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-N05-2014-0060-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC0118327-01

PROJECT NAME: Natural Soda Additional Barren Line

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian
T 1S, R 98 W
Section 25 Lots 12 and 13
Section 26 Lots 6 - 9

APPLICANT: Natural Soda Inc.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:
Background/Introduction: Natural Soda Inc. (NSI) operates an in-situ sodium bicarbonate (nahcolite) solution mining operation which 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) in the Piceance Creek Basin, approximately 37 miles west and south of Meeker, Colorado. NSI current mining operations involve solution mining from five available mining well pairs. A plant expansion completed in spring of 2013 was designed to increase plant capacity from 125,000 tons per year to 250,000 tons per year. Production for 2014 is projected at [illegible]ately 180,000 tons and is anticipated to increase to the new plant capacity within the [illegible] years. Production from the 10H through 13H wells is limited by the size of the existing pipeline.

Sign Here

Proposed Action: NSI proposes to add approximately 4,700 feet of 12 inch insulated surface pipeline extending from NSI's processing facilities to the 10H through proposed 14H well pads (Figures 1 and 2). It would run parallel to the two existing eight inch pipelines currently servicing these production well pairs. Existing lines would be lowered from the existing stanchions and all three pipelines would be placed on ground level cross pipe supports to support the pipeline above the ground. No new surface disturbance would be associated with the installation.

Construction of the additional pipeline is anticipated to begin as soon as authorized in spring of 2014 and could require three to four weeks for project completion. Construction, monitoring, reclamation, and maintenance activities for NSI's facilities and well field are governed by NSI's approved mine plan.

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

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
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 3/11/2014. 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	4/16/2014
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Special Status Wildlife Species	3/20/2014
Heather Woodruff	Range Management Specialist/Ecologist	Special Status Plant Species	3/19/2014

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: The project area has been inventoried multiple times for cultural resources at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Conner 2008, compliance dated 12/17/2008; Conner 2009, compliance dated 3/19/2009; Reed et al. 2008, compliance dated 10/3/2008; Schwendler et al., compliance dated 2/11/2009). No National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-Eligible sites are expected to be impacted by the proposed project. Only one cultural resource was identified within the project area – Isolated Find 5RB3023, collected by GRI upon discovery in 1990 and ineligible for NRHP listing by the Colorado BLM-SHPO Programmatic Agreement. One potentially Eligible site (Not Eligible – Field) occurs within 308m of the project area – open prehistoric camp 5RB1877. As SWCA found the site heavily disturbed in 2008 and as vibrations from construction activities should not substantially impact lithics at a distance of 255 meters, construction activities are not expected to have negative, direct impacts on 5RB1877.

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 project area encompasses portions of the following fossil-bearing formation:

- Uinta Formation-Potential Fossil Yield Classification (PFYC) 4: Eocene mammals (titanotheres, uintatheres, myacid carnivores, possibly others), reptiles (turtles and crocodilians), fish (vertebrae, spines, and scales, likely including Lepisosteidae), gastropods (high-spired and turitellid snails), insect larvae, and plants (leaves, wood, algae, etc.). (Tweto 1979; Armstrong and Wolny 1989)

One known fossil locality (5RB1923, titanothere skull fragments) occurs within 30 meters of the project area centerline.

Because scientifically important fossils are often found in this formation, and because of the proximity of locality 5RB1923, special mitigations shall apply requiring paleontological monitoring (see below).

Special Status Wildlife Species: The Proposed Action would have no conceivable influence on any population or associated habitat of special status animals or wildlife with special management emphasis. The pipeline would lie immediately adjacent to a paved mine access road and parallel an existing surface pipeline with each end terminating at active mine facilities.

Special Status Plant Species: No new surface disturbance would be associated with the installation of the additional pipeline. In the surrounding area of the Proposed Action several plant surveys have been conducted for BLM sensitive and T&E species. No suitable or occupied plant habitat has been identified. 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.

Compass: Colorado's On-line Cultural Resource Database. Colorado Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation. http://www.coloradohistory-oahp.org/compass/. Accessed 3/11/2009.

Conner, Carl
2008 Class III cultural resources inventory for three core hole locations (10H-C, 10H-I, and 11H-I) and short access in Rio Blanco County, CO for Natural Soda, Inc. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (08-11-20: SHPO #RB.LM.NR2065

Conner, Carl
2009 Class III cultural resources inventory for the proposed recovery pipeline for the 10H-I and 11H-I drill locations in Rio Blanco County, Colorado for Natural Soda, Inc. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (09-11-04: SHPO # RB.LM.NR2028)

Reed, Karen, Chris Millington, Michelle Delmas, Matthew Bandy, Ryan Byerly, John Kennedy, Josh Tatman, Beau DeBoer, Todd Kohler, Rebecca Schwendler, George Connell, R. Ashley Fife, Lauren Frink, Scott Bowen, Michael J Retter, Vanesa Zeitz, Paul Brunett, Thomas A. Witt, Sean Doyle, Nicole Kromarek, Emily Bitterman, Caryn Berg, Jennifer Long, Courtney Higgins, Gina Clingerman, Erin Salisbury, Norma Crumbley, Carrie J. Riordan, Jason Burkard, Judy Cooper, Sarah Baer, Scott Phillips, Zonna Barnes, Scott Slessman, and Anthony Lopez
2008 Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of the Piceance Creek 3-D Geophysical Exploration Project Area, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. SWCA Environmental Consultants, Broomfield, Colorado. (08-127-09: SHPO# RB.LM.R1085)

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: SHPO #RB.LM.R1083)

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

MITIGATION:

1. The operator/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.

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 operator/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 operator/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.

