

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

**Section 390
Categorical Exclusion for
Oil and Gas Development**

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2014-0025-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC62050

PROJECT NAME: WPX's request to drill an additional 2 wells on the existing RGU 22-20-198 well pad (2 APDs)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T. 1 S., R. 98 W., Sec. 20, 6th P.M.

APPLICANT: WPX Energy Rocky Mountain, LLC.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: WPX Energy is proposing to drill two additional wells on the existing RGU 22-20-198 well pad. In addition, WPX will expand the existing location approximately 2.3 acres to accommodate the additional wells. The existing well pad footprint occupies approximately 3.7 acres; the well pad footprint will occupy approximately 6 acres after expansion. The operator has confirmed that this action will not require the construction of any road or pipeline corridors; the existing road and pipelines will be used to service the two proposed wells. There is one producing well on the location.

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

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

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-5

Decision Language: "Make federal oil and gas resources available for leasing and development in a manner that provides reasonable protection for other resource values."

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-58) prescribed five categorical exclusions (CX) for activities whose purpose is for the exploration of oil or gas.

The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under the Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act, #1: *“Individual surface disturbances of less than five acres so long as the total surface disturbance on the lease is not greater than 150 acres and site-specific analysis in a document prepared pursuant to the NEPA has been previously completed.”*

Documentation

The BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) provides specific instructions for using this CX.

1) Is surface disturbance associated with the Proposed Action less than five acres?

No additional disturbance will result from implementing the Proposed Action. WPX will expand the existing location approximately 2.3 acres to accommodate the additional two natural gas wells. The existing well pad footprint occupies approximately 3.7 acres; the well pad footprint will occupy approximately 6 acres after expansion. The operator has confirmed that this action will not require the construction of any road or pipeline corridors; the existing road and pipelines will be used to service the two proposed wells.

2) Is there less than 150 acres of surface disturbance, including the Proposed Action, on the entire leasehold?

Estimates of surface disturbance within the lease (COC62050 at the surface location) that are most likely attributed to oil and gas exploration and production activities equal approximately 21 acres. This area represents 2 percent of the total area of the lease, which is approximately 1,080 acres in size.

3) Is the Proposed Action within the boundaries of an area included in a site-specific NEPA document? (The NEPA document must have analyzed the exploration and/or development of oil and gas (not just leasing) and the action/activity being considered must be within the boundaries of the area analyzed in the environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). The NEPA document need not have addressed the specific permit or application being considered.)

Yes. Potential impacts associated with drilling natural gas wells were reviewed in BLM-CO-110-2006-131-EA (signed on 1/5/2007).

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW: Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the White River Field Office (WRFO) interdisciplinary team on 11/19/2013. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 12/22/2013.

Name	Title	Resource	Date
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns	11/21/2013
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Special Status Wildlife Species	2/28/2013
Heather Woodruff	Range Management Specialist/Ecologist	Special Status Plant Species	11/22/2013
Matthew Dupire	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation, Invasive, non-Native Species	3/4/2014

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: A number of cultural resources inventory and evaluations projects have occurred in the area of the proposed well pad expansion for the proposed additional wells (Conner and Armstrong 1989 compliance dated 9/8/1989, Conner and Davenport compliance dated 8/23/1999, Conner *et al* 2005 compliance dated 10/3/2005, Martin *et al* 2009 compliance dated 11/3/2009, Schwendler *et al* 2008 compliance dated 2/11/2009). The inventory work has resulted in the identification of six resources within 305 meters (1,000 feet) of the center of the well pad. Three of the resources (5RB.2933, 5RB.2934 and 5RB.4135) are Isolated Finds and are not generally considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). One site is a paleontological locality and will be discussed further below. One site is a wickiup village and is considered NRHP eligible and one is an open camp that is considered potentially eligible.

Due to the increase of human activity in the area due to the drilling and operations of natural gas wells in the vicinity of these important cultural resources there is the potential for adverse impacts to cultural resources from low frequency vibrations associated with drilling and fracking equipment, gas compressors – should any be required to produce the gas, and unlawful collection of surface artifacts. Any losses to the cultural resources would constitute a long term, permanent, irreversible and irretrievable loss of data from the regional archaeological database.

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 additional wells are located in an area generally mapped as the Uintah Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Potential Fossil Yield Classification (PFYC) 5 formation. Formations that are in the PFYC 5 classification are known to produce scientifically noteworthy fossils (c. Armstrong and Wolny 1989). One of the various resources located near the 22-20-198 well pad is a fossil locality where fossil mammal bones were identified on the surface (Conner and Armstrong 1989 compliance dated 9/8/2013). This suggests that any excavation into the underlying sedimentary rock for well cellers or pits or other support features have a potential to impact scientifically noteworthy fossils.

