

**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-110-2012-0126-CX

**CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:** COC37750

**PROJECT NAME:** Texas Mountain Communications Site Upgrade and Renewal

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado  
T. 3 S., R. 102 W.,  
sec. 21, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

**APPLICANT:** Public Service Company of Colorado

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:** Right-of-way (ROW) COC37750 was issued to Western Slope Gas Company on December 14, 1983. The ROW is for a private mobile radio repeater station located on the Texas Mountain communications site (see Exhibit A). The communications site is 50 ft by 50 ft and contains approximately 0.06 acres.

Public Service Company of Colorado proposes to install two pole mounted photovoltaic arrays on a concrete slab and install a small outbuilding for the power house. The 6 inch poles would be erected and panels would be attached to the top of the poles. The solar array would be 4 ft by 4 ft. A 2 ft by 6 ft outbuilding would be installed to house the 48-volt batteries. The building would be installed on a concrete pad that would be 4 inches deep. The concrete would be mixed and poured on site due to difficulty of access for a concrete truck. A trench would be dug between the poles and the power house for wiring and electrical work to connect the photovoltaic arrays to the charge controller and the batteries. Construction would begin in October 2012.

In addition, Public Service Company of Colorado requests renewal of the ROW for a thirty year term. The existing facilities at the Texas Mountain communications site include an 18 ft high antenna, a 9 ft by 6 ft building, and a 2 ft by 2 ft solar array. The current site is powered by a 24-volt battery system.

No upgrades or additional disturbance outside of the existing Texas Mountain communications site is authorized by this action. All applicable terms and conditions of the right-of-way grant shall be carried forward and remain in full force and effect.

**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 2-49

**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.”

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW:** The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, E13: “*Amendments to existing rights-of-way, such as the upgrading of existing facilities, which entail no additional disturbances outside the right-of-way boundary.*” and E9: “*Renewals and assignments of leases, permits, or rights-of-way where no additional rights are conveyed beyond those granted by the original authorizations.*”

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 either the bureau of office.		X

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
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 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 8/7/2012. 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
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns	10/3/2012
Laura Dixon	Wildlife Biologist	Special Status Wildlife Species	8/13/2012
Amber Shanklin	Biological Technician – Plants	Special Status Plant Species	8/1/2012

**REMARKS:**

*Cultural Resources:* The proposed facility upgrade location has been inventoried at the Class III (100 percent pedestrian) level (Horn 2012, compliance dated 10/3/2012) with no cultural resources identified on the surface in the project location. The potential for subsurface remains not identifiable during surface examination is probably very small but cannot be discounted.

*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 proposed communications facility is located in an area generally mapped as the Douglas Creek member of the Lower Green River formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Potential Fossil Yield Classification (PFYC) 4 formation indicating that it is known to produce scientifically noteworthy fossil resources (c.f., Armstrong and Wolny 1989). Excavation into the underlying sedimentary rock for the building foundation or tower footers has the potential to impact scientifically noteworthy fossil resources. Such impacts are irreversible and irretrievable and may result in a net overall loss of scientific data in the region. However, monitoring auger holes used to drill small diameter circular footings is virtually impossible.

*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.

#### 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

Horn, Jonathon C.

2012 Cultural Resource Inventory of Xcel Energy's Texas Mountain Communications Facility Upgrade, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Montrose, Colorado. (12-83-01: SHPO #RB.LM.NR2325)

Tweto, Ogden

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

#### MITIGATION:

1. All applicable terms and conditions of original right-of-way grant COC37750 are carried forward and remain in full force and effect.
2. The holder shall conduct all activities associated with the construction, operation, and termination of the right-of-way within the authorized limits of the right-of-way.
3. The holder shall ensure all communication facilities and equipment are installed, operated, and maintained according to Motorola R-56 standards and guidelines for communication sites.
4. New construction authorized by an amendment to an existing communications use authorization must also meet the R-56 standards.

