsac-Moyerson-Rock Outcrop, complex, 5-65% slopes	Pinyon-Juniper woodland / Clayey Slopes	27
Moyerson stony clay loam, 15-65% slopes	Pinyon-Juniper woodland	1

Rentsac and Moyerson soils have moderate to rapid runoff and high to very high water erosion potential. Current conditions show concentration of water in vehicle ruts and localized erosion in some locations along the route. The proposed new road construction is along a finger ridge and in generally stable terrain. The two track route is generally stable when it is not severely rutted or on a steep slope. Public access on this route during wet conditions is mostly responsible for the rutting of the current road.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Direct impacts from road work would include soil compaction and removal of vegetation in some locations. The Proposed Action includes installing water bars and removing ruts on some sections of the road and not blading other sections of the road (see the construction notes on the road plan). The road standards agreed to by the applicant and the BLM are for a four-wheel drive access road for occasional use when the road is dry. This is in conformance with BLM Manual section 9113 that states that roads must be designed to an appropriate standard no higher than necessary to accommodate their intended function. In this case, the applicant needs occasional access to a private parcel across BLM administered land. Since some sections of the route are currently in bad shape with rutting and erosion, these sections will need to be repaired to allow occasional maintenance of the access road and accommodate the intended use without resource damage.

Overall, the Proposed Action will repair some sections of the route that have erosion problems and rehab some small sections of the route that will not be used; therefore overall impacts should be beneficial for soils by reducing the concentration of surface run-off on the route surface and reducing the current erosion in sections. The new road construction is expected to be minimal and located in a relatively flat and stable area on a ridge line.

Cumulative Effects: The location of the proposed access road is in an area of dispersed public use directly south of Rangely with many short pioneered routes. Many of these small routes have illegal dumps of branches and other trash, shell casings, fire rings and other indicators of public land use that is not favorable to soil resources. The Proposed Action, with mitigation, will improve one of these routes into a 4wd access road and include some BLM management of these routes that may promote more positive recreation on public lands. Improved access may make this area easier to manage and facilitate cleaning up the illegal dumps.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: No water bars would be installed and the road would not be improved over current conditions. Concentration of surface runoff in the ruts on the route would continue as well as the erosion in some section of the current route.

Cumulative Effects: Public use of this area that is unfavorable to soil resources would be unaffected since there would be no road improvements or changes in management.

Mitigation: The following should be added as conditions of approval (COAs):

1. With the exception of public health and safety concerns, the road should not be used by the applicant when road surfaces and soils are saturated in order to avoid new rutting on the road surface.
2. Water bars will be maintained as necessary by the applicant to protect drainage features of the road. If public use makes the maintenance of the road difficult due to inappropriate use, the BLM will be notified and a shared plan will be implemented to restore the function of the drainage features on the road.
3. The Soil/Water/Air program at the BLM White River Field Office will seed the unused portions of the road that are de-compacted by the applicant, areas of surface disturbance and during favorable conditions for seed germination and establishment. A sign will be installed at Station 18.59 indicated that the road dead-ends in less than one mile.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #1 for Upland Soils: With mitigation, this action is unlikely to reduce the productivity of soils on public lands.

VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The proposed road is located entirely within the pinyon-juniper woodlands and clayey slopes ecological sites (Rio Blanco County Soil Survey, 1994). These

ecological sites primarily consist of pinyon and juniper trees with a sparse understory of Indian rice grass, beardless wheatgrass, mountain mahogany, big sagebrush, prairie junegrass, salina wild rye, sandberg bluegrass, shadscale and bitterbrush.

