

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-110-2012-0068-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC69166, COC120057 01

PROJECT NAME Minor Modification to Shell Frontier Oil Shale Research Demonstration and Development (RDD) Plan of Development (POD) COC 69166

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian  
T2 S, R98 W  
Sec. 4: Lots 9, 10, 15, and 16

APPLICANT: Shell Frontier Oil & Gas (Shell)

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

**Background/Introduction:** In December 2005 Shell Frontier Oil & Gas Inc. (Shell) was granted the Oil Shale Research, Development and Demonstration (R, D&D) Lease COC69166 which is effective as of January 1, 2007. This lease has a ten year term and allows Shell Frontier to utilize lands as may be necessary for the mining, extraction, processing, and preparation of oil shale and oil shale products for market. In August 2011 BLM approved Shell's Plan of Development (POD) for the demonstration of a two-step process for the recovery oil shale resources. Site preparation was completed in late 2011 with facility construction and drilling operations expected to commence in spring 2012.

**Proposed Action:** Shell has submitted a modification to their POD identifying the use of a drill hole cuttings pit and burial of cuttings onsite. Cuttings would be disposed on site within the area of disturbance identified in the approved POD.

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR 1610.5-3, BLM 1601.08) 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: Page 2-6

Decision Language: "...At the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, research scale lease tracts will be considered within lands available for oil shale leasing. Approval of research tracts will be based on the merits of the technology proposed."

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 (e.g., change in mining sequence or timing)."

The Proposed Action has been reviewed with the list of extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) described in the table below.

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
a) Have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.		X
b) 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
c) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
d) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
e) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
f) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
g) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.		X
h) 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
i) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
j) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		X
k) 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
l) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the		X

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

The Proposed Action was presented to, and reviewed by, the White River Field Office interdisciplinary team on 03/20/2012. A complete list of resource specialists who participated in this review is available upon request from the White River Field Office. The table below lists resource specialists who provided additional remarks concerning cultural resources and special status species.

Name	Title	Resource	Date
Kristin Bowen	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns	04/18/2012
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Special Status Wildlife Species	04/10/12
Zoe Miller	Ecologist	Special Status Plant Species	05/1/2012

REMARKS:

*Cultural Resources:* There are no cultural-related issues or concerns associated with the Proposed Action.

*Native American Religious Concerns:* There are no known Native American religious concerns associated with the Proposed Action.

*Special Status Wildlife Species:* There are no wildlife-related issues or concerns associated with the Proposed Action.

*Special Status Plant Species:* There are no special status plant species issues or concerns associated with the Proposed Action.

MITIGATION: None

COMPLIANCE PLAN: “Shell Frontier Plan of Development (POD) for Oil Shale Research Development and Demonstration (RDD) Lease COC-69166 and Sodium Preference Right Lease COC-0120057”

NAME OF PREPARER: Paul Daggett

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Heather Sauls

COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, Number F-8. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

  
Acting Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 5/9/12

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1: General Location Map – Aerial Photo

Figure 2: General Location Map – Topo & Land Status

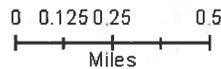
Figure 1: General Location Map – Aerial Photo

**DOI-BLM-CO-110-2012-0068-CX**  
**Minor Modification to Shell Frontier Oil Shale Research Demonstration and Development (RDD) Plan of Development (POD) COC 69166**



03/20/2012

**T2 S, R98 W 6th P.M.**  
**Sec. 4: Lots 9, 10, 15, and 16**



- POD Area of Disturbance
- Oil Shale RDD COC69166

Sources:  
 BLM, US GS, CDDW, etc.

