

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Environmental Assessment  
UT-G010-2011-0120-EA**

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**January 2012**

**Kings Canyon to Alger Pass Pipeline Project**

**Project No. UTU-82322**

**Location:** T. 10 & 11 S., R. 19 E., SLM  
Sections 15, 21, 22, 28, 29, 33, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 17

**Applicant/Address:** *XTO Energy Inc.*  
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**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

**INTRODUCTION**

This Environmental Assessment has been prepared to analyze the potential impacts of XTO Energy Inc's (XTO) existing and proposed pipeline. The EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of a proposed action or alternatives to the proposed action. An EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any "significant" impacts could result from the analyzed actions. "Significance" is defined by NEPA and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI). A Decision Record, which includes a FONSI statement, is a document that briefly presents the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative would not result in "significant" environmental impacts (effects) beyond those already addressed in the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan (VFORMP), October 2008. If the decision maker determines that this project has "significant" impacts following the analysis in the EA, then an EIS would be prepared for the project. If not, a Decision Record may be signed for the EA approving the alternative selected.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

XTO has requested their existing Temporary Use Permit (UTU-82322-01), which authorizes an existing 8 inch, surface, steel, and natural gas pipeline be converted to a permanent right-of-way grant. In addition, XTO proposes to remove a portion of the existing pipeline and to install an additional 15,075 feet of 12 inch, buried, natural gas pipe line to re-direct the flow of gas. XTO has constructed a natural gas compressor plant (Wild Horse Bench Compressor Site) on Ute Tribal land and would like to redirect the flow of gas from the Kings Canyon Area to this facility which involves the removal of a portion of pipeline and add an additional pipeline.

The BLM's need is to:

Consider approval of the application in a manner that avoids or reduces impacts on sensitive resource values associated with the project area and prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands.

XTOs need for the proposed action is to:

Convert their existing temporary authorization to a permanent right-of-way grant, remove a portion of pipe and to install additional pipeline to redirect the flow of gas to the Wild Horse Bench Compressor Site.

## **CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)**

The proposed pipeline and related facilities would be in conformance with the Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (October 31, 2008). The RMP/ROD decision allows for processing applications, permits, operating plans, mineral exchanges, leases on public lands in accordance with policy and guidance and allows for management of public lands to support goals and objectives of other resources programs, respond to public requests for land use authorizations, and acquire administrative and public access where necessary (RMP/ROD p.86). It has been determined that the proposed action and alternative(s) would not conflict with other decisions throughout the plan.

## **RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS**

This EA was prepared by the BLM in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and in compliance with all applicable regulations and laws passed subsequently, including the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and the U.S. Department of Interior requirements and guidelines listed in the BLM *Manual Handbook H-1790-1*. This EA assesses the environmental effects of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

The proposed action is also consistent with the Uintah County General Plan 2011-as amended. The Uintah County General Plan contains specific policy statements addressing public and multiple-use resource use and development, access, and wildlife management. In general, the Plan indicates support for development proposals through its emphasis on multiple-use public land management practices and responsible use and optimum utilization of public land resources. The County, through the Plan, supports the development of natural resources as they became available as new technology allows.

## **IDENTIFICATIONS OF ISSUES**

As part of internal scoping, BLM resource specialists in the Vernal Field Office reviewed XTO's Proposed Action and conferred with other agencies to assess the type and magnitude of potential impacts to affected resources. The potential issues listed below are consistent with relevant concerns and potential issues presented in **Appendix A** (Interdisciplinary Team [IDT] Checklist). These potential issues are carried forward for analysis in the Environmental Consequences section (**Chapter 4**) of this EA.

## **CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This EA focuses on the Proposed and No Action Alternatives. The No Action Alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the proposed action.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

### **Introduction:**

In September 2005, Dominion Exploration & Production (Dominion) submitted application for the Kings Canyon Pipeline. While waiting for permanent authorization, Dominion received a temporary use authorization (UTU-82322-01) allowing them to construct and place the pipeline (See attached map, Appendix C from point "A" to Point "E").

XTO Energy Inc. (XTO), successor to Dominion assets, applied for and received approval for an extension of the temporary authorization (UTU-82322-01) on January 15, 2009. XTO now requests that the pipeline ROW be amended as described below and be made a permanent Right-of-Way grant.

XTO has constructed a natural gas compression plant (Wild Horse Bench Compressor Site) on Ute Indian Tribal land located in Section 1, T10S, R19E, SLB&M., and therefore would like to redirect the flow of gas from the Kings Canyon area to that facility by amending the current pipeline.

### **Existing Pipeline Layout:**

Current Kings Canyon Pipeline: The currently existing, temporary, 8" surface pipeline begins on federal lands at point "A" (see attached map in Appendix B) in Section 6, and transverses south-easterly through Sections 7, 8, 17 and then north-easterly through Sections 8, 9, 4, (all in T11 S, R19E, SLB&M) and then to point "B" in Section 33, T10S, R19E, SLB&M. The pipeline then travels north-westerly through State Section 32, T10S, R19E, and SLB&M to point "C". From point "C" the pipeline travels northeasterly through federal lands in Section 29, 28, 21, 22 and terminating at point "E" in Section 15. (all in T10S, R19E, and SLB&M).

### **Proposed Pipeline Layout:**

- XTO proposes to convert Temporary ROW (UTU-82322-01) into Permanent ROW. (UTU-82322)
- Kings Canyon South: XTO proposes to add the Segment #2 - "Interconnect"; a buried pipeline from Kings Canyon Pipeline (ROW UTU 82322), point "F" on the west to Algiers Pass pipeline (ROW UTU 82716), and point "G" on the east. Details of the pipeline addition are described below.
- Kings Canyon North -Post construction of the south "Interconnect", XTO plans to sever the north pipeline and remove the portion of the pipeline that crosses Kings Canyon - ("Disconnect" point "C" to point "D"). XTO would retain and utilize the pipeline north of Kings Canyon (RBU -point "D" to point "E"). Details of the pipeline removal are described below.

TABLE 1.0 -Distances and Acreages

	KC South Segment #1 Point "A" to "B"	KC South Segment #2 Point "F" to "G"	Total KC Segment # 1 KC Segment #2	North Point "D" to "E"	KC North- "Disconnect" Point "C" to "D"	KC South State Sec. 32 Point "B" to "C".
Length Miles (approx. feet)	6.87 (36,274)	2.40 (12,672)	9.27 (48,946)	1.23 (6,494)	2.18 (11,510)	0.46 (2,429)
Construction ROW Width	NA	75'	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maintenance ROW Width	18'	30'	NA	NA	NA	NA
Construction Acres	NA	21.82	21.82		NA	NA
Maintenance Acres	14.99	8.73	23.72	NA	NA	NA

**SEGEMENT #1 (see attached map, Appendix B, point A to point B)**

XTO needs a long term use pipeline to collect gas from the Kings Canyon production area and deliver it to the Wild Horse Bench compressor site where it would be compressed and sold into Three Rivers Pipeline. XTO proposes to convert the existing Temporary Use Pipeline Right-of-way corridor (UTU-82322-0 1) to a permanent renewable pipeline Right-of-way corridor (UTU-82322). The existing temporary pipeline ROW is for an 8" steel, surface pipeline on an 18' wide corridor. As a permanent pipeline ROW, Segment #1 would remain an 8" steel, surface pipeline on an 18' wide corridor. The pipeline portion (Segment #1) would be 6.87 miles (36.274 feet +/-) All other physical conditions of the south portion would remain the same except for the addition of the Segment #2 -"Interconnect", as described below.

**SEGEMENT #2 – INTERCONNECT – up to 12” buried pipeline (see attached map, Appendix B, point F to point G)**

In order to complete the pipeline for gas gathering towards the Wild Horse Bench compressor, XTO plans to construct a corridor containing a 12” or less steel, buried pipeline and associated infrastructure within a 75' wide disturbed pipeline corridor (30' permanent and 45' temporary construction width). The pipeline would be installed within a new right-of-way corridor across federal surface beginning at the Kings Canyon pipeline (UTU -82322) in Section 9, T11S, R19E, SLB&M, on the west to the existing Algiers Pass pipeline (UTU-82716) in Section 11, T11 S, R19E, SLB&M, on the east. This pipeline portion is shown as point "F" to point "G" on the attached map.

Kings Canyon South, Segment #2 -"Interconnect", would require a 2.40 mile (12,672') long by 75' wide corridor (21.82 acres) across federal surface. No disturbance for this project is proposed on state, private or Ute Indian Tribal surface.

The pipeline would serve as a gathering pipeline along existing disturbance and parallel to an existing lease road. Pig launchers and receivers and valve sets would be installed at each end of

the pipeline to insure safe and economic operation of the pipeline.

#### Cathodic protection -Kings Canyon South, Segment #2 -"Interconnect"

Cathodic protection would be provided via rectifier located at the Wild Horse Bench compressor site, which supply an electrical current through electrical wiring, attached to the pipeline. Cathodic test stations would be placed within the ROW approximately every quarter of a mile and immediately over the buried pipe. *(Test station description: Dual electrical wire, spot welded to the buried pipe, and extending to 3' +/-above ground level within a 2" PVC protective riser with top end removable cap for the purpose of testing pipeline electrical current).* Either a Cathodic bed or deep well system would be utilized. The type of system would be determined and implemented after pipeline construction and when a cathodic protection survey is completed.

#### Design Factors of Kings Canyon South, Segment #2 -"Interconnect"

This project would follow procedures specified by the BLM as well as other applicable guidelines, including API 1104, "Welding of Pipelines and Related Facilities", latest edition. The buried pipeline would be constructed of new pipe with wall thickness of (0.375 or less -based on actual pipe diameter installed) and an anticipated operating pressure of 100 psig or less and a maximum allowable operating pressure (MAOP) of 1000 psig. Furthermore the pipeline would be pneumatic tested to 110% of MAOP (1100 psig) for an 8 hour period of time prior to installation. Connecting welds would be X-Ray tested.

#### Right-of Way Location Kings Canyon South. Segment #2 -"Interconnect"

Surface disturbance and vehicular travel would be limited to existing access roads and right-of-way corridor. A maximum of 21.82 acres of federal lands would be disturbed as a result of the pipeline corridor installation though every effort would be made to keep new disturbance to a minimum.

