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-110-2013-0013-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC0118327-01

PROJECT NAME: Natural Soda Site Facility Sign

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T.1 S., R. 98 W., 6th PM
Sec. 26: SWNE

APPLICANT: Natural Soda Inc.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:
Background/Introduction: Natural Soda Inc. (NSI) is an underground sodium bicarbonate (nahcolite) solution mining operation that has been in continual operations since 1991. Their operation and facilities are located at the termination of Rio Blanco County (RBC) Road 31 (see Figures 1 and 2).

Proposed Action: Natural Soda Inc. has submitted a minor modification to their mine plan requesting the approval for installation of a lighted site facility sign. The sign would consist of a rock surfaced structure and three flag poles (see Figure 3). Final foot print of the sign and flag poles would be approximately 20 feet by 30 feet. Access for the sign construction would be overland with no surface blading and approximately 150 feet from RBC 31 northwest of the proposed sign (see Figure 1). A 350 foot power supply line would be buried from White River Electric's power pole located beyond the end of RBC 31 on the southwest side of the road (see Figure 1). Total area affected would be approximately 0.2 acres.

Areas affected by construction and access would be reseeded upon completion of construction activities with the seed mix from the "Natural Soda 2010 Mine Plan and Environmental Monitoring Plan". Final reclamation would consist of removal of all the structures and occur at the end of the NSI's processing facility life followed by implementation of the reclamation plan in NSI's approved mine plan. Construction of the sign would occur upon approval, estimated early 2013 time frame.

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 and 2-7

Decision Language: "Facilitate the orderly and environmentally sound development of sodium resources occurring on public lands."

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

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
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 11/05/2012. 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	11/7/2012
Laura Dixon	Wildlife Biologist	Special Status Wildlife Species	11/7/2012
Baili Foster	Ecologist Intern	Special Status Plant (SSP) Species	1/23/2013

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: The proposed project area has been surveyed for cultural resources multiple times, and no historic properties lie within the area of potential effect for this project. There will be no impacts to cultural resources with approval of this proposed project.

Native American Religious Concerns: There should be no Native American religious concerns with this project. No known sites are within the area of direct impact. This proposal will not introduce visual intrusions to the landscape any more than the facility which it is signing did.

Special Status Wildlife Species: There are no special status wildlife species 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:

1. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.

2. If any archaeological materials are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, activity in the vicinity of the discovery will cease, and the BLM WRFO Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Work may not resume at that location until

approved by the AO. The applicant will make every effort to protect the site from further impacts including looting, erosion, or other human or natural damage until BLM determines a treatment approach, and the treatment is completed. Unless previously determined in treatment plans or agreements, BLM will evaluate the cultural resources and, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), select the appropriate mitigation option within 48 hours of the discovery. The applicant, under guidance of the BLM, will implement the mitigation in a timely manner. The process will be fully documented in reports, site forms, maps, drawings, and photographs. The BLM will forward documentation to the SHPO for review and concurrence.

3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the applicant 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 applicant must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.

4. 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: "Natural Soda 2010 Mine Plan and Environmental Monitoring Plan"

NAME OF PREPARER: Paul Daggett

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: Kent C. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 02/13/2013

ATTACHMENTS:
Figure 1: General Location Map – Aerial Photo
Figure 2: General Location Map – Topographic & Land Status
Figure 3: Example Sign