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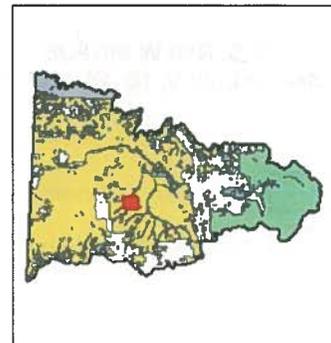
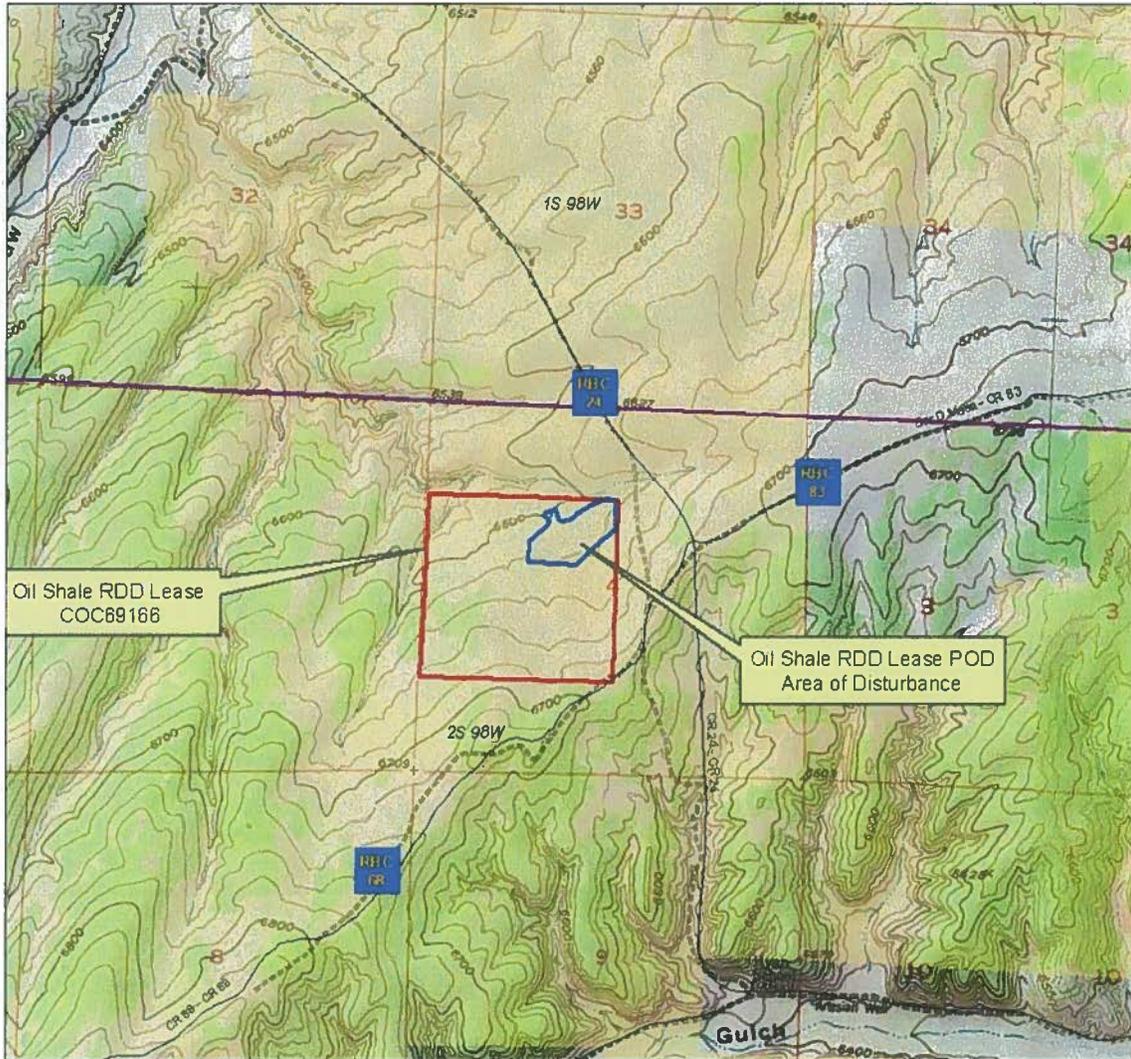


Figure 2: General Location Map – Topo & Land Status

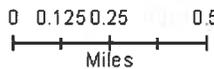
**DOI-BLM-CO-110-2012-0068-CX**  
**Minor Modification to Shell Frontier Oil Shale Research Demonstration**  
**and Development (RDD) Plan of Development (POD) COC 69166**



03/20/2012

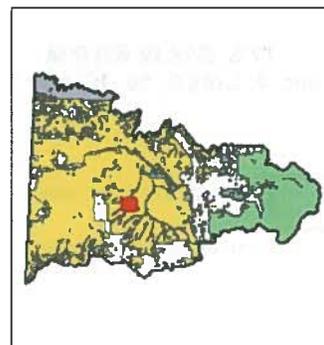
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**DECISION RECORD**

**PROJECT NAME:** Minor Modification to Shell Frontier Oil Shale Research Demonstration and Development (RDD) Plan of Development (POD) COC 69166

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-CO-2012-0065-CX

**DECISION**

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-2012-0065-CX, authorizing the construction and use of a cuttings pit in the construction of wells for the development of Shell Frontier's Oil Shale RDD Lease COC-69166.

**Mitigation Measures**

None

**COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS & CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN**

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

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The BLM informed the public about this project by listing it on the online WRFO NEPA Register on 03/20/2012 and a copy of the completed Categorical Exclusion will be posted on the WRFO website.

**RATIONALE**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, Number F-8. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

**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:**

*Est. M. McCyl*  
Acting Field Manager

**DATE SIGNED:**

5/9/12