#### **KINGS CANYON NORTH PIPELINE -Remove from ROW UTU 82322-01 and submit Form 3160-5 (sundry) for continued use as an on unit pipeline.**

Beginning at point "C" the pipeline travels north-easterly through Federal lands in Section 29; 28; 21; and 22, T10S, R19E, and SLB&M., terminating at point "E" in Section 15. After the Kings Canyon South, Segment #2 -"Interconnect" pipeline is constructed and gas is able to flow toward the Wild Horse Bench compressor site, XTO would remove a portion of KC North Pipeline -"Disconnect" which travels through the Kings Canyon geographical feature (point "C" to point "D", Sections 29, 28, 21 in T10S, R19E, and SLB&M). The remaining portion of KC North pipeline, Point "D" to point "E", Sections 21, 22, 15, T10S, R19E, SLB&M would remain intact and would be utilized for gathering of RBU unit gas to the RBU Dehydration Site in Section 15, T10S, R19E. A sundry has been submitted and approved to change the authorization from a temporary right-of-way authorization to a lease authorization in order to retain this portion of the pipeline for in-unit purposes only.

## **Removal and Reclamation of Kings Canyon North Pipeline "Disconnect"**

Access: XTO would access the temporary pipeline through the bottom of the geographical feature, Kings Canyon, beginning from a point on the east/west road through Kings Canyon at Latitude 39°52'43"N & Longitude 109°47'19"W traveling north along the bottom of the wash to Latitude 39°55'01"N & Longitude 109°47'20"W, point of temporary pipeline. Equipment accessing the bottom of the canyon would consist of two track-hoes, one side-boom tractor, one equipment / pipe trailer, and crew ATV's. As access activities would be conducted in the bottom of a sandy / rocky wash, the wash would be naturally reclaimed by future storm events.

To accomplish the removal of the pipe from Kings Canyon, XTO would first pig the line to remove any condensate or liquids into a temporary storage tank at RBU 9-21E. XTO would then sever the pipeline using an acetylene cutting torch at a mid-way point in the bottom of Kings Canyon and skid the pipe either direction from the cut(s). The south portion of the pipeline would be pulled to a staging area located at point "C" in Section 29, T10S, R19E. SLB&M, where the pipe would be cut into truck sized lengths. The north portion of the pipeline would be pulled to a staging area located on the RBU 9-21E location where it would be cut into truck sized lengths. The cut pipe would then be transported from both staging areas to the XTO Roosevelt yard facility for storage.

Special Status Species consideration: Where the temporary pipeline is to be removed, the BLM has identified an area which contains Clay Reed Mustard habitat. XTO proposes to sever the pipeline at a point just north of the referenced plant habitat, suspend the pipeline in the air with the track-hoes, and walk the pipeline south while the remainder of that portion of the pipeline is winched / skidded to the south, away from the sensitive plant habitat.

### **Government Agencies Involved**

The proposed "interconnect" right-of-way is located on Federal surface. A road encroachment application would be filed with Uintah County Road Department for a pipeline crossing at point "F" in Section 9, T11S, and R19E SLB&M.

### **Visual Resources**

The pipeline would be buried to blend with the natural environment. Cuts and fills would be minimized and no permanent storage areas would be established along the corridor. The corridor would be kept clear of debris and unused equipment and would be kept at a minimum width to blend in with the natural environment to minimize disturbance to visual resources.

### **Erosion and Sedimentation Control**

Storm water and erosion BMP's would be implemented along the construction corridor. No vehicles would be operated during periods of saturated soil conditions when surface ruts greater than 4 inches would occur within the staging area. Should excessive erosion begin to occur, additional erosion control structures would be installed and interim reclamation practices would be initiated.

### Human Health and Safety

To protect and minimize the possibility of fires during the construction phase, all equipment would be equipped with fire extinguishers. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) would be required as well as adhering to safe construction practices.

### Air Quality

Members of the pipeline construction crew would car pool to and from Ouray or surrounding cities and towns to minimize vehicle-related emissions. If necessary, XTO Energy, Inc. would control dust evolving from the access corridor, if caused by construction traffic and only during the period of construction.

### Noxious and Invasive Weeds

To reduce the likelihood of the introduction of noxious and invasive weed species via project-related vehicles and equipment, any vehicle or equipment originating from outside of the Uintah Basin would be power washed prior to the beginning of the construction project.. XTO would monitor weed growth and control them by spraying.

### **Construction of the Segment #2 - "Interconnect"**

Construction activities associated with the proposed pipeline project are anticipated to take approximately 8 weeks to complete and would include blading, trenching and grading of the proposed right-of-way. The adjacent road would be used for welding of the pipeline and temporary staging areas are planned.

Equipment needed to construct the corridor would include flat bed trailers, a bending machine, welding rigs, trenching machine, backhoes, track hoes, dozers, side booms, water trucks, and pickup trucks. Vehicle traffic during the construction phase would include the transportation of materials and heavy equipment the commuting of the workforce, and the daily operation of the construction equipment.

Trash containers and a portable toilet would be located on construction sites during construction. Upon completion of construction, the toilet and its contents would be transported to Vernal, Utah's municipal sewage facility in accordance with applicable rules and regulations regarding sewage treatment and disposal. Accumulated trash and nonflammable waste materials would be hauled to the Uintah County landfills. All debris and waste materials not contained in the trash containers would be cleaned up, removed from the ROW, and disposed of at the landfill. No potentially harmful materials or substances would be left on the ROW or vicinity. Scrap metal and other recyclable refuse would be hauled to the XTO yard.

### General Reclamation

Please refer to the January 11, 2010, BLM approved, XTO Energy Reclamation plan that is on file at the Vernal BLM field office. This plan is in conformance with the Green River District

Guidelines and is applicable to all XTO surface disturbing activities.

#### Site Specific Reclamation for Kings Canyon South, Segment #2 -"Interconnect"

Storm water BMP's would be utilized during construction activities. Upon completion of the proposed pipeline and following BLM published Best Management Practices the reclamation would be completed within 90 days of completion of the pipeline project, the ROW corridor would be contoured to match surrounding hills and drainages. Drill and/or broadcast seeding of the disturbed areas would be conducted between August 15 to December 31, and prior to winter freezing of the soil, with the seed mix indicated below. Reclaimed areas receiving incidental disturbance during the life of the right-of-way would be re-contoured and reseeded, as needed.

Seed Mixture:

Species	Scientific Name	Seeding Rate (PLS/acre)
Siberian Wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron sibiricum</i>	3
Gardner Salt Brush	<i>Atriplex gardneri</i>	2
Bottlebrush Squirreltail	<i>Elymus elymoides</i>	2
Indian Ricegrass	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	2.5
Shadscale	<i>Atriplex confertifolia</i>	2
TOTAL:		11.5

Monitoring and yearly reporting of the site vegetation re-growth would occur until 75% basal cover is achieved.

Upon final abandonment, XTO would pig the pipeline and fill it with an inert gas prior to cutting and capping of the pipeline ends at a minimum 3' beneath ground level. The pipeline would remain engraved to prevent additional surface disturbance after final abandonment.

#### Site Specific Reclamation Kings Canyon North Pipeline -Disconnect

The existing pipeline is laid on the surface and largely within a sandy wash. Consequently, annual storm events are expected to reclaim any signs left from the pipeline following the removal of the pipe. Reclamation, therefore, would not be needed in this area. In addition, a ROW (UTU 69125-33) for an access road into section 29 is held by Uintah County; therefore, in this area of the Disconnect, no reclamation would be needed in the road ROW.

#### Operations and Maintenance

XTO Energy, Inc. would be responsible for all maintenance of the 8" and the 12" pipeline corridor. All maintenance activities would be confined to the proposed pipeline corridor right-of-way. No new or expanded access would be needed for operation and maintenance.

#### **NO ACTION**

The No Action Alternative would be to deny the approval. With this alternative BLM would not approve the conversion of the temporary use permit to a permanent right-of-way grant which includes the addition of 15,075 feet of buried pipeline, known as Segment 2 and the removal of surface pipeline, known as "Disconnect" between Points C and D.

## **Alternatives considered but not carried forward**

Alternate locations for the pipeline corridor have been analyzed by XTO personnel and deemed unsatisfactory given that an existing road, and therefore, existing disturbance, currently exists along most of the proposed alignment. The existing disturbed area for the road would be utilized to the extent possible to minimize new disturbance. Future activity proposed in the immediate area of the pipeline is routine inspection and maintenance of the associated right-of-way and the ongoing oil and gas activities of XTO Energy, Inc. and other operators with interests in the area. The pipeline would be a permanent facility lasting the lifespan of the associated drilling and production project in the area.

## **CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING**

This chapter presents the potentially affected existing environment (e.g., the physical, biological, social and economic values) of the project area as identified by the ID team analysis. This chapter provides the baseline for comparison of impacts/consequences described in Chapter 4.

### **VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS:**

The vegetation in the vicinity of the proposed project is dominated by desert shrub and sagebrush communities. Important native plant species include Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), black sagebrush (*Artemisia nova*), Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*), shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), mat saltbush (*Atriplex corrugata*), Gardner saltbush (*Atriplex gardneri*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*), Mormon tea (*Ephedra* sp.), inflated buckwheat (*Eriogonum inflatum*), rubber rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), spiny hopsage (*Grayia spinosa*), salina wildrye (*Leymus salinus*), bud sage (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), galleta grass (*Pleuraphis jamesii*), horsebrush (*Tetradymia* sp.). Invasive plant species identified in the vicinity of the proposed project include halogeton (*Halogeton*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Russian thistle (*Salsola* sp.), and tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*).

### **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, PROPOSED OR CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES:**

#### **Clay reed-mustard (*Schoenocrambe argillacea*)**

Clay reed-mustard is a perennial herb and a member of the mustard family. It is federally listed as threatened and is endemic to the lower Uinta and upper Green River Shale formations in the Bookcliffs of Uintah County, Utah. It consists of a sparsely leafed stem arising from a stout, woody base. From mid-April through mid-May, clay reed-mustard produces 3.5 to 4.5-millimeter wide lilac to white flowers that have prominent purple veins.

Clay reed-mustard typically occurs on steep hillsides and canyons on clay soils derived from the contact zone between the Uinta and Green River geologic formations. The typical plant community in clay reed-mustard habitat is the salt desert shrub community.

The Vernal Field Office Lands and Mineral's Botanist visually inspected all of the Disconnect on June 6, 2011. During this inspection, 48 clay reed-mustard individuals were found directly adjacent to the southwest portion of the existing pipeline. Specifically, the population is located on a steep westerly facing slope where the pipeline leaves the main part of Kings Canyon and trends up a side canyon.