Portions of the project area are degraded and dominated by cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). Cheatgrass is an annual invasive species that can dominate portions of plant communities creating a monoculture. Cheatgrass does not provide high quality forage for wildlife and livestock, and also does not have root structures suitable for anchoring soils. Cheatgrass is primarily found at the intersection of County Road 23 and the dragon road in the clayey foothill ecological sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Implementation of the Proposed Action will require the complete removal of vegetation on an area 12 feet wide by 1,117 feet long (0.31 acres). Removal of vegetation does leave soils susceptible to erosion, and noxious/invasive weed establishment. Since the project is going to be an access road, it should be kept free of vegetation minimizing the opportunity for noxious weeds to establish and proliferate. Construction of water bars will aid in protecting soils by diverting water from the road surface. There will be no new disturbance on the existing 5,496 feet of road except for the construction of six water bars. Disturbance for construction of the water bars will be minimal and will consist of a small diversion to divert water of the road.

Cumulative Effects: Past vegetation disturbance in the area includes roads, pipelines, and oil and gas development. Vegetation disturbance in the area is currently pretty light from past and present development, but there is potential for continued development in the future that will disturb vegetation. Vegetation disturbance decreases available forage for livestock and wildlife, increases the probability for noxious/invasive weed establishment and increases the probability of soil movement. Current disturbance levels are within what was analyzed within the 1997 White River ROD/RMP.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Implementation of the no action alternative will result in no further disturbance to vegetation for access road construction. The existing road will remain in its current condition and no additional water bars will be constructed and reseeded will not take place on the steep portion of the road at Station 18.59.

Cumulative Effects: See cumulative effects analysis above.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #3 for Plant and Animal Communities: The project area is currently meeting land health standards for plant and animal communities. There are portions of the project area that have a level of cheatgrass invasion where the dragon road intersects with County Road 23 that are close to crossing a threshold of not meeting standards. This is a small portion of the total project area, and areas within the pinyon-juniper woodlands are all meeting standards.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The state of Colorado has noxious weeds divided into three categories that define the level of management. List A species are designated by the commissioner for eradication, List B species have or will have a state noxious weed management plan developed to stop their spread, and List C species are species which weed management plans will be developed to facilitate more effective weed management on public and private lands.

There is no known List A or List B species known to occur within the immediate vicinity of the project area. Halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*) and Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) are two list C species that occur immediately within the vicinity of the project. There are List B species known to occur near the project area such as Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*), and spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Removal of vegetation and soil disturbance necessary for road construction will create a pathway for noxious weeds to establish and proliferate within the project area. Weed seeds and propogules are at risk of being spread or transported onto the project area on construction equipment. Seeds can also be transported onto the site in animal fur and feces. It is anticipated that the road surface will be kept free of vegetation which will minimize the potential for weeds to establish on the road surface, but weeds can spread onto the adjacent plant community. The use of the early detection rapid response management for noxious weeds will also limit weed establishment and proliferation should they move onto the site as a result of this project.

Cumulative Effects: Currently there is no known List A or List B species known to occur immediately within the project area for past or present projects. It is anticipated that future soil disturbance will occur into the future and there is a risk of weeds being transported onto the site from vehicles and/or animals. The WRFO currently has an integrated weed management plan to manage noxious weeds within the resource area, and currently weeds are not a concern in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The no action alternative will result in no further disturbance to soils or vegetation in the project area. The 0.31 acres of proposed new disturbance will remain intact and existing vegetation will be able to compete with non-native/invasive species should they be introduced to the site.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects are the same as those analyzed above.

Mitigation:

1. The applicant will be responsible for managing noxious weeds along the proposed access road should they become established using means approved in the WRFO Integrated Weed Management Plan (Mechanical or Herbicides).

2. If the applicant chooses to use herbicides to manage weeds, an approved Pesticide Use Proposal (PUP) will be submitted to the WRFO and on file at the office.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The Proposed Action would involve roughly 0.31 acres of open-canopied pinyon-juniper woodlands. Additionally, minor improvements along the existing access road (unnamed BLM road) may potentially involve adjacent sagebrush habitat. These woodland and sagebrush communities provide nesting habitat for a number of bird species during the breeding season (typically mid-May through mid-July).