Figure 1: General Location Map – Aerial Photo

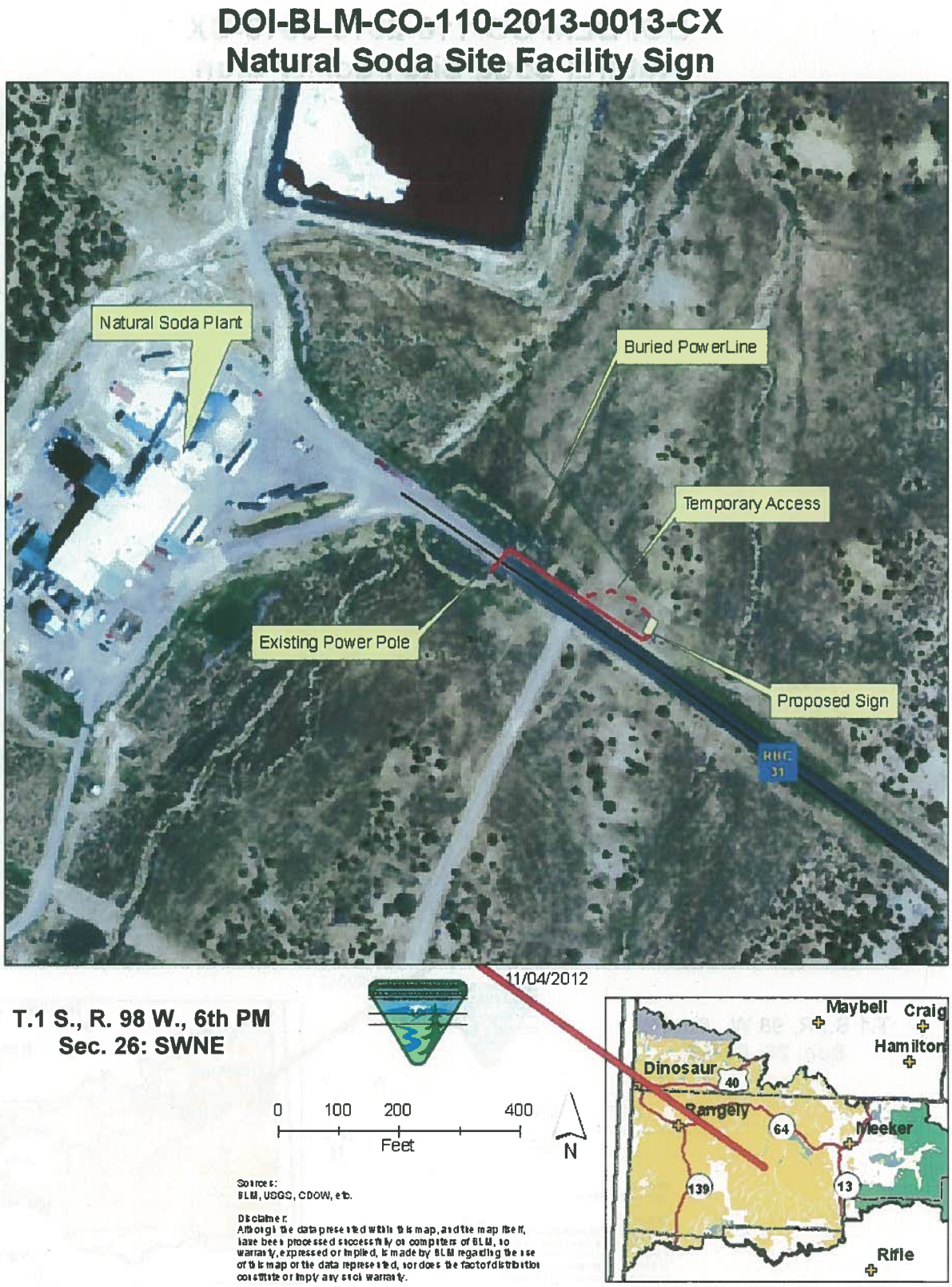


Figure 2: General Location Map – Topographic & Land Status

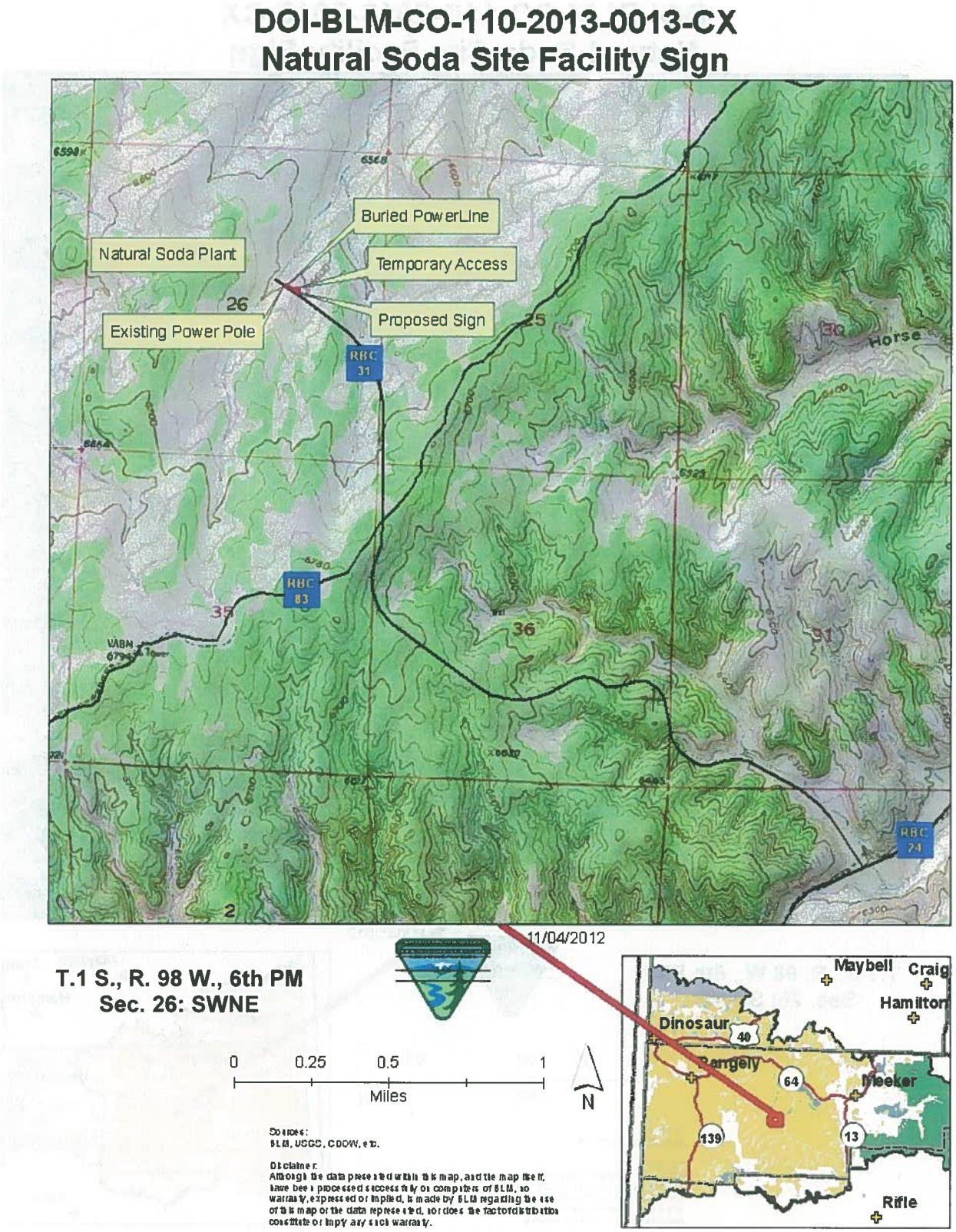
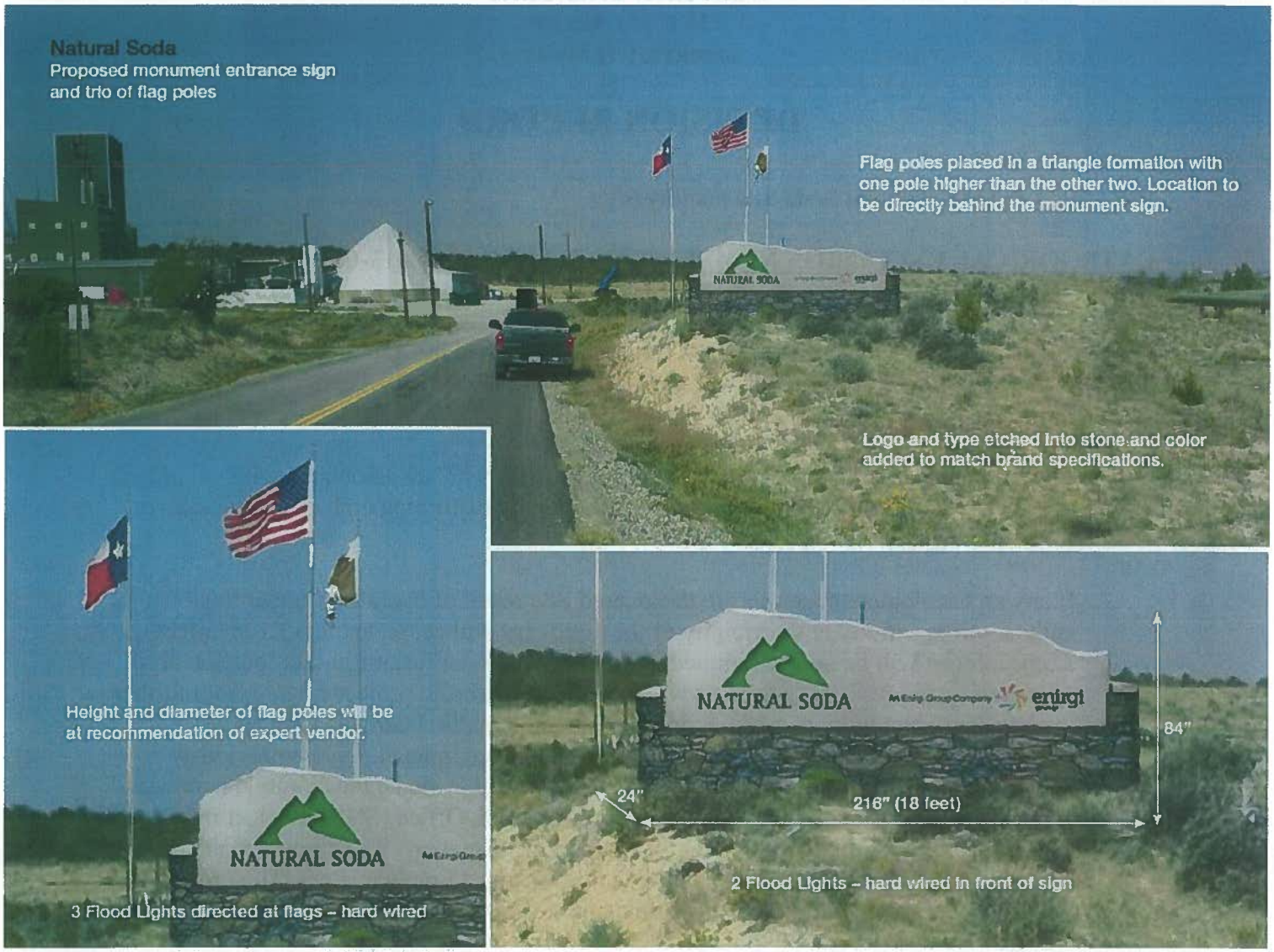


Figure 3: Figure 3: Example Sign



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DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: Natural Soda Site Facility Sign

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2013-0013-CX

DECISION
It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-110-2013-0013-CX, authorizing the construction and maintenance of a lighted site facility sign.

Mitigation Measures

1. The applicant is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts.

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

3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the applicant 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 applicant must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the AO.

4. 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 November 6, 2012 and a copy of the completed Categorical Exclusion will be posted on the WRFO website. As of February 6, 2013, no comments or inquiries have been received.

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: Kent C. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 02/13/2013