#### **Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus wetlandicus*)**

Uinta Basin hookless cactus is a perennial herb and a member of the cactus family. It is federally listed as threatened and is endemic to the Uinta Basin. It consists of a perennial succulent shoot, solitary or rarely branching, globose, ovoid or cylindrical. Individuals are usually 3 to 9 centimeters in diameter and 4 to 12 centimeters. Each spine cluster, areoles, usually consists of one large (15 to 29 millimeters) central spine, three to four lateral central spines, and six to ten radial spines. From late April to May, Uinta Basin hookless cactus produces 2.5 to 5-centimeter high pink to violet flowers.

The ecological amplitude of Uinta Basin hookless cactus is wide, being found from clay badlands up to the pinyon-juniper habitat. The preferred habitat occurs on river benches, valley slopes, and rolling hills consisting of xeric, fine textured, clay soils, derived from the Duchesne River, Green River, Mancos, and Uinta formations, overlain with a pavement of large, smooth, rounded cobble. The typical plant community in Uinta Basin hookless cactus habitat is the salt desert shrub community.

The entire section of pipeline proposed for removal is located within the current US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) potential habitat polygon for Uinta Basin hookless cactus. The Vernal Field Office Lands and Mineral's Botanist visually inspected all of the Disconnect on June 6, 2011, during which time no individuals were identified along the existing pipeline.

#### **LIVESTOCK GRAZING:**

The proposed project is located in the Wild Horse Bench Allotment; used for winter sheep grazing. The allotment is primarily located within the semi-arid salt shrub ecosystem; undisturbed characterized by native low-lying shrubs, grasses and forbs. Disturbed areas of the Wild Horse Bench Allotment are currently characterized by invasive weeds such as halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*) and cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*) as well as bare ground. The allotment is currently dissected by hundreds possibly thousands of miles of pipelines, roads and road spurs, as well as other infrastructure such as compressor stations, which characterizes dense oil and gas development.

The current livestock operator has been unable to utilize his full permitted AUMs within the allotment due to the current level of disturbance, fragmentation, daily traffic and development.

## **RANGELAND HEALTH STANDARDS:**

Rangeland Health Standards were assessed for the Wild Horse Bench Allotment in 2005; a determination was made for that allotment that rangeland standards were being met. However, since then, a large portion of the vegetative surface has been removed and/or disturbed as a result of the development of oil and gas resources in the area.

The allotment is primarily located within the semi-arid salt scrub ecosystem; undisturbed characterized by low-lying shrubs, grasses and forbs. Disturbed areas of the allotment are currently characterized by invasive weeds such as halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*) and cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*) as well as bare ground.

## **WILD HORSES AND BURROS:**

The proposed project is located within the Hill Creek Herd Area (HA). The Vernal RMP/ROD determined that the horses in the HA are to be gathered, removed, and the herd would be determined to be “zeroed” out. At present, the horses have yet to be removed. The last count of the horse herd was estimated to be 245 in the spring of 2010. The horses are currently utilizing the Wild Horse Bench area in small bands (<10); occasionally larger bands of 10 or more may be observed during the winter months. The horses currently compete for forage resources with livestock and an increased wintering bison herd, as well as trespass livestock from neighboring tribal lands. The portion of Wild Horse Bench within the HA has been developed for energy resources.

## **SOILS**

Soils in the project area are comprised mostly of a complex of the Lanver and Walknolls soil types. The Lanver soil is derived from eolian deposits over residuum derived from sandstone and shale. The Lanver soil is moderately deep, well drained, and occurs on slopes between 2 and 8 percent. This soil is strongly sodic, slightly saline, and the risk of water erosion is medium. Walknolls soil is formed from slope alluvium derived from sandstone. The Walknolls soils are shallow, well drained, and occur on slopes between 2 and 25 percent. This soil is slightly sodic, non-saline, and the risk of water erosion is medium.

Both soils have low potential for reclamation due to the low precipitation of the project area, poorly developed topsoil that is low in organic matter, and very low water supplying and holding capacities. For both soil types, the background sediment yield is approximately 1.0 tons/acre/year.

## **CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

### **DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS**

This chapter presents the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts expected from each alternative on affected resources as identified by Chapter 3 and the ID team analysis.

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

#### **VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS:**

The proposed project would disturb approximately 21.82 acres of vegetation. Surface disturbance associated with the Proposed Project may provide favorable conditions for the germination and establishment of undesirable non-native plant species. Adherence to XTO's approved Reclamation Plan and Weed Management Guideline would minimize the risk of the establishment and spread of these species.

#### **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES:**

##### **Clay reed-mustard (*Schoenocrambe argillacea*)**

A portion of the Disconnect passes through identified occupied clay reed-mustard habitat. To prevent the pipeline from sliding across the occupied habitat which could result in plants being uprooted and resulting in major negative impacts to the habitat, the proponent has committed to lifting and walking the pipeline out of the occupied habitat prior to dragging the pipe out of the canyon. Although this would prevent direct physical damage to individuals and minimize the impacts to the habitat, the heavy equipment needed to move the pipeline would be driven on and placed on suitable habitat for the species.

In addition to the direct impacts to the habitat for the species, possible direct and indirect dispersed negative impacts which may result from implementation of the Proposed Action, primarily due to the proposed off road travel, include: increased competition for space, light, and nutrients with invasive and noxious weed species introduced and spread due to the Proposed Action; accidental spray or drift of herbicides used during invasive plant control; and altered photosynthesis, respiration, and transpiration due to increased fugitive dust resulting from project related traffic.

Based upon on the above information and mitigation measures below, implementation of the Proposed Action would result in a "*May Affect, Is Likely to Adversely Affect*" determination for clay-reed mustard. Pursuant with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and in conformance with 50 CFR Part 402.13, the BLM entered into and completed informal Section 7 consultation with USFWS. The USFWS and the BLM agreed to the following mitigation measures.

### *Mitigation measures*

As there would be activity within 300 feet of identified plants and incidental disturbance to habitat for the species resulting from the proposed project, the following measures from the Vernal RMP would be required to help minimize impacts to the species.

- The removal of the pipeline would not occur during the flowering period for the species (generally May 1<sup>st</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup>).
- A qualified botanist would be present on site to monitor the pipeline removal.
- Individuals would be flagged to assist in avoidance immediately prior to the pipeline removal and the flags would be removed immediately after the project completion.
- To identify if any long term impacts to the *S. argillacea* populations occur from pipeline removal activities, the following surveys will be conducted:
  - An initial population baseline will be established prior to removal activities.
  - The population within the removal area will then be monitored for three years following project completion.

*Discovery Stipulation:* Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the USFWS would be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for clay reed-mustard is anticipated as a result of project activities.

### **Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus wetlandicus*)**

As the visual survey of the Disconnect identified no individual cactus, Uinta Basin hookless cactus individuals would not receive direct physical damage due to the Proposed Project. Possible direct and indirect dispersed negative impacts which may result from implementation of the Proposed Action, primarily due to the proposed off road travel, include: increased competition for space, light, and nutrients with invasive and noxious weed species introduced and spread due to the Proposed Action; accidental spray or drift of herbicides used during invasive plant control; and altered photosynthesis, respiration, and transpiration due to increased fugitive dust resulting from project related traffic.

Based upon on the above information and mitigation measures below, implementation of the Proposed Action would result in a “*May Affect, Is Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” determination for Uinta Basin hookless cactus. The USFWS concurred with the above determination.

*Discovery Stipulation:* Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the USFWS would be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for any federally listed plant species is anticipated as a result of project activities.

## **LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

The Wild Horse Bench Allotment has been impacted through the high amount of development; the proposed action would contribute to the existing disturbance and fragmentation. Although the pipeline proposed would be a surface line; surface lines contribute to disturbance throughout the construction, maintenance and eventual removal process. Disturbance leads to loss of desirable forage vegetation species, loss of topsoil, alterations in nutrient cycling and an increase in invasive and noxious weed species. Currently, reclamation within the Wild Horse Allotment has been unsuccessful. The continuation of fragmentation and disturbance throughout the Allotment has led to multiple years of moderate to minimal use by the current grazing permittee. Impacts to livestock grazing should be minimized and reclamation success should improve under the current VFO BLM Reclamation Guidelines, and mitigation requirements.

Competition for grazing resources currently exists as a result of disturbance from oil and gas energy development, an influx of wintering bison and trespass cattle from neighboring tribal lands, as well as resident wild horses.

## **RANGELAND HEALTH**

Rangeland Health assessments were carried out on the Allotment in 2005 and the allotment was considered to be meeting land health standards; however since then there has been a large increase in the level of disturbance as a result of oil and gas development in the area. Impacts from large amounts of disturbance and fragmentation contribute to factors (weeds, bare ground, shifts in ecological community structure, erosion, etc.) that often lead to areas not meeting rangeland health. Moderate success with reclamation efforts may minimize the above factors. However, successful reclamation often takes multiple years to determine the outcome. It is likely that Rangeland Health would need to be assessed on the allotment due to the large shift in surface use during the last 6 years. Impacts to rangeland health should be minimized and reclamation success should improve under the current VFO BLM Reclamation Guidelines, and mitigation requirements.

## **WILD HORSES AND BURROS:**

The proposed project is likely to affect forage resources utilized by wild horses as well as lead to continued fragmentation of wild horse habitat. Construction activities may displace horses utilizing the area.

Impacts from large amounts of disturbance and fragmentation contribute to factors (weeds, bare ground, shifts in ecological community structure, erosion, etc.) that often lead to unhealthy rangelands and may displace grazing livestock, wild horses and/or wildlife. Rangeland forage resources continue to be lost on Wild Horse Bench due to the increase in oil and gas development projects and associated infrastructure such as the proposed project. Moderate success with reclamation efforts may minimize the above factors. However, successful reclamation often takes multiple years to determine the outcome. Impacts to wild horse habitat should be minimized and reclamation success should improve under the current VFO BLM Reclamation Guidelines, and mitigation requirements.

## **SOILS**

Under this alternative, the removal of the surface line is not expected to impact soils, due to the typically minor disturbances that occur with surface pipeline placement and removal.

Construction of the proposed buried line is expected to increase soil erosion and sedimentation rates, since the proposed action involves blading the pipeline route. Increased rates of erosion and sedimentation are expected to last until perennial vegetation is re-established. Even with the Applicants Committed Measures that includes a technically adequate Reclamation Plan, that conforms to the Green River District Reclamation Guidelines vegetation recovery is expected to take between 5 and 10 years, due to the low precipitation and soils with low reclamation potential. Until the vegetation has recovered to pre disturbance levels, increased soil erosion is expected to last for this period of time.

## **NO ACTION**

### **VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS:**

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no direct disturbance or indirect effects to vegetation including invasive plants/noxious weeds from surface-disturbing activities associated with the proposed project. Current land use trends in the area would continue, including increased industrial development, increased off-highway vehicle traffic, and increased recreational use.