The BLM lends increased management attention to migratory birds listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC). These are bird populations that monitoring suggests are undergoing range-wide declining trends and are considered at risk for becoming candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act if not given due consideration in land use decisions. Pinyon jay and juniper titmouse, BCC associated with pinyon-juniper habitats have potential to occur in the project area but at extremely low densities. BCC associated with sagebrush shrubland habitats is limited to the BLM-sensitive Brewer's sparrow.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action would involve < 0.50 acre of predominately pinyon-juniper woodlands. Trees involved would not be removed however limbs will be trimmed to accommodate vehicle passage. Improvements along the existing unnamed BLM road may also minimally involve adjacent sagebrush communities. If construction activities were to take place during the migratory bird nesting season, the bulk of which occurs from mid-May through mid-July, there would be greater potential to displace birds from the project area and adjacent habitats, leading to potential nest abandonment or failure and possible mortality of nestling birds. Construction activities occurring outside the breeding season would have virtually no influence on migratory bird nesting activities.

Indirectly, improvements along the existing BLM road may lead to increased vehicle use which has the potential to impact an additional 80 acres of functional forage and nesting habitats due to reductions in nest densities and avoidance of habitats associated with increased human activity and vehicle traffic.

Cumulative Effects: The Proposed Action is not anticipated to add substantially to existing or proposed disturbances. The construction of 1,117 feet of road is not anticipated to have a measureable influence on local bird populations as there is considerable suitable habitat adjacent to the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct or indirect impacts to migratory bird species or important habitats under the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects: There would be no contribution to previous or existing disturbances under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: All vegetation clearing and earthwork associated with the Proposed Action will take place outside the migratory bird nesting period of May 15 through July 15.

TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE

Affected Environment: The lower elevation pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush shrub lands which encompass the project area are categorized by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as mule deer winter concentration/severe winter range. These ranges typically receive heaviest use from January through April.

Woodland habitats surrounding the project area are younger-aged, open stands which typically do not provide suitable nesting substrate for woodland raptors. There are no cliffs or rock outcrops in the vicinity of the project area that would provide suitable nest substrate for golden eagle or red-tailed hawks.

The distribution and abundance of small mammal populations are poorly documented within the Resource Area. Recent trapping efforts undertaken throughout Piceance Basin indicate a high tendency in both sagebrush and pinyon-juniper communities for more generalized species such as deer mouse and least chipmunk and it is suspected that these species would be relatively abundant in the project area. There are no small mammal species that are narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action would involve < 0.50 acres of pinyon-juniper woodlands. Trees would not be directly removed but would instead be limbed to accommodate vehicle passage. Upgrades along the existing BLM road may minimally involve adjacent sagebrush habitats. Construction activities during the winter months would have greater potential to displace big game as both deer and elk tend to congregate in the surrounding lower elevation pinyon-juniper and sagebrush habitats during these time frames. Activities associated with the Proposed Action would likely displace local wildlife (contributing to increased energetic demands); however due to the limited amount of activity in the immediate vicinity, it is suspected that local big game populations would have adequate forage and cover resources available. Big game would be expected to return to the project area once construction activities have ceased. The project area is located in mule deer severe winter range and as such would be subject to RMP timing limitations designed to limit disturbance during the core period of occupation (January 1 – April 30).

Indirectly, improvements to the existing BLM road may promote a minimal increase in vehicle use which could influence big game movements (displacement), particularly if the road is maintained throughout the winter months. It is suspected that this would not have any measurable influence on big game populations.

Cumulative Effects: The Proposed Action is not anticipated to contribute substantially to existing or proposed disturbances, nor is expected to have any measureable influence on local wildlife populations. The Proposed Action would represent an incremental increase in road density in mule deer severe winter range.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: There would be no direct or indirect impacts to terrestrial wildlife species or associated habitats under the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects: There would be no contribution to previous or existing disturbances that would potentially impact terrestrial wildlife species or habitats under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: Construction activities will be prohibited from January 1 through April 30 in mule deer severe winter range (all of project area) to reduce adverse behavioral effects on wintering big game (WRRR ROD TL-08).