5. At least 90 days prior to termination of the right-of-way, the holder shall contact the Authorized Officer to arrange a joint inspection of the right-of-way. The inspection will result in the development of an acceptable termination and rehabilitation plan submitted by the holder. This plan shall include, but is not limited to, removal of facilities, drainage structures, and surface material; recontouring; topsoiling; or seeding. The Authorized Officer must approve the plan in writing prior to the holder's commencement of any termination activities.

6. Any proposal involving additional surface disturbance outside of the authorized right-of-way requires an application to the BLM for analysis and authorization. New stipulations for construction would be applied to projects subject to the regulations and policies existing at the time of authorization.

7. The holder shall monitor all disturbed and reclaimed areas through final abandonment for the presence of invasive, non-native, and/or noxious plant species. The applicant will be responsible for eradication of noxious weeds that occur on site using materials and methods approved in advance by the Authorized Officer.

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 25 lbs./day, up to 250 lbs./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.

COMPLIANCE PLAN: On-going compliance inspections and monitoring will be conducted by the BLM White River Field Office staff during and after construction. Specific mitigation developed in this document will be followed. The holder will be notified of compliance related issues, and depending on the nature of the issue(s), will be provided 30 days to resolve such issues.

NAME OF PREPARER: Stacey Burke

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, E9 and E13. 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:



Field Manager

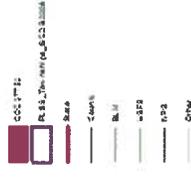
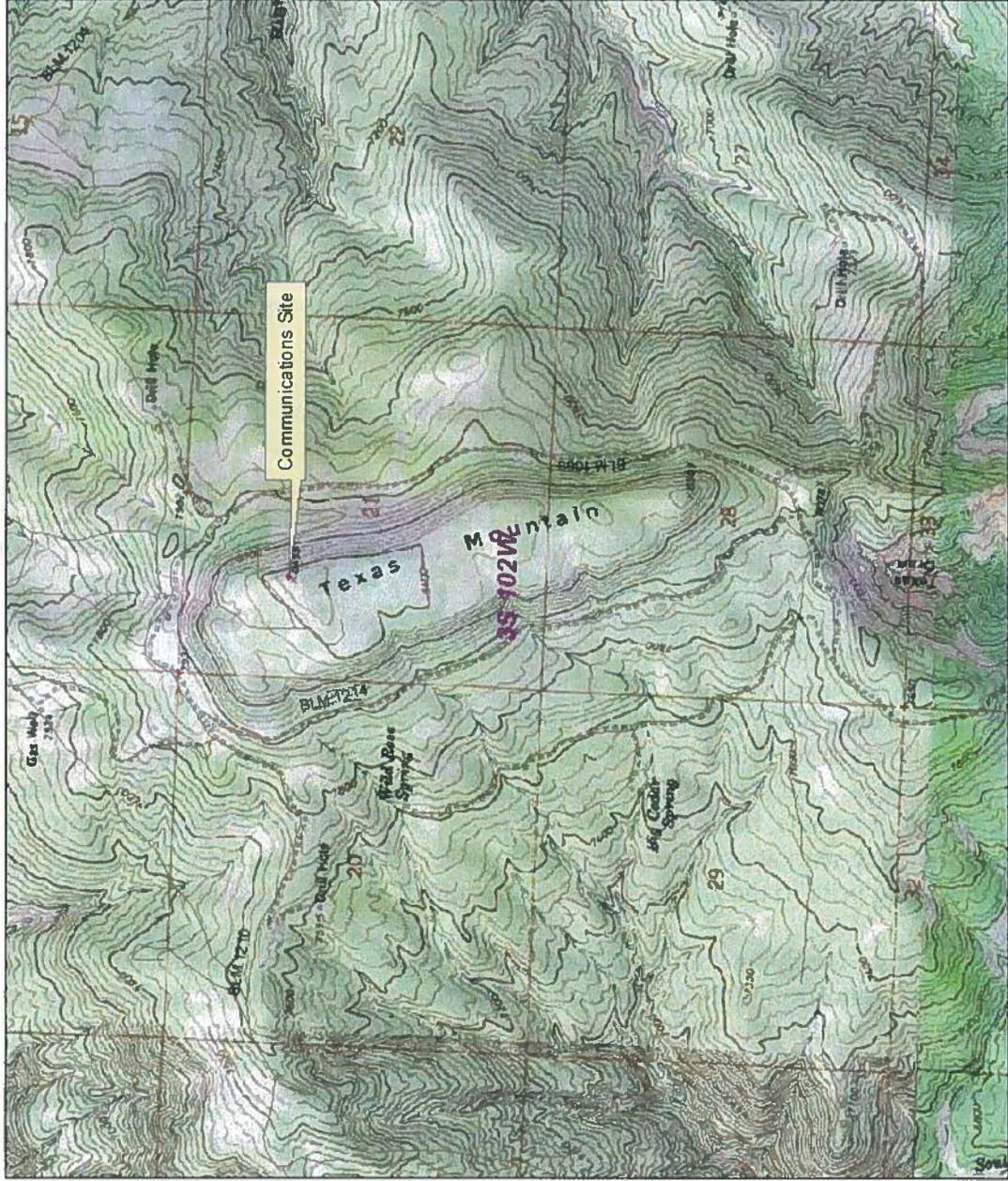
DATE SIGNED:

10/10/12

ATTACHMENTS: Exhibit A – Map of Proposed Action

**Texas Mountain Communications Site COC37750  
T3S, R102W, sec. 21**

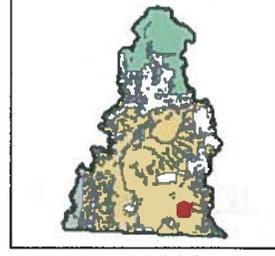
**Exhibit A**



Check for:  
BLM 102W, COC 37750, etc.  
Check for:  
Although the site of interest is shown on this map, it is not the only location where a communications site may be located. The BLM is not responsible for the accuracy of the information presented on this map. It is the user's responsibility to verify the accuracy of the information presented on this map in any way that is necessary.



August 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:** Texas Mountain Communications Site Upgrade

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-CO-2012-00126-CX

**DECISION**

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-2012-0126-CX, authorizing the installation of two pole mounted photovoltaic arrays and building to house the batteries at the existing Texas Mountain communications site and issuance of communications use lease COC37750.

**Mitigation Measures**

1. All applicable terms and conditions of original right-of-way grant COC37750 are carried forward and remain in full force and effect.
2. The holder shall conduct all activities associated with the construction, operation, and termination of the right-of-way within the authorized limits of the right-of-way.
3. The holder shall ensure all communication facilities and equipment are installed, operated, and maintained according to Motorola R-56 standards and guidelines for communication sites.
4. New construction authorized by an amendment to an existing communications use authorization must also meet the R-56 standards.
5. At least 90 days prior to termination of the right-of-way, the holder shall contact the Authorized Officer to arrange a joint inspection of the right-of-way. The inspection will result in the development of an acceptable termination and rehabilitation plan submitted by the holder. This plan shall include, but is not limited to, removal of facilities, drainage structures, and surface material; recontouring; topsoiling; or seeding. The Authorized Officer must approve the plan in writing prior to the holder's commencement of any termination activities.
6. Any proposal involving additional surface disturbance requires an application to the BLM for analysis and authorization. New stipulations for construction would be applied to projects subject to the regulations and policies existing at the time of authorization.
7. The holder shall monitor all disturbed and reclaimed areas through final abandonment for the presence of invasive, non-native, and/or noxious plant species. The applicant will be responsible

for eradication of noxious weeds that occur on site using materials and methods approved in advance by the Authorized Officer.

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.

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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.

**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 8/10/2012 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, E9 and E13. 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**

This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay (43 CFR 2801.10(b)). 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:**

10/10/12