### **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, PROPOSED OR CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES:**

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no direct disturbance or indirect effects to clay reed-mustard or Uinta Basin hookless cactus that would result from the proposed project. Current land use trends in the area would continue, including increased industrial development, increased off-highway vehicle traffic, and increased recreational use.

## **LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

The Wild Horse Bench Allotment has been impacted through the high amount of development. However, under the No Action Alternative there would be no contributions to the existing disturbance and fragmentation. Past reclamation within the Wild Horse Bench Allotment has been unsuccessful. The large amount of fragmentation and disturbance throughout the Allotment has led to multiple years of moderate to minimal use by the current grazing permittee. However, under the No Action Alternative there would be no additional disturbance from this project to the allotment.

## **RANGELAND HEALTH**

Rangeland Health assessments were carried out on the Allotment in 2005 and the allotment was considered to be meeting land health standards; however since then there has been a large increase in the level of disturbance as a result of oil and gas development in the area. Impacts from large amounts of disturbance and fragmentation contribute to factors (weeds, bare ground,

shifts in ecological community structure, erosion, etc.) that often lead to areas not meeting rangeland health. However, under the No Action Alternative there would be no additional disturbance from this project to the allotment.

### **WILD HORSES AND BURROS:**

The No Action Alternative would not affect forage resources utilized by wild horses as well as lead to continued fragmentation of wild horse habitat. Other ongoing land use activities such as energy exploration and development, ATV use, and livestock, wild horse and wildlife grazing could all result in surface disturbance that could lead to a reduction in vegetative cover that would then result in increased erosion and sedimentation rates.

### **SOILS**

Under this alternative, the proposed action would not occur. Other ongoing land use activities such as continued energy exploration and development, ATV use, and livestock grazing could all result in surface disturbance that could lead to a reduction in vegetative cover that would then result in increased erosion and sedimentation rates.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

### **VEGETATION INCLUDING INVASIVE PLANTS/NOXIOUS WEEDS:**

The Cumulative Impact Analysis Area (CIAA) for Vegetation including invasive plants/noxious weeds is the Kings Canyon-Green River 6<sup>th</sup> level subwatershed. This area covers approximately 43,243 acres of BLM, Ute tribal, state of Utah, and privately held lands. Within the CIAA, there are two active approved field development NEPA documents, Newfield Production Company's Castle Peak and 8-Mile Flat EIS and the Gasco EA. In total approximately 3,827 acres of surface disturbance was authorized across the analysis areas of these documents. If the disturbance is relatively uniform throughout these project areas, then approximately 546 acres of surface disturbance has occurred or could occur within the CIAA (1.3% of the CIAA). Within the CIAA there also are numerous oil and natural gas wells that do not tier to either of these NEPA documents. As of 2/14/2011, there are 52 abandoned oil and gas locations outside of the scope of the field development documents. Using the assumption of 5.0 acres of disturbance per well (including associated roads and pipelines), as per the Vernal Resource Management Plan, 260 acres of the CIAA were disturbed some point in the past and are in various stages of reclamation (0.6% of the CIAA). There are currently 252 well pads that serve as platforms for actively producing wells not permitted under these documents. Using the above assumption, this has resulted in 1,260 acres of surface disturbance (2.9% of the CIAA). Finally, 44 wells are currently proposed that do not tier to these documents that could result in 220 acres of surface disturbance (0.5% of the CIAA). Currently proposed field developments, if all approved as proposed (either the estimated disturbance presented in the proposal or an estimate of 5-acres of disturbance per well if an estimate is not yet available) would result in 23,379 acres of surface disturbance throughout the entirety of the project areas. If it assumed that disturbance would be relatively uniform throughout, then there would be about 2,790 acres of disturbance with the CIAA due to the projects (6.5% of the CIAA). Thus, in total 5,076 acres (11.8% of the CIAA)

have been or would be disturbed within the CIAA due to energy development activities. Within the CIAA, there are approximately 100 miles of road. The Proposed Action would add 21.82 acres of new surface disturbance. The No Action Alternative would not result in an additional accumulation of impacts.

## **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, PROPOSED OR CANDIDATE PLANT SPECIES:**

### **Clay reed-mustard**

The CIAA for clay reed-mustard is the known range of the species. The potential habitat has not been fully explored and mapped and total population estimates for the species are currently unknown. Existing data reveals populations of clay reed-mustard are found on steep canyon walls and cliffs along the contact zone between the Uinta and Green River geological formations. Currently, populations are known to occur along Willow Creek and the Green River. As this species is found in steep, difficult to reach locations, direct impacts to the species from development, grazing, and recreation have been limited. Indirect anthropogenic caused impacts to the species may include the loss of pollinators due to habitat disturbance and fragmentation resulting from widespread energy development; increased competition with non-native plant species introduced during the course of development, grazing, or recreation; and loss of suitable habitat resulting from soil destabilization or the dumping of clean fill following upslope development.

### **Uinta Basin hookless cactus**

The area delineated by the USFWS as potential habitat for Uinta Basin hookless cactus covers approximately 517,631 acres on BLM, Ute tribal, state of Utah, and privately held lands. Within the CIAA, there are 11 active approved field developments. Newfield Production Company's Castle Peak and Eightmile Flat Oil and Gas Expansion EIS, EOG Resources, Inc. North Chapita Natural Gas Well Development Project EA, Enduring Resources, LLC's West Bonanza Area Natural Gas Well Development Project EA, Gasco Production Company's Proposed Natural Gas Well Drilling Project Riverbend Unit EA, Kerr-McGee Oil & Gas Onshore LP's Bonanza Area EA, Petro-Canada Resources Rye Patch EA, Gasco Production Company's Wilkin Ridge Unit EA, Enduring Resources, LLC's Saddletree Draw Leasing and Rock House Development Proposal EA, QEP Energy Company's Greater Deadman Bench Oil and Gas Producing Region EIS, EOG Resources, Inc. Chapita Wells-Stagecoach EIS, and Bill Barrett Corporation's West Tavaputs Plateau Natural Gas Full Field Development Plan EIS. In total approximately 13,419 acres of surface disturbance was authorized across the analysis areas of these documents. If the disturbance is relatively uniform throughout these project areas, then approximately 4,979 acres of surface disturbance has occurred or would occur within the CIAA (1.0% of the CIAA). Within the CIAA there also are numerous oil and natural gas wells that do not tie to either of these NEPA documents. As of 3/28/2011, there are 527 abandoned oil and gas locations outside of the scope of the field development documents. Using the assumption of 5.0 acres of disturbance per well (including associated roads and pipelines), as per the Vernal Resource Management Plan, 2,635 acres of the CIAA were disturbed some point in the past and are in various stages of reclamation (0.5% of the CIAA). There are currently 3,331 well pads that serve as platforms for actively producing wells not permitted under these documents. Using the

above assumption, this has resulted in 16,655 acres of surface disturbance (3.2% of the CIAA). Finally, 761 wells are currently proposed that do not tier to these documents that would result in 3,805 acres of surface disturbance (0.7% of the CIAA). Currently proposed field developments, if all approved as proposed (either the estimated disturbance presented in the proposal or an estimate of 5-acres of disturbance per well if an estimate is not yet available) would result in 40,486 acres of surface disturbance throughout the entirety of the project areas. If it assumed that disturbance would be relatively uniform throughout, then there would be about 22,134 acres of disturbance with the CIAA due the projects (4.3% of the CIAA). Thus, in total 50,208 acres (9.7% of the CIAA) have been or would be disturbed within the CIAA due to energy development activities. Within the CIAA, there are approximately 1,828 miles of roads. The No Action Alternative would not result in an additional accumulation of impacts.

Due to inclusions of areas of unsuitable habitat within the potential habitat area, the total acreage of suitable habitat is less than 517,631 acres. However, a complete survey of suitable habitat has not been performed and thus the amount of suitable habitat has not been quantified. Impacts to the species from past, current, and reasonably foreseeable actions may be greater or smaller than those described for the total area depending upon the exact distribution of actions relative to suitable habitat.

#### **RANGELAND RESOURCES (INCLUDING: RANGELAND HEALTH, LIVESTOCK GRAZING, AND WILD HORSES.)**

The CIAA for Rangeland Resources is the Wild Horse Bench Allotment. The allotment includes approximately 43,526 acres, (39,426 acres of BLM, 3,901 acres of SITLA, and 235 acres of tribal land). Within the CIAA, competition for grazing resources currently exists as a result of disturbance from oil and gas energy development, an influx of wintering bison and trespass cattle from neighboring tribal lands, as well as resident wild horses. Reclamation techniques have generally been unsuccessful. Invasive species such as: halogeton, tumble weed, tumble mustard and cheatgrass usually dominated disturbed sites throughout the CIAA. The current landscape within the CIAA is heavily fragmented from multiple miles of surface pipelines, roads, well pads (abandoned and active), compressor stations, and other infrastructure typically associated with the oil and gas industry. The following table depicts known disturbance as well as foreseeable (APD well locations). Cumulative disturbance for the CIAA is approximately 5,754 acres and 130 miles of ancillary roads. Therefore, it is currently estimated that more than 13% of the surface has been or will be disturbed through past, present and ongoing activities. The Proposed Action will contribute 22 acres to the overall cumulative disturbance, effectively 0.4% of the cumulative amount of disturbance. The No Action Alternative will not contribute additional disturbance impacts to the CIAA.