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard #3 for Plant and Animal Communities: The Land Health Standards for animal communities are currently being met in the project area. Neither the Proposed nor No Action Alternatives are expected to detract from the continued meeting of the Land Health Standards.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed private land access road is located in an area generally mapped as the Upper Mesa Verde Group (Tweto 1979) which the BLM, WRFO has classified as a PFYC 5 fossil bearing formation meaning it is known to produce scientifically noteworthy fossil resources (Armstrong and Wolny 1989).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: If it should become necessary to excavate into the underlying sedimentary rock formation to reduce ruts or straighten out the exiting two track or construct the short segment of new access road there is the potential to impact scientifically noteworthy fossil resources. Even if no excavation into the underlying sedimentary formation is necessary any fossils that might be exposed on the surface, especially some of the smaller once known to occur in the upper Mesa Verde could be impacted by increased traffic in the area, increased human presence and any unauthorized collecting that might accompany increased human activity in the area.

Cumulative Effects: Any losses associated with project approval would be a long term irretrievable and irrecoverable loss to the regional paleontological database.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the No Action Alternative there would be no new construction and development related impacts to paleontological resources.

Cumulative Effects: Even though there would be no new construction related impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative the natural, slow weathering process that has been underway for millennia would continue and some human activity and presence in the area would continue. Paleontological data would continue to be irreversibly and irretrievably lost but at a much slower rate than if development proceeds.

Mitigation: The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.

If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the holder or any of his agents must stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator, and make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM or designated paleontologist will evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator will be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator’s instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator’s instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.

Any excavations into the underlying native sedimentary stone must be monitored by a permitted paleontologist. The monitoring paleontologist must be present before the start of excavations that may impact bedrock.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed road will cross two different grazing allotments within the WRFO. The allotment to the west is the Johnson/Trujillo allotment (06338) and the allotment to the east is the Douglas Creek allotment (06342). Both of these allotments are permitted to Sam and Cheri Robinson for winter sheep use. The grazing schedule is outlined in the table below.

ALLOTMENT		LIVESTOCK		GRAZING PERIOD				
Number	Name	Number	Kind	Begin	End	%PL	Type Use	AUMs
06338	Johnson/Trujillo	2650	Sheep	3/1	4/15	100	Active	802
06338	Johnson/Trujillo	2650	Sheep	12/21	2/28	100	Active	1220
06342	Douglas Creek	2650	Sheep	4/16	4/26	100	Active	192
06342	Douglas Creek	2650	Sheep	12/1	12/20	100	Active	349

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Road construction will result in the removal of forage on 0.31 acres within the Douglas Creek allotment. This will equal out to less than one Animal Unit Month (AUM) of forage. An AUM is defined as the amount of forage required to sustain one cow/calf pair for one month. Construction of the road will increase the risk of conflicts between livestock and vehicles in the project area. Since the road will be maintained as a four-wheel drive road to access a small portion of private property, it is anticipated that vehicle traffic will be light, and conflicts with livestock will be minimal.

Cumulative Effects: This one project will reduce forage within the Douglas Creek grazing allotment by less than one AUM and have little or no effect on the permitted grazing; however there is oil and gas development within the area, and the potential for future development could result in a loss of AUMs in the future for the grazing permittee. This will be assessed during the permit renewal process for the grazing permittee.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The no action alternative will result in no disturbance to forage within the Douglas Creek grazing allotment, and no increase in traffic to access private lands.

Cumulative Effects: See cumulative effects analysis above.