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

4. All construction activities impacting exposed outcrops and excavations into the underlying bedrock must be monitored by an approved paleontologist. In addition, construction of portions of the surface pipeline within 100 meters of 5RB1923 must be monitored by an approved paleontologist. The paleontologist shall be present before any such excavations begin.

COMPLIANCE PLAN: "Natural Soda 2010 Mine Plan and Environmental Monitoring Plan"

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: Kent E. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 4/18/14

ATTACHMENTS:
Figure 1: General Location Map – Topographic
Figure 2: General Location Map – Aerial Photo

Figure 1: General Location Map – Topographic

DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0060-CX
Natural Soda Additional Barren Line

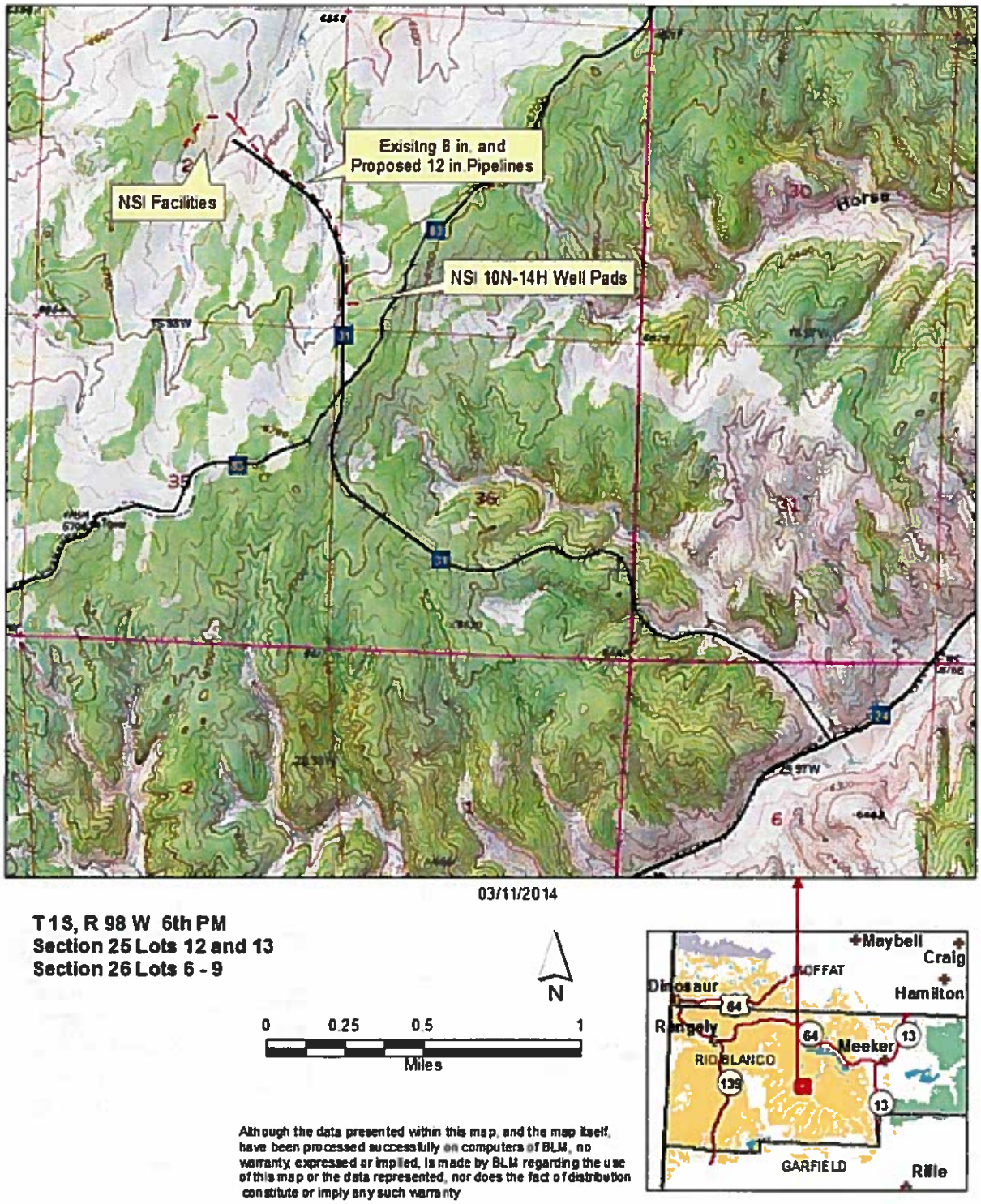
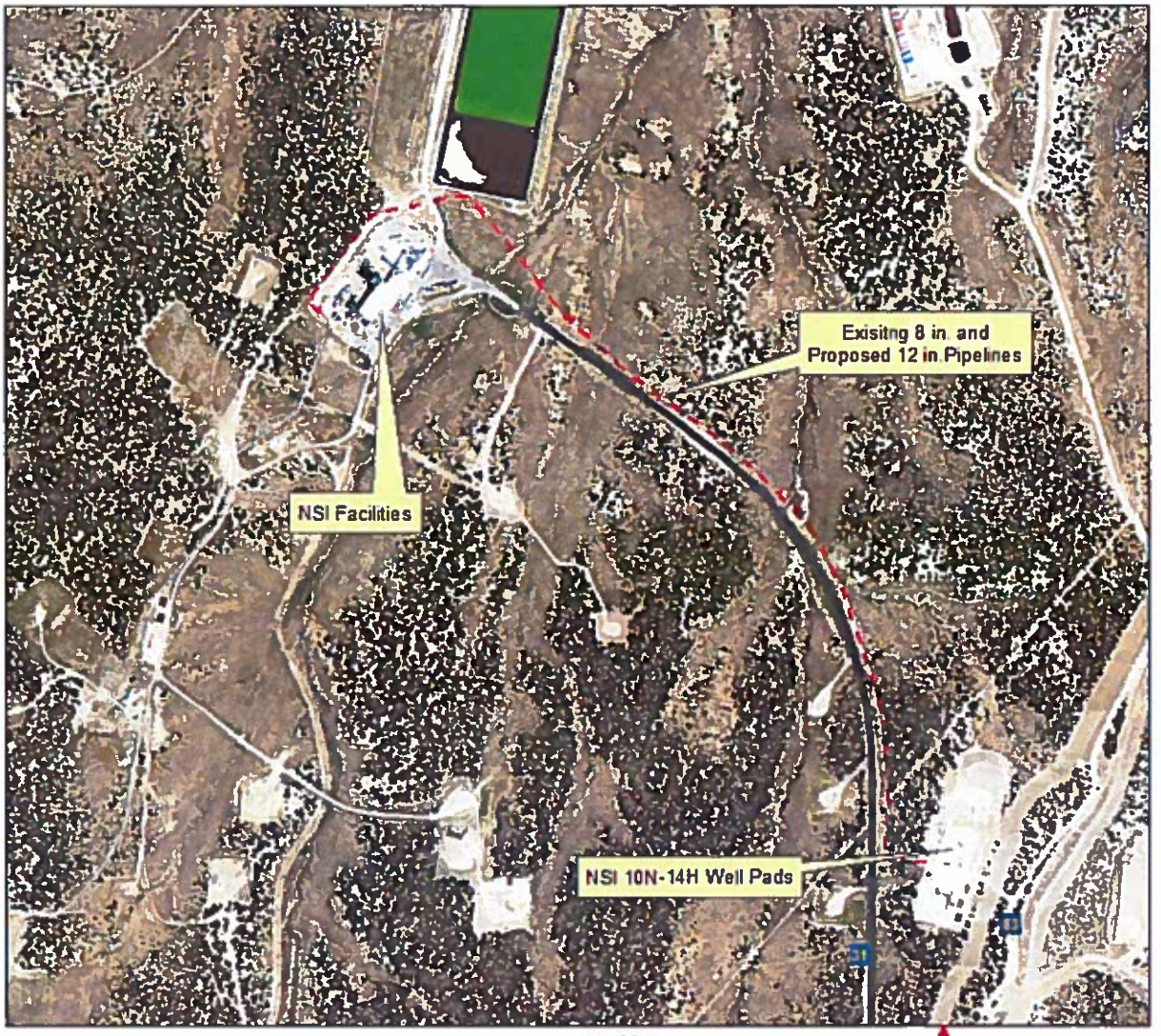


Figure 2: General Location Map – Aerial Photo

DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0060-CX
Natural Soda Additional Barren Line



03/11/2014

T1S, R 98 W 6th PM
Section 25 Lots 12 and 13
Section 26 Lots 6 - 9

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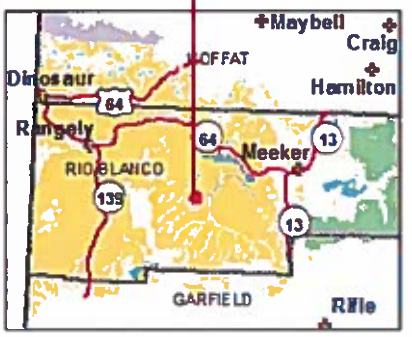
Feet



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DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: Natural Soda Additional Barren Line

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0060-CX

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0060-CX, authorizing the construction, operation, and maintenance of additional 12 inch barren liquor surface pipeline parallel to existing surface pipelines along with the lowering of the existing parallel pipelines.

Mitigation Measures

1. The operator/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.

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 operator/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 operator/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.

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monitored by an approved paleontologist. The paleontologist shall be present before any such excavations begin.

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 3/12/2014 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: Kent E. Walter

Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 4/18/14