Type of Disturbance (11.15.2011)	Count	~ Acreage	Other Metrics	Notes
<b>Energy Exploration</b>				
Approved Permit to Drill Locations	75	375		DOGM Data
Drilling Locations	4	20		DOGM Data
Locations Abandon	93	465		DOGM Data
Operations Center	2	10		DOGM Data
Producing Wells	415	2075		DOGM Data
Plugged and Abandoned Locations	59	295		DOGM Data
Shut In Well Locations	12	60		DOGM Data
Temporarily Abandoned	1	5		DOGM Data
Foreseeable Well Pad Locations	485	2425	Miles of road unknown at this time	Estimated from Field Development Pending Documents; specifically XTO/EXXON
<b>Other (County, Livestock, Etc.)</b>				
Ponds and/or Guzzlers	12	24		
Ancillary Roads	130		130 miles	
<b>Total Estimated Cumulative Disturbance</b>		<b>5,754</b>	<b>130 miles +</b>	

## SOILS

The Cumulative Impact Analysis Area (CIAA) for Soils is the Kings Canyon-Green River 6<sup>th</sup> level subwatershed. This area covers approximately 43,243 acres of BLM, Ute tribal, state of Utah, and privately held lands. Within the CIAA, there are two active approved field development NEPA documents, Newfield Production Company's Castle Peak and 8-Mile Flat EIS and the Gasco EA. In total approximately 3,827 acres of surface disturbance was authorized across the analysis areas of these documents. If the disturbance is relatively uniform throughout these project areas, then approximately 546 acres of surface disturbance has occurred or would occur within the CIAA (1.3% of the CIAA). Within the CIAA there also are numerous oil and natural gas wells that do not tie to either of these NEPA documents. As of 2/14/2011, there are 52 abandoned oil and gas locations outside of the scope of the field development documents. Using the assumption of 5.0 acres of disturbance per well (including associated roads and pipelines), as per the Vernal Resource Management Plan, 260 acres of the CIAA were disturbed some point in the past and are in various stages of reclamation (0.6% of the CIAA). There are currently 252 well pads that serve as platforms for actively producing wells not permitted under these documents. Using the above assumption, this has resulted in 1,260 acres of surface disturbance (2.9% of the CIAA). Finally, 44 wells are currently proposed that do not tie to these documents that would result in 220 acres of surface disturbance (0.5% of the CIAA). Currently proposed field developments, if all approved as proposed (either the estimated disturbance presented in the proposal or an estimate of 5-acres of disturbance per well if an estimate is not yet available) would result in 23,379 acres of surface disturbance throughout the entirety of the project areas. If it assumed that disturbance would be relatively uniform throughout, then there would be about 2,790 acres of disturbance with the CIAA due to the projects (6.5% of the CIAA). Thus, in total 5,076 acres (11.8% of the CIAA) have been or would be disturbed within the CIAA due to energy development activities. Within the CIAA, there are approximately 100 miles of roads that have approximately 428 acres of permanent disturbance (1.0% of the CIAA). In total past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities has resulted in approximately 5,504 acres of disturbance (12.8% of the CIAA). The Proposed Action would add 21.82 acres of

new surface disturbance. The No Action Alternative would not result in an additional accumulation of impacts.

## **CHAPTER 5 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED**

During preparation of the EA, the public was notified of the proposed action by posting the action to the public Electronic Notification Bulletin Board with its assigned NEPA number on January 6, 2011. A 30-day Public Comment Period was offered from January 10, 2012 through February 10, 2012. We received no substantive comments back.

### **List of Preparers**

BLM staff specialists who determined the affected resources for this document are listed in Appendix A.

## **6.0 REFERENCES, GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS**

### **6.1 References Cited:**

Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD signed October 31, 2008

### **6.2 List of Acronyms Used in this EA:**

EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
ID	Interdisciplinary
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	Right-of-Way

## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A: Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist**

**APPENDIX B: Map of Proposed Project**

**APPENDIX C: Wilderness Characteristics Review**

## APPENDIX A INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

**Project Title:** XTO Energy Inc Kings Canyon to Alger Pass Pipeline

**NEPA Log Number:** UT-G010-2011-0120-EA

**File/Serial Number:** UTU-82322

**Project Leader:** Cindy McKee

**DETERMINATION OF STAFF:** *(Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)*

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for relevant impact that need to be analyzed in detail in the EA

NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section D of the DNA form. The Rationale column may include NI and NP discussions.

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
<b>RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX I H-1790-1)</b>				
NI	Air Quality	Dust emissions currently occur from vehicles utilizing the subject roads. Those air quality impacts are encompassed within the Uinta Basin Air Quality Study (UBAQS) that was conducted in 2009. Overall, air quality in the Basin was modeled as being within attainment of the NAAQS. The 2012 horizon showed isolated modeled exceedences of the ozone NAAQS, which are thought to be residual effects from utilizing Wasatch Front monitors (which are 120 miles away in a non-attainment area) to calibrate the model. An additional model was run for the Greater Natural Buttes project. The results of that model correspond with the results of the UBAQS model. There are no regulatory monitoring data for the project area to verify and calibrate the results of either model, although monitoring is ongoing beginning in July 2009. Preliminary monitoring results are showing exceedences of the ozone NAAQS in the Uinta Basin during the winter when snow cover is present. However, ozone formation from its component parts (NOx and VOCs) is a non-linear, photo-reactive process, and no models exist to predict the formulation of winter-time ozone. It is anticipated that the incremental change from this project's alternatives would be so small as to be undetectable by both models and monitors.	Cindy McKee	1-7-2011
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	None present per VFO RMP and GIS Layer Review.	Jason West	1/20/2011

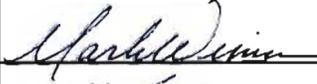
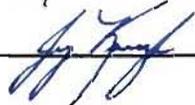
<b>Determination</b>	<b>Resource/Issue</b>	<b>Rationale for Determination*</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
NP	Cultural Resources	The area of potential effect (APE) is defined as the project area within the polygons. A Class III survey was conducted in the project area on 9/16/2008 by An Independent Archaeologist, James A. Truesdale. As a result of the survey, no cultural resources were identified in the APE. Project U-08-AY-809b, already exists in Cures.	Kathie Davies	1-24-2011
NP	Environmental Justice	No minority or economically disadvantaged communities or populations would be disproportionately adversely affected by the proposed action or alternatives because there are none in the project area.	Stephanie Howard	1-24-2011
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	All prime farmlands in Uintah County are irrigated. All unique farmlands in Uintah County are orchards. No irrigated lands or orchards are located in the project area; therefore this resource will not be carried forward for analysis.	Cindy McKee	1-7-2011
NI	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFWS Designated Species	UDWR has designated the area encompassed by the new pipeline as antelope habitat. Impacts to habitat should be negligible because of the small-scale (short-lived) nature of the project.	Susanne Grayson	1/17/2011
NI	Floodplains	No HUD inventoried floodplains are impacted by the proposed project however non-HUD inventoried floodplains would be crossed. Concerns for negative impacts to floodplains would not be anticipated and similar development activities have not proved to be negative for floodplain concerns.	Stan Olmstead	2/18/2011
NI	Fuels/Fire Management	There are no past or planned fuels projects in the immediate area. The proposed reclamation activities should minimize the risk of accumulating hazardous fuels.	Blaine Tarbell	1/7/2011
NI	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production	No known gilsonite veins are in the area. However, XTO is required to contact the BLM VFO if any veins are encountered.	Betty Gamber	1-18-2011
NI	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	No standards have been set by EPA or other regulatory agencies for greenhouse gases. In addition, the assessment of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change is still in its earliest stages of formulation. Global scientific models are inconsistent, and regional or local scientific models are lacking so that it is not technically feasible to determine the net impacts to climate due to greenhouse gas emissions. It is anticipated that greenhouse gas emissions associated with this action and its alternative(s) would be negligible.	Cindy McKee	1-7-2011
NI	Hydrologic Conditions (stormwater)	The proposed project is similar to energy activities in the area and consistent with multiple land use. Installation and operation of the proposed pipeline would slightly alter surface water flow patterns but installation techniques would minimize erosion and would not be of concern for stormwater discharge associated with Section 402 of the Clean Water Act.	Stan Olmstead	2/18/2011

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
PI	Invasive Plants/Noxious Weeds (EO 13112)	Disturbance associated with proposed project would provide suitable habitat for the establishment and spread of noxious weeds into the surrounding habitat.	Aaron Roe	1/21/2011
NI	Lands/Access	Existing and proposed pipeline runs alongside existing roads and pipeline rights-of-way. Right-of-way holders would be notified of the proposed portion to be added. As of 11-8-2011 no responses received from right-of-way holders.	Cindy McKee	1-7-2011
PI	Livestock Grazing	Project is located within the Wildhorse Bench grazing Allotment. The project and associated disturbance and fragmentation may impact forage resources	Dusty Carpenter	1-12-11
NI	Migratory Birds	The habitat within the project area consists of salt desert shrub which is not heavily used by migratory birds. Depending on the time of construction, impacts to migratory bird nesting habitat should be minimal.	Susanne Grayson	19 Jan. 2011
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	Tribal consultation was conducted on the proposed project on 08/16/10. We received "no adverse effect" responses from the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation and the Pueblo of Laguna. No other tribes have commented to date.	Kathie Davies	1-24-2011
NP	Paleontology	No fossils were found along the new pipeline route, Point F to Point G. (Alden H Hamblin, September 13, 2008) No new disturbance along the rest of the pipeline route so a paleo survey was not required.	Betty Gamber	1/18/2011
PI	Rangeland Health Standards	Project is located within the Wildhorse Bench grazing Allotment. The project and associated disturbance and fragmentation may impact rangeland health standards.	Dusty Carpenter	1/12/2011
NI	Recreation	There are no established recreation sites within the proposed project area. OHV travel is limited to designated travel routes.	Jason West	1/20/11
NI	Socio-Economics	No impact to the social or economic status of the county or nearby communities would occur from this project due to its small size in relation to ongoing development throughout the basin.	Cindy McKee	1-7-2010
PI	Soils	Surface disturbing actions have the potential for increased sediment yields and erosion	Steven Strong	2/15/2011
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	There are no <i>known</i> TEC species present within or surrounding the project area following GIS review.	Susanne Grayson	1/18/2011
PI	Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Candidate Plant Species	The entire portion of the temporary pipeline being removed is located within potential habitat for Uinta Basin hookless cactus.  The Interconnect is located outside of potential habitat for Uinta Basin hookless cactus, is located on soils not known to support the species, and a portion was surveyed and no individuals were identified. Therefore, the construction of the new pipeline will have no impact on the species.	Aaron Roe	10/17/2011