Mitigation: None.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: Existing rights-of-way (ROW) in the area of the access road consist of the following: COC071603, FAA-NW Mountain Region-Rangely Communication Site; Microwave repeater and access road. COC44255, Moon Lake Electric Association, 7.2V power line to radio tower. COC011243, Ignacio/Sumas pipeline is located in the northeast corner of Section 13. COC1972, Public Service of Colorado, natural gas pipeline runs north/south through Sections 13 and 24.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action has been serialized as COC75107. Approximately 1,117 feet of road will be constructed, with 5,496 feet of un-named BLM road upgraded to eliminate erosion and road ruts. This one lane road will have a running surface of twelve feet wide and contain 1.83 acres. Construction of the 1,117 feet of road will not impact any existing rights-of-way.

Cumulative Effects: As the number of ROW holders in the project area increases, so would competition for suitable locations for facilities. Increased ROW densities would also lead to a higher probability of conflict between ROW users.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Failure to authorize the proposed project would not result in any increased impacts to realty authorizations in the area.

Cumulative Effects: There would not be any cumulative effects from not authorizing the proposed project.

Mitigation: All activities shall comply with all applicable local, State, and Federal laws, statutes, regulations, standards, and implementation plans. This includes acquiring all required State and/or local permits, effectively coordinating with existing facility ROW holders, and implementing all applicable mitigation measures required by each permit.

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: The project traverses through a network of County, BLM, and State highway roads that have multiple uses from recreation to basic transportation. Primary access to the site is off Rio Blanco County Road 23 and then an unnamed and unnumbered BLM road. The majority of traffic in the area is primarily local residents, oil and gas development, and dispersed recreationists.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Only a negligible increase in traffic is expected as a result of the Proposed Action, confined primarily to local residential traffic associated with the project proponent. There would be a slight temporary, increase in truck traffic on local roads when heavy equipment is transported to the site for construction of the road. No disruptions to access or other traffic is expected as a result of this project.

Cumulative Effects: Combined with other road development occurring in the area, the Proposed Action would slightly cumulatively contribute to additional transportation infrastructure development.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Since the Proposed Action would not occur, no impacts are expected from the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects:

Mitigation: None.

REFERENCES CITED:

Armstrong, Harley j., and David G. Wolny

1989 Paleontological Resources of Northwest Colorado: A Regional Analysis. Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Martin, Curtis

2011 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for A proposed New Access Road in Rio Blanco County, Colorado for Don and Lottie Redmon. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (11-11-38: SHPO #RB.LM.NR2285)

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) 1994. Rio Blanco County Soil Survey.

Tweto, Ogden

1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Bob Lange	Hydrologist	Air Quality; Surface and Ground Water Quality; Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights; Soils	1/6/2012
Zoe Miller	Ecologist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Special Status Plant Species; Forest Management	12/9/2011
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources; Native American Religious Concerns; Paleontological Resources	12/1/2011
Matthew Dupire	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species; Vegetation; Rangeland Management	1/9/2012
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds; Special Status Animal Species; Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife; Wetlands and Riparian Zones	1/3/2012
James Roberts	Natural Resource Specialist	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	1/9/2012
Chad Schneckenburger	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness; Visual Resources; Access and Transportation; Recreation,	12/5/2011
Will Hutto	Fuels Specialist	Fire Management	10/13/2011
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals	11/30/2011
Janet Doll	Realty Specialist	Realty	1/6/2012
Melissa J. Kindall	Range Technician	Wild Horse Management	11/28/2011
Paul Kelley	Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist	NEPA Compliance	1/11/2012

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A---Map

Redmon Private Property Access Road
T. 1 N., R. 102 W.