Should any fossil resources be impacted by development activities associated with the additional wells on this pad it would represent a long term, permanent, irreversible and irretrievable loss of data from the regional paleontological database.

Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species: There are no threatened or endangered animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important use from the project area. The well pad is located in mule deer severe winter range, a specialized component of winter range that supports virtually an entire herd during the most extreme winters (heavy snowfall, temperatures etc.). Disruptive activity is subject to the White River ROD/RMP-approved timing limitations on these ranges. In order to avoid cumulative behavioral impacts to deer during the late winter/early spring period, activities associated with vegetation clearing, well pad construction and the drilling and equipping of wells shall be confined to timeframes outside the period of December 1 to April 30 on this location.

Threatened and Endangered Plant Species: According to plant surveys performed during the summer of 2013 no SSPS were found. There are no special status plant species issues or concerns associated with the Proposed Action.

Vegetation and Invasive and Non-native Species: Expansion of the well pad will require the complete removal of all vegetation on an additional 2.3 acres. Removal of vegetation on this area will create a larger area for non-native species to establish on the project area. The SUPO does address interim reclamation and final reclamation for the additional disturbance on the well pad and is expected to mitigate losses of vegetation and the potential for noxious weed establishment.

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.

Conner, Carl E., and Harley J. Armstrong

1989 Cultural and Paleontological Resource Inventories of the Proposed Rock School Project in Rio Blanco County, Colorado for Denison Resources. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (89-11-03: OAH # RB.LM.R37)

Conner, Carl E., and Barbara J. Davenport

1999 Class III Cultural Resource Inventory Report for the Proposed Rock School project Sodium Bicarbonate Facility in Rio Blanco County, Colorado, for AmerAlia, Inc. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (99-11-04A: RB.LM.R403)

Conner, Carl E., Barbara Davenport, Dana Archuleta and Jim Conner

2005 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory Report for Thirteen proposed Well Locations and Related Linear Routes in Rio Blanco County, Colorado for Williams Production RMT. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (05-11-35: OAH #RB.LM.R965)

Martin, Curtis M., Richard Ott, Nicole Darnell and James C. Miller
 2009 The Colorado Wickiup Project Volume IV: Dominquez Archaeological Research Group, Grand Junction, Colorado. (09-158-02: OAH # MC.SHF.R183)

Schwendler, Rebecca, Sarah Baer, Karen Reed, Scott Phillips, Scott Slessman, Matthew Bandy, Nicole Kromarek, Scott Bowen, Max Wolk, Caryn M. Berg, Paul Burnett, Tom Witt, Sean Doyle, Michelle Delmas, Michael Cregger, John Kennedy, Judy Cooper, Zonna Barnes, Amanda Cohen, Cynthia Manseau, Michael Retter, Dan Shosky, and Erin Salisbury
 2008 A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory for the Ryan Gulch 3-D Geophysical Exploration Project, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. SWCA Environmental Consultants, Broomfield, Colorado. (09-127-01: OAH # RB.LM.R1083)

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

MITIGATION: The following mitigation is based on that found in DOI-BLM-CO-110-2006-131-EA and applies to drilling and maintenance activities associated with the proposed two natural gas wells:

1. All personnel from drilling, construction and maintenance crews shall be required to remain on the well pad or the county road or access road to the well pad to prevent unauthorized collection of artifacts or damage to resources in the area.
2. Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed Mix #3. It is recommended that seeding occur between September 1st and February 29th immediately following completion of the wells to provide the best opportunity for seed germination and establishment. Seed mixture rates are Pure Live Seed (PLS) pounds per acre. Drill seeding is the preferred method of application.

Native Seed Mix #3		
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar)	2	
Needle and thread	1	
Indian ricegrass (Rimrock)	2	
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1	
Utah sweetvetch	1	

3. It will be the responsibility of the operator to prevent use by migratory birds of reserve pits that store or are expected to store fluids which may pose a risk to such birds (e.g., migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and raptors) during completion and after completion activities have ceased. Methods may include netting, the use of bird-balls, or other alternative methods that effectively prevent use and that meet BLM approval. It will be the responsibility of the operator to notify the BLM via **Sundry Notice** of the method that will be used to prevent use two weeks prior to when completion activities are expected to begin. The BLM approved method will be applied within 24 hours after completion activities have

begun. All lethal and non-lethal events that involve migratory birds will be reported to the Petroleum Engineer Technician immediately.