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		All potential habitat for Graham's penstemon was inspected by the BLM Botanist. No populations were identified. As such, there would not be physical damage to plants, long term loss of suitable habitat, and the proposed project would not likely impact the species.  The temporary pipeline crosses occupied habitat for clay reed-mustard		
SSP: NI Veg: PI	Vegetation, (excluding USFWS Designated Species)	All potential habitat for Barneby's catseye and <i>Yucca sterilis</i> was inspected by a BLM Botanist. No populations were identified.  The proposed project will result in the disturbance of 21.82 acres of disturbance to the vegetation in the area	Aaron Roe	10/17/2011  1/21/2011
NI	Visual Resources	The proposed project is located within VRM Class IV per VFO GIS data base. The action would be allowed under Class IV objectives.	Jason West	1/20/11
NI	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	No chemicals subject to reporting under SARA Title III in amounts greater than 10,000 pounds would be used, produced, stored, transported, or disposed of annually in association with the project. Trash and other waste materials would be cleaned up and removed immediately after completion of operations.	Cindy McKee	1-7-2011
NI	Waters of the U.S.	The proposed buried line crosses a number of blue line ephemeral drainages. None of them are 100-year floodplains. No impacts to waters of the U.S. would be impacted by the project.	Stephanie Howard	1-24-2011
Sur: NI GR: NI	Water Resources/Quality (surface/ground)	Surface Water: Installation and operation would disturb soils and cause some impact negatively causing increased erosion. Also potential for chemical spills such as fuels and other equipment chemical could occur. However this concern is slight and other energy activities upon the Field Office have not shown this to be a concern. The proponents techniques to manage water flow patterns are consistent with state of the art development methods and it would not be expect that sediment of chemical would reach perennial water such as the Green River more than 1 ½ miles to the west.  Groundwater is likely present at over 500 ft. below ground surface and would not be affected by new construction of buried pipeline.	Stan Olmstead-Surface  Betty Gamber-Ground	2/18/2011  1-18-2011
NP	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No known riparian or Field Office inventoried riparian habitat is present or near the project area. The nearest habitat is along the Green River more than 1 ½ miles to the west and installation of the pipeline would not directly or indirectly impact riparian.	Stan Olmstead	2/18/2011
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	None present as per Vernal RMP and GIS layer review	Jason West	1/20/11

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
PI	Wild Horses and Burros	There may be potential impacts to forage resources utilized by the wild horse herd on Wild Horse Bench. The VFO ROD has determined that the horses will be removed and the HMA status removed; however, until the herd is zeroed out they will continue to be managed.  Project located within the Hill Creek Wild Horse & Burro Hear Area per VFO GIS data Base.	Dusty Carpenter	1/12/2011
Seg. 1 NI Seg. 2 NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Segment 1; (from point A to point C on attached map) According to the 2007 wilderness inventory this area was found to have wilderness character. However, the existing pipeline was in place in 2005, prior to the inventory in 2007. According to the proposed action no new surface disturbance would take place. Consequently, no impact to this resource would occur.  Segment 2; (from point F to point G on attached map) According to the 2007 wilderness inventory, this area was found not to have wilderness character. See Wilderness Characteristics Review marked Appendix C in EA.	Jason West	5-6-2011
NP	Woodland / Forestry	None present per review of GIS and aerial photos	David Palmer	1/26/2011

**FINAL REVIEW:**

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator		2/13/12	2011-0120 EA
Authorized Officer		2/13/2012	

**XTO Energy Inc.**

**Kings Canyon Pipeline**

- Temporary to permanent conversion
- South Interconnect to Algiers Pass
- North Disconnect
- North Sundry

T10S, R19E SLB&M

Sections: 15, 21, 22, 28, 29, 32, 33

T11S, R19E SLB&M

Sec. 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 17

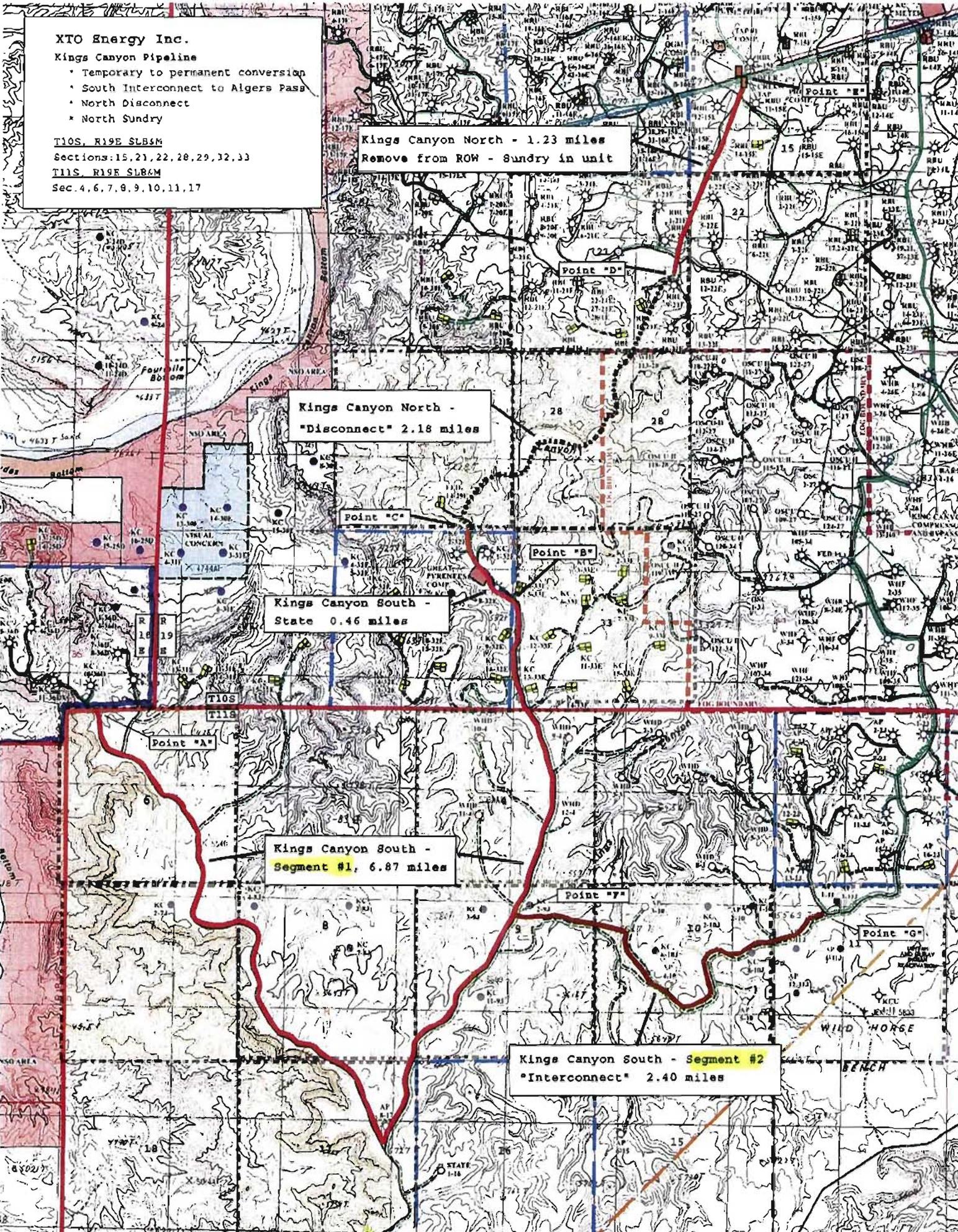
Kings Canyon North - 1.23 miles  
Remove from ROW - Sundry in unit

Kings Canyon North -  
"Disconnect" 2.18 miles

Kings Canyon South -  
State 0.46 miles

Kings Canyon South -  
Segment #1, 6.87 miles

Kings Canyon South - Segment #2  
"Interconnect" 2.40 miles



# WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS REVIEW

Date of Submission: December 15, 2001

Proponent: Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA); Utah Wilderness Coalition (UWC)

Name of Area to be Reviewed: **Desolation Canyon Area**

Date(s) of Field Office Review: February 7, 2007

BLM Field Office(s) Affected: Vernal Field Office

## EVALUATION

1. Was new information submitted by a member of the public for this area?

a. YES: \_\_\_\_\_ NO:  X

2. If new information was submitted, describe the submission. For example, did the submission include a map that identifies the specific boundaries of the area(s) in question; a narrative that describes the wilderness characteristics of the area and documents how that information differs from the information gathered and reviewed in prior BLM inventories; photographic documentation; etc?

a. No new information has been submitted by a member of the public.

The proponent submitted a map identifying the specific boundaries of the UWC *Desbrough Canyon and Desolation Canyon Proposed Wilderness Unit* as proposed in the bill, *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act*. For the purpose of this review, the UWC *Desbrough Canyon and Desolation Canyon Proposed Wilderness Unit* as illustrated in the *UWC Proposal for Wilderness in Utah* will be called the Desolation Canyon review area. The *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act* bill was first introduced in 1989. It recently was reintroduced into the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress as H.R.1919 in the U.S. House of Representatives, and S. 1170 in the U.S. Senate.

In 1980, the BLM issued a decision on Wilderness Study Areas based on the 1979 Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Reports. Much of the Desolation Canyon review area is contained within the following areas: Devils Canyon (UT-080-616), Nine Mile Canyon (UT-080-612), and Sand Wash (UT080-065).

In 1999, the BLM reinventoried the Desolation Canyon area and determined that the area did contain wilderness characteristics. This determination is described as the BLM Desolation Canyon Wilderness Inventory Area in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*.

The proponents submitted information to the BLM Vernal Field Office on December 15, 2001. The submitted information included more detailed data than the BLM considered during the *1979 Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Reports* concerning opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, supplemental wilderness values, natural character, and photos. The boundaries of the proposal encompassed the BLM Desolation Canyon Inventory Area (WIA) and included additional lands beyond the WIA.

The Vernal Field Office in November 2002 prepared an *Evaluation of New Information Report* that indicated portions of the Desolation Canyon review area outside of the WIA may contain wilderness characteristics.

On February 7, 2007, a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team reviewed the pertinent *1979 Wilderness Intensive Inventory Evaluation Report*; the *UWC Desbrough Canyon Proposed Wilderness Unit* as proposed in the bill, *America's Red Rock Wilderness Act*; the book *Wilderness at the Edge*; the *1999 BLM Desolation Canyon Wilderness Inventory Area*; and, the three Vernal Field Office *2002 Evaluation of New Information Reports*. In addition, the interdisciplinary team reviewed changes to the area since 2002 that could affect the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics

The Vernal Field Office in November 2002 prepared an *Evaluation of New Information Report* that determined wilderness characteristics may be present in the Desolation Canyon review area.

This maintenance review did not include U.S. National Forest lands, U.S. National Park Service, State of Utah lands, or private lands. Only lands within the BLM Vernal Field Office planning boundaries were considered by the interdisciplinary team. The attached map shows the BLM Vernal Field Office's determination of which lands contain or do not contain wilderness characteristics for the review area.

3. As a result of interdisciplinary review of relevant information (which may include aerial photographs, state and county road information, road maintenance agreements, documentation from prior BLM inventories, field observations, maps, master title plats, evidence presented as new information by a proponent, etc.), do you conclude:
- a. \_\_\_\_\_ The decision reached in previous BLM inventories that the area lacks wilderness is still valid.
- (or)
- b.  X  Some or all of the area has wilderness characteristics as shown on the attached map.