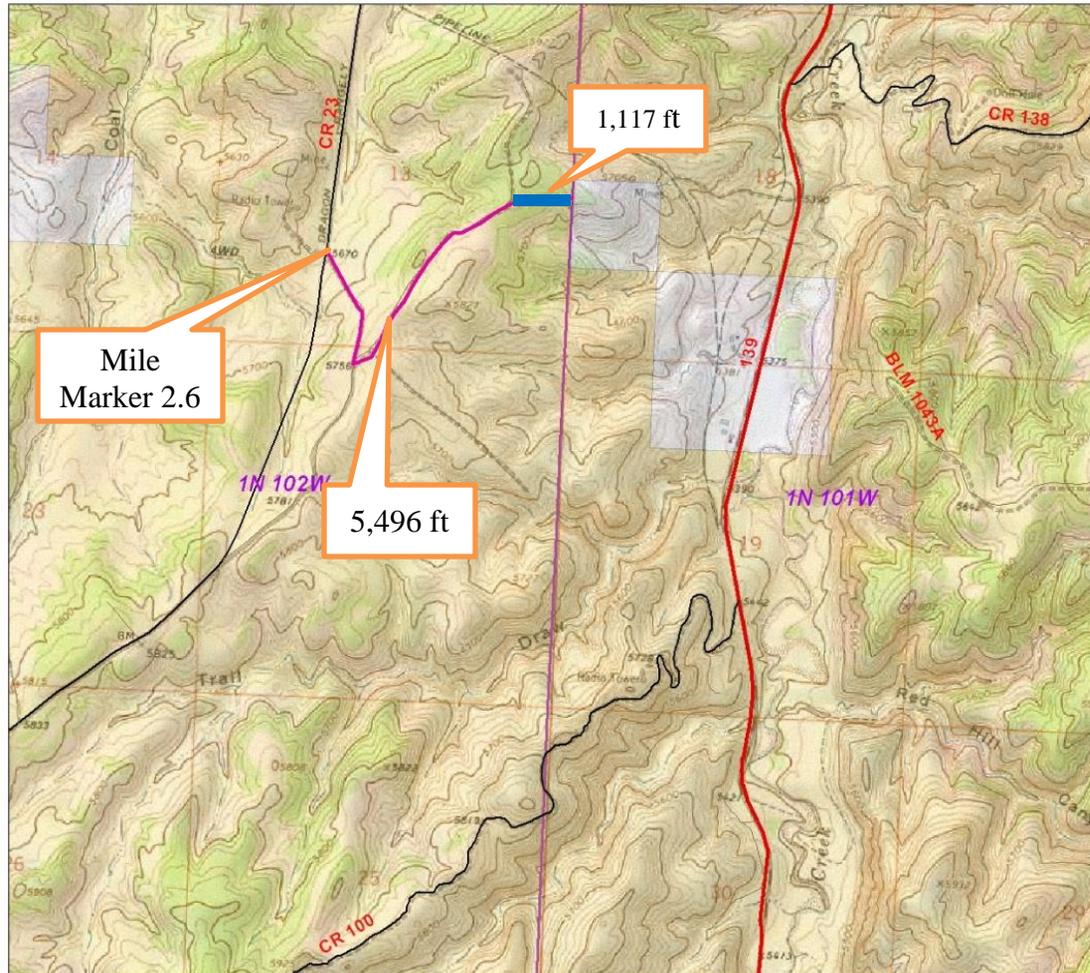


EXHIBIT A

- Redmon Road
- State
- County
- BLM
- USFS
- NPS
- Other
- BLM
- CDOW
- County
- FOR
- NPS
- PRI
- STA
- PLS_S_Township_OCDB0200



Sources:
BLM, USFS, CDOW, etc.