4. **Ground Water:** Shallow aquifers shall be protected from hydrofracturing and the production of oil and gas by installation and cementing of surface and intermediate casing. Any groundwater produced from the Fort Union or Mesaverde Formations will be hauled off and disposed of due to poor water quality and therefore preventing adverse impacts to valuable surface and ground water resources. Environmentally unfriendly substances (e.g. diesel) must not be allowed to contact soils. The use of spill-guards (or equivalent spill prevention equipment) under and around pumping equipment and frac-tanks will be used to intercept such contaminants prior to infiltrating soils and contaminating ground water. Furthermore, all pits shall be lined and all wastes associated with construction and drilling (including produced water) will be properly treated and disposed of. The operator will be required to monitor BLM spring 184-04 for water quality and flow rates starting from the first day of drilling until successful interim reclamation (as determined by the BLM) is completed. All access roads and well pads will be designed to "Gold Book" standards (as outlined above) to maintain natural surface water drainage and ground water recharge patterns.
5. Erosion and sediment control measures will be installed on all slopes exceeding five percent to mitigate soil loss. Erosion and sediment control measures will be maintained until stream banks and adjacent upland areas are stabilized.
6. Road speed limits (with the exception of Rio Blanco County Road 24) will be 15 miles per hour to aid in dust abatement and improves overall traffic safety.
7. The sodium lease holders shall be notified by the operator of their plans to drill wells on the 22-20-198 prior to the commencement of surface disturbing activities.
8. To prove ownership of any aquifer contamination or drilling influence, a fluorescent dye other than Rhodamin WT, should be added to all drilling fluids used through the Green River formation while drilling wells on the 22-20-198 well pad.
9. For wells drilled on the 22-20-198 well pad, drilling fluid should be sampled and analyzed for pH and conductivity every 100 feet from surface to 100 feet below the dissolution surface. WPX will document fluid losses during drilling operations through the Green River Formation. The analysis of the fluid samples and fluid loss documentation will be supplied to the BLM Meeker office within 30 days of drilling.
10. The Colorado-One-Call procedures will be implemented before any surface disturbing activities for the pipelines take place.
11. All permanent (onsite for six [6] months or longer) structures, facilities and equipment placed onsite shall be painted Munsell Soil Color Chart Juniper Green or equivalent within six months of installation.

12. The operator will be required to maintain the fences they encounter during the project in working order (e.g., cut fence will be repaired, gates will be closed, cattleguards repaired, and fence laid down will be put up).

The following mitigation also applies to the Proposed Action:

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. The applicant assumes responsibility for the integrity of site 5RB.2930 and 5RB4134 for the duration of the life or operation of RGU 22-20-198 pad. This includes, but is not be limited to, having an approved archaeological consultant conduct yearly monitoring of sites 5RB.2930 and 5RB.4135 as well as any stabilization or data recovery necessitated by site degradation, whether resulting from construction and operation of the RGU 22-20-198 well pad, vandalism, erosion, or any other cause.
17. The applicant 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.
18. If any paleontological resources are discovered as a result of operations under this authorization, the applicant 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.

19. 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.
20. Disruptive activity is subject to the White River ROD/RMP-approved timing limitations on these ranges. In order to avoid cumulative behavioral impacts to deer during the late winter/early spring period, activities associated with vegetation clearing, well pad construction and the drilling and equipping of wells shall be confined to timeframes outside the period of December 1 to April 30 on this location.

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE: On-going compliance inspections and monitoring of drilling, production, and post-production activities will be conducted by White River Field Office staff during construction of well pads, access roads, and pipelines. Specific mitigation developed in the associated Categorical Exclusion and the lease terms and conditions will be followed. The Operator will be notified of compliance related issues in writing, and depending on the nature of the issue(s), will be provided 30 days to resolve such issues.

NAME OF PREPARER: Brett Smithers

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 Section 390 of the Energy Policy.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: _____



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: _____

03/07/14

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1. Project area map.

Figure 2. Aerial photo of existing disturbance and the proposed 3 inch water line.