4. Describe your findings regarding specific wilderness characteristics and provide detailed rationale.

a. **WIA Area:**

- (1). **Description:** The Desolation Canyon review area is located in Duchesne and Uintah Counties about 40 air miles south-southwest of Vernal, Utah. The WIA area was identified in the *1999 Utah Wilderness Inventory (revised 2003)*. The unit of interest is Unit #1 within Duchesne and Uintah Counties. The Naval Oil Shale Reserve on the east side of the Green River and on the south end of Unit #1 has been transferred to the Ute Tribe and is no longer administered by the BLM. The UWC proposal encompasses the WIA area.

The terrain found within the WIA varies dramatically from the Green River bottoms and floodplains to the high ridges of the Tavaputs Plateau nearly 9,500 feet in elevation. Numerous mesas, ridges, plateaus, canyons, and remote drainages intersect with the Green River.

The review area contains a variety of vegetation ranging from the riparian zones along the river, piñon- juniper woodlands, and areas with saltbush, sagebrush, and shadscale. The higher ridges may have stands of aspen, spruce, and fir.

The WIA area has about 37,157 acres or 64% of the area currently leased for oil and gas. For that part of the area considered to have wilderness characteristics, seven wells have a listed status of Plugged and Abandoned, and seven Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) have been approved by the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (UDOGM). The BLM has not finalized the processing of these APDs. The State of Utah lands in the area also are leased.

The Little Desert Road in the west portion of the area is the line of demarcation between the UWC nominated to the west of the road and the BLM inventoried lands to the east of the road. Two producing wells located off the Little Desert Road as well as the road, have been cherry-stemmed.

- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The area is natural in condition. While there are human-made developments, except as provided below, they are scattered and their individual and cumulative impact on the natural character of the area is minor. The imprints are in various stages of natural rehabilitation and substantially unnoticeable as a whole. The expansive landscape, diverse topography, and vegetation screen intrusions from sight within the area.

New impacts to the Desolation Canyon review area have occurred since 1999. The Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team has identified several areas that now do not have the appearance of naturalness due to existing impacts from oil and gas activities that were conducted under valid, existing rights. These areas that are lacking in naturalness isolate other small portions of land within the review area.

Since 1999, Dominion Oil and Gas has drilled extensively east of the Green River adjacent to the eastern boundary of the review area. The area is adjacent to the River Bend Unit. This particular area has a travel route identified on the attached map as the Kings Canyon Road. The road is the primary north/south route servicing the Dominion operations. The interdisciplinary team found that enough development has occurred east of Kings Canyon Road that the lands do not have an appearance of naturalness. Those lands that were considered not to contain wilderness characteristics are described under Heading 4.b.(5), Areas without wilderness characteristics.

An area located in Sections 13, 14, 22-24, T10S, R18E; and, Section 19, T10S, R19E, is isolated by existing motorized routes from the portion of the WIA that has an appearance of naturalness. The area is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size and is not considered to have an appearance of naturalness due to its size.

Along the western edge of the WIA, two producing wells located off the Little Desert Road as well as the road, have been cherry-stemmed.

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The Desolation Canyon review area is contiguous to the Desolation Canyon WSA. The WIA area is large enough to provide opportunities for solitude on its own as a large, remote area where visitors are isolated from the outside world. The vast size, configuration, numerous scenic vistas, and diversity of vegetation and landform provide the visitor with numerous places to be alone while providing opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Most of review area is remote, accessible only by foot, horseback, or boat.

Areas of the WIA that are not considered to be natural in appearance are identified under Heading 4.a.(1), Appearance of Naturalness, and Heading 4.a.(5), Areas without wilderness characteristics.

- (4). **Supplemental Values:** The Desolation Canyon review area contains many supplemental wilderness values, including cultural, scenic, geologic, botanical, and wildlife values. Habitats within the area range from desert canyons to high mountain environments. Six endangered animals occur or may occur in the review area. Ten special status animals and six special status plants may also live here.
- (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** The interdisciplinary team found that a substantial amount of development has occurred east of Kings Canyon Road. These lands have diminished in naturalness and do not have the appearance of naturalness. It has been determined that the lands east of Kings Canyon Road do not contain wilderness characteristics.

The area located in Sections 13, 14, 22-24, T10S, R18E; and, Section 19, T10S, R19E, is isolated by existing motorized routes from lands that contain wilderness characteristics. The area is substantially less than 5,000 acres in size. The interdisciplinary team found that this area does not contain wilderness characteristics due to its isolation from other lands the small size of the area..

**b. Externally Nominated Area:**

- (1). **Description:** The UWC nominated areas contain similar terrain and vegetation as described for the WIA area under Heading 4.a.(1), Description.

The nominated area is found to the northwest of the Little Desert Road and is located in Sections 24-28, 33-35, T10S, R17E; Sections 1-5, T11S, R17E; Sections 19-21, 28-31, T11S, R18E. Two producing wells located off the Little Desert Road as well as the road, have been cherry-stemmed.

The interdisciplinary team identified four, small areas located in Sections 27, 34, T10S, R19E; and, Section 11, T11S, R19E, as containing wilderness characteristics. The areas are east of the Kings Canyon Road and, the WIA lands found by the interdisciplinary team to not have wilderness characteristics. The areas have not been previously reviewed.

The additional area nominated by UWC has about 10,961 acres or 94% of the area currently leased for oil and gas. For that part of the area considered to have wilderness characteristics, one well has a listed status of Plugged and Abandoned; one well as a listed status of producing; one well has a listed status of drilling; and, three Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) have been approved by the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (UDOGM). The BLM has not finalized the processing of these APDs. The State of Utah lands in the area also are leased.

- (2). **Appearance of Naturalness:** The externally nominated lands northwest of the Little Desert Road are similar to the lands described under Heading 4.a.(2), Appearance of Naturalness, in that the lands have retained the appearance of naturalness.

The four areas that are east of the Kings Canyon Road are substantially less than 5,000 acres and are separated from any lands that have been found to contain wilderness characteristics. The interdisciplinary team found that the four areas did not retain the appearance of naturalness due to the development of oil and gas in the area and the small size of the four areas. These lands are further described under Heading 4.b.(5), Areas without wilderness characteristics.

- (3). **Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation:** The information provided above in Heading 4.a.(3), Solitude, Primitive and Unconfined Recreation, also applies to this section.
  - (4). **Supplemental Values:** The information provided above in Heading 4.a.(4), Supplemental Values, also applies to this section.
  - (5). **Areas without wilderness characteristics:** The interdisciplinary team found that the four areas described under Heading 4.b.(1), do not contain wilderness characteristics due to the development of oil and gas in the area and the small size of the four areas.
- c. As protocol for all VFO wilderness characteristic reviews, the Interdisciplinary Team determined appropriate set-back distances for pipelines, roads, and other R-O-Ws.
  - d. The following table summarizes the Non-WSA lands in the review area that do or do not contain wilderness characteristics:

<b>DESOLATION CANYON AREA</b>			
<b>Type of Lands</b>	<b>Non WSA Lands with wilderness characteristics (acres)</b>	<b>Non WSA Lands without wilderness characteristics (acres)</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>
UWC, Externally Nominated	11,163	436	11,599
WIA, BLM Identified	51,955	6,557	58,512
<b>TOTAL ACRES</b>	<b>63,118</b>	<b>6,993</b>	<b>70,111</b>

- 5. Document all information considered during the interdisciplinary team review (e.g. aerial photographs, state and county road information, road maintenance agreements, prior documentation from the BLM inventories, field observations, maps, master title plats, evidence presented as new information by a proponent, etc.)
  - August 2006 NAIP (National Agricultural Imagery Program) aerial photos.
  - Master Title Plats.
  - State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (UDOGM) approved, producing and plugged and abandoned oil and gas wells (current up to 1-25-07).
  - R-O-W using LR 2000.
  - Field Observations.
  - GIS layers for various resources including: Range improvements, Recreation facilities, Wildlife, and Fire including both Rx and fuels projects.
  - USGS digital topographic maps both 1:24,000 and 1:100,000.
  - Land status of the BLM.
  - The BLM road layer including roads on 1:24,000 scale and supplemented by both GPS and aerial photography.
  - Uintah County Roads layer August 2006.
  - UWC wilderness proposal data layer.

6. List the members of the interdisciplinary team and resource specialties represented.

<i>Chuck Patterson</i>	<i>Recreation</i>
<i>Kim Bartel</i>	<i>Recreation/wilderness</i>
<i>Tim Faircloth</i>	<i>Wildlife</i>
<i>Naomi Hatch</i>	<i>Realty</i>
<i>Jerry Kenczka</i>	<i>AFM Minerals</i>
<i>Howard Cleavinger</i>	<i>Associate Field Manager</i>
<i>Kyle Smith</i>	<i>GIS</i>
<i>Steve Knox</i>	<i>USO Planning Specialist</i>
<i>Kelly Buckner</i>	<i>NEPA</i>
<i>Mark Stavropoulos</i>	<i>Range</i>
<i>Blaine Phillips</i>	<i>Archeology</i>
<i>Steve Strong</i>	<i>Fire</i>
<i>Stephanie Howard</i>	<i>NEPA</i>