Disclaimer:
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August 2011



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

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
DOI-BLM-CO-110-2011-0182-EA**

BACKGROUND

Lottie Redmon applied to construct a one lane road (running surface 12 feet wide) approximately 1,117 feet in length from an unnumbered, unmaintained BLM road referred to as Dragon Road. This road connects to County Road 23, south of Rangely. The right-of-way length would be approximately 5,496 feet of BLM road with an additional 1,117 feet proposed to be constructed by the applicant, for a total of 6,613 feet. The road is designed for four-wheel type vehicles with a travel speed of 15 mph or less. The portion to be constructed by the applicant will not require any taking of trees to construct the road. Some trees will be trimmed.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving BLM administered public lands that do not in and of itself have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this Proposed Action:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the White River Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. The road has been inventoried at the Class III (100 percent) pedestrian level with no cultural resources identified.
9. There are no threatened, endangered or candidate animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area. The only special status species that may be present in the project area is Brewer's sparrow. Pinyon jay and juniper titmouse, Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) associated with pinyon-juniper habitats have potential to occur in the project area but at extremely low densities. BCC associated with sagebrush shrub land habitats is limited to the BLM-sensitive Brewer's sparrow.
10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

01/20/2012

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

DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: Access Road to Private Lands off Co. Rd. 23

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0182-EA

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0182-EA and listed below, authorizing Lottie Redmon road access to private lands.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. With the exception of public health and safety concerns, the road should not be used by the applicant when road surfaces and soils are saturated in order to avoid new rutting on the road surface.
2. Water bars will be maintained as necessary by the applicant to protect drainage features of the road. If public use makes the maintenance of the road difficult due to inappropriate use, the BLM will be notified and a shared plan will be implemented to restore the function of the drainage features on the road.
3. The Soil/Water/Air program at the BLM White River Field Office will seed the unused portions of the road that are de-compacted by the applicant, areas of surface disturbance and during favorable conditions for seed germination and establishment. A sign will be installed at Station 18.59 indicated that the road dead-ends in less than one mile.
4. The applicant will be responsible for managing noxious weeds along the proposed access road should they become established using means approved in the WRFO Integrated Weed Management Plan (Mechanical or Herbicides).
5. If the applicant chooses to use herbicides to manage weeds, an approved Pesticide Use Proposal (PUP) will be submitted to the WRFO and on file at the office.
6. All vegetation clearing and earthwork associated with the Proposed Action will take place outside the migratory bird nesting period of May 15 through July 15.
7. Construction activities will be prohibited from January 1 through April 30 in mule deer severe winter range (all of project area) to reduce adverse behavioral effects on wintering big game (WRRR ROD TL-08).

8. The holder 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.
9. 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 holder 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 holder, 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.
10. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the AO, by telephone and written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.
11. The holder is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for disturbing or collecting vertebrate fossils, collecting large amounts of petrified wood (over 25lbs./day, up to 250lbs./year), or collecting fossils for commercial purposes on public lands.
12. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the holder or any of his agents must stop work immediately at that site, immediately contact the BLM Paleontology Coordinator, and make every effort to protect the site from further impacts, including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage. Work may not resume at that location until approved by the AO. The BLM or designated paleontologist will evaluate the discovery and take action to protect or remove the resource within 10 working days. Within 10 days, the operator will be allowed to continue construction through the site, or will be given the choice of either (a) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for stabilizing the fossil resource in place and avoiding further disturbance to the fossil resource, or (b) following the Paleontology Coordinator's instructions for mitigating impacts to the fossil resource prior to continuing construction through the project area.
13. Any excavations into the underlying native sedimentary stone must be monitored by a permitted paleontologist. The monitoring paleontologist must be present before the start of excavations that may impact bedrock.

14. All activities shall comply with all applicable local, State, and Federal laws, statutes, regulations, standards, and implementation plans. This includes acquiring all required State and/or local permits, effectively coordinating with existing facility ROW holders, and implementing all applicable mitigation measures required by each permit.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS & CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN

This decision is in compliance with the 1997 White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-CO-2011-0182-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 9/13/2011.

RATIONALE

Analysis of the Proposed Action has concluded that there are no significant negative impacts and that it meets Colorado Standards for Public Land Health.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at White River Field Office, 220 East Market St., Meeker, CO 81641 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300-QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals at the above address within 30 days after the Notice of Appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:


Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

01/20/2012