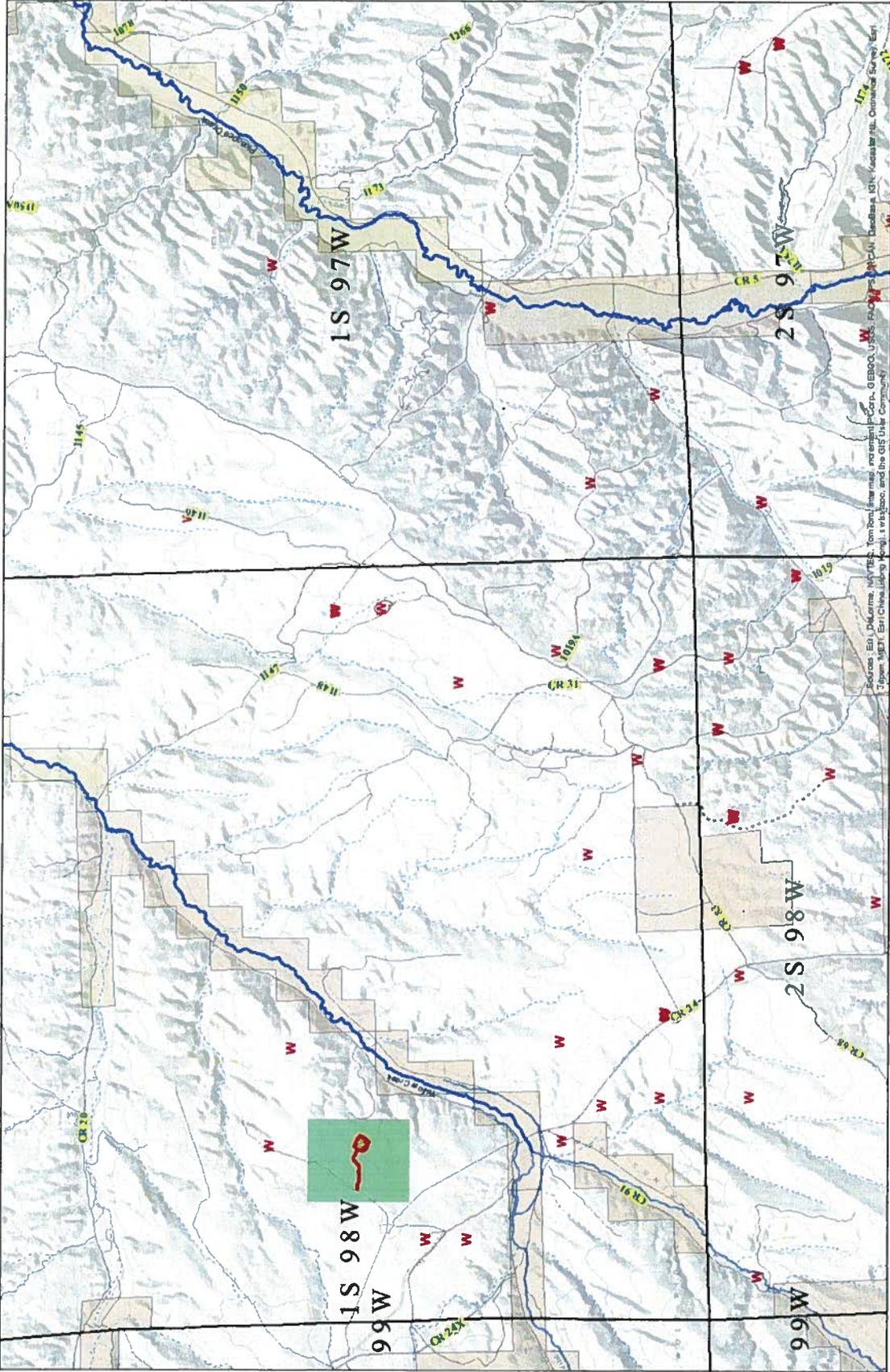


Figure 1. The image above illustrates the geographic location of the existing well pad (within the green rectangle) where the proposed natural gas wells will be drilled from the existing RGU 22-20-198 well pad.



Figure 2. The image above illustrates the geographic location of the existing well pad and road and pipeline corridor.

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220 E Market St
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DECISION

PROJECT NAME: WPX's request to drill an additional 2 wells on the existing RGU 22-20-198 well pad (2 APDs)

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2014-0025-CX

DECISION: It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-110-2014-0025-CX, authorizing drilling and maintenance activities for the proposed two natural gas wells on the existing RGU 22-20-198 location.

MITIGATION: The following mitigation is based on that found in DOI-BLM-CO-110-2006-131-EA and applies to drilling and maintenance activities associated with the proposed two natural gas wells:

1. All personnel from drilling, construction and maintenance crews shall be required to remain on the well pad or the county road or access road to the well pad to prevent unauthorized collection of artifacts or damage to resources in the area.
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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:

Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the White River Field Office (WRFO) interdisciplinary team on 11/19/2013. External scoping was conducted by posting this project on the WRFO's on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 12/22/2013.

RATIONALE:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act. Drilling additional wells from existing well pad locations allows for further development of the oil and gas resource with reduced surface disturbance compared to new locations.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES:

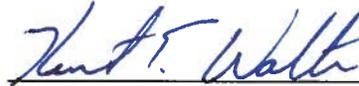
State Director Review

Under regulations addressed in 43 CFR 3165.3(b), any adversely affected party that contests a decision of the Authorized Officer may request an administrative review, before the State Director, either with or without oral presentation. Such request, including all supporting documentation, shall be filed in writing with the BLM Colorado State Office at 2850 Youngfield Street, Lakewood, Colorado 80215 within 20 business days of the date such decision was received or considered to have been received. Upon request and showing of good cause, an extension may be granted by the State Director. Such review shall include all factors or circumstances relevant to the particular case.

Appeal

Any party who is adversely affected by the decision of the State Director after State Director review, under 43 CFR 3165.3(b), of a decision may appeal that decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals pursuant to the regulations set out in 43 CFR Part 4.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

03/07/14