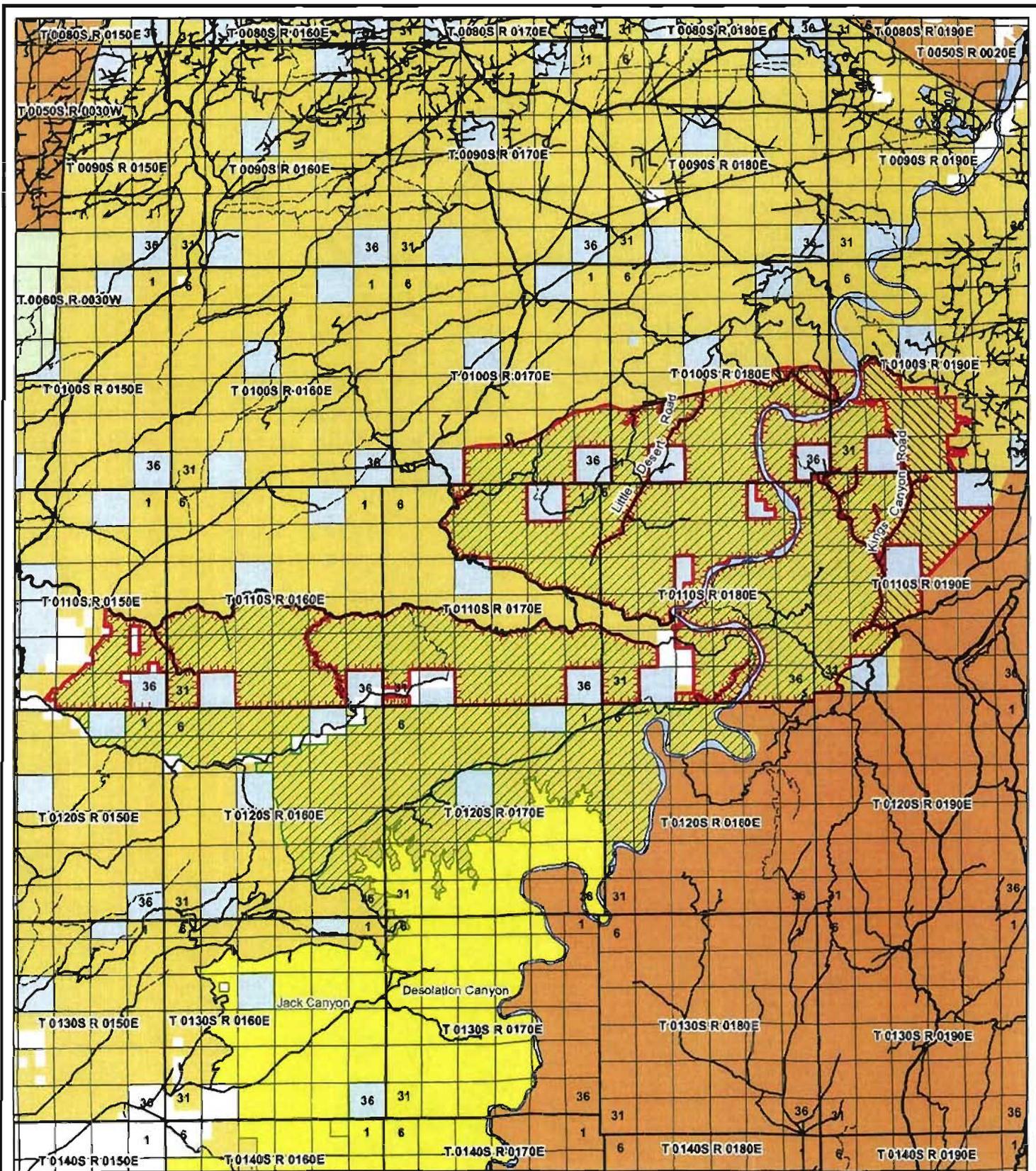
7. Signature / Concurrence

This review by a Vernal Field Office interdisciplinary team was conducted in February 2007. The purpose of the review was to identify for planning purposes those areas that are not Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) but do contain wilderness characteristics. A supplement to the draft Vernal Land Use Plan will, in Alternative E, analyze the impact from and to the identified wilderness characteristics. Until the Land Use Plan is completed, it should be noted that as part of a project-specific or site-specific analysis within this area, these findings will be used to assess impacts, if any, to wilderness characteristics within the project area.

I concur with the findings of the interdisciplinary team as described in this review.

Name: *William H. Hines* Date: *4/2/07*  
 Field Office Manager

This determination is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision-making process and does not constitute a decision that can be appealed.



## Field Office Decision for Desolation Canyon

Wilderness Characteristics Exist: 63,118 Acres  
 Wilderness Characteristics Do Not Exist: 6,993 Acres

### Wilderness Inventory Lands

- Review Area
- Wilderness Characteristics Exist
- Wilderness Characteristics Do Not Exist
- Wilderness Study Area

### Land Status

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Indian Trust
- Private
- State
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

U. S. Department of the Interior  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 Vernal Field Office, Utah  
 April 2007  
 No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management  
 for use of any of the data for purposes not intended by BLM.



0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles



**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Finding of No Significant Impact  
Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM\_UT-G010-2011-0120EA**

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**February 2012**

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**XTO Energy, Inc.  
Kings Canyon to Alger Pass Pipeline Project**

**Right-of-Way UTU-82322**

***Location:***

*Salt Lake Meridian,  
T. 10 & 11 S., R. 19 E., SLM  
Sections 15, 21, 22, 28, 29, 33, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 17*

***Applicant/Address:*** *XTO Energy, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1360  
Roosevelt, Utah 84066*

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Vernal Field Office  
170 South 500 East  
Vernal Utah 84078  
Phone: (435) 781-4400  
Fax: (435) 781-3420



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**Environmental Assessment**  
**DOI-BLM\_UT-G010-2011-0120-EA**

*Project Name*

**XTO Energy, Inc.**  
**Kings Canyon to Alger Pass Pipeline Project**

**Right-of-Way UTU-82322**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the (referenced or attached) environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Officer

**FEB 13 2012**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Decision Record  
Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0120-EA**

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**February 2012**

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Kings Canyon to Alger Pass Pipeline Project**

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# DECISION RECORD

## Environmental Assessment

### *XTO Energy, Inc.*

## Kings Canyon to Alger Pass Pipeline Project

DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0120-EA

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In September 2005, Dominion Exploration & Production (Dominion) submitted an application for the Kings Canyon Pipeline. While waiting for permanent authorization, Dominion received a temporary use authorization (UTU-82322-01) allowing them to construct and place the pipeline (See attached map, Appendix C from point "A" to Point "E").

XTO Energy Inc. (XTO), successor to Dominion assets, applied for and received approval for an extension of the temporary authorization (UTU-82322-01) on January 15, 2009. XTO now requests that the pipeline ROW be amended as described in Chapter 2 – Proposed Action and be made a permanent Right-of-Way grant.

XTO has constructed a natural gas compression plant (Wild Horse Bench Compressor Site) on Ute Indian Tribal land located in Section 1, T10S, R19E, SLB&M., and therefore would like to redirect the flow of gas from the Kings Canyon area to that facility by amending the current pipeline.

A full description of the Selected Alternative is located in Chapter 2 – Proposed Action, EA No. DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2011-0120-EA.

**Authorities:** The authority for this decision is contained in to Section 28 of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended (30 U.S.C. 185).

#### **Compliance and Monitoring:**

- Invasive Plants/Noxious Weeds (EO 13112)
- Livestock Grazing
- Rangeland Health Standards
- Soils
- Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Candidate Plant Species
- Vegetation, (excluding USFWS Designated Species)
- Wild Horses and Burros

#### **Terms / Conditions / Stipulations:**

##### **Vegetation including Invasive Plants/Noxious Weeds:**

Adherence to XTO's approved Reclamation Plan and Weed Management Guideline would minimize the risk of the establishment and spread of these species.

### **Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Plant Species:**

**Clay reed-mustard (*Schoenocrambe argillacea*)** As there would be activity within 300 feet of identified plants and incidental disturbance to habitat for the species resulting from the proposed project, the following measures from the Vernal RMP would be required to help minimize impacts to the species.

- The removal of the pipeline would not occur during the flowering period for the species (generally May 1<sup>st</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup>).
- A qualified botanist would be present on site to monitor the pipeline removal.
- Individuals would be flagged to assist in avoidance immediately prior to the pipeline removal and the flags would be removed immediately after the project completion.
- To identify if any long term impacts to the *S. argillacea* populations occur from pipeline removal activities, the following surveys will be conducted:
  - An initial population baseline will be established prior to removal activities.
  - The population within the removal area will then be monitored for three years following project completion.

*Discovery Stipulation:* Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the USFWS would be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for clay reed-mustard is anticipated as a result of project activities.

### **Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus wetlandicus*)**

*Discovery Stipulation:* Reinitiation of section 7 consultation with the USFWS would be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for any federally listed plant species is anticipated as a result of project activities.

### **LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

Impacts to livestock grazing should be minimized and reclamation success should improve under the current VFO BLM Reclamation Guidelines, and mitigation requirements.

### **RANGELAND HEALTH**

Impacts to rangeland health should be minimized and reclamation success should improve under the current VFO BLM Reclamation Guidelines, and mitigation requirements.

## **WILD HORSES AND BURROS:**

Impacts to wild horse habitat should be minimized and reclamation success should improve under the current VFO BLM Reclamation Guidelines, and mitigation requirements.

## **SOILS:**

Applicant Committed Measures include a technically adequate Reclamation Plan, that conforms to the Green River District Reclamation Guidelines vegetation, recovery is expected to take between 5 and 10 years , due to the low precipitation and soils with low reclamation potential.

## **PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:**

The proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with one or more of the following BLM Land Use Plans and the associated decision(s):

Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (October 31, 2008). The RMP/ROD decision allows for processing applications, permits, operating plans, mineral exchanges, leases on public lands in accordance with policy and guidance and allows for management of public lands to support goals and objectives of other resources programs, respond to public requests for land use authorizations, and acquire administrative and public access where necessary (RMP/ROD p. 86). It has been determined that the proposed action and alternative(s) would not conflict with other decisions throughout the plan.

The proposed action is also consistent with the Uintah County General Plan, adopted October 2007. The Uintah County 2011 General Plan- As Amended contains specific policy statements addressing public land, multiple-use, resource use and development, access, and wildlife management. In general, the plan indicates support for development proposals through its emphasis on multiple-use public land management practices and responsible use and optimum utilization of public land resources. The County, through the plan, supports the development of natural resources as they become available, as new technology allows.

## **Alternatives Considered:**

No Action Alternative. Under this action, BLM would not approve the conversion of the temporary use permit to a permanent right-of-way grant which includes the addition of 15,075 feet of buried pipeline, known as Segment 2 and the removal of surface pipeline, known as "Disconnect" between Points C and D. This alternative was not selected because it does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

## **Alternatives considered but not carried forward**

Alternate locations for the pipeline corridor have been analyzed by XTO personnel and deemed unsatisfactory given that an existing road, and therefore, existing disturbance, currently exists along most of the proposed alignment. The existing disturbed area for the road would be utilized to the extent possible to minimize new disturbance. Future activity proposed in the immediate area of the pipeline is routine inspection and maintenance of the associated right-of-way and the ongoing oil and gas activities of XTO Energy, Inc. and other operators with interests in the area. The pipeline would be a permanent facility lasting the lifespan of the associated drilling and

production project in the area.

**Rationale for Decision:**

The Selected Alternative described in this document is in conformance with the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (BLM 2008). The ROD allows for the issuance of rights-of-way. The Selected Alternative would not conflict with other decisions throughout the plan.

The proposed project is consistent with the Uintah County 2011 General Plan, as amended, that encompasses the location of the proposed ROW's. In general, the plan indicates support for development proposals such as the Selected Alternative through the plan's emphasis of multiple-use public land management practices, responsible use, and optimum utilization.

Onsite visits were conducted by Vernal Field Office Personnel. The onsite inspection reports do not indicate that any other locations be proposed for analysis. In addition, all proposed mitigation has been carried forward into the Decision.

**Protest/Appeal Language:**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and the enclosed Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office (at the above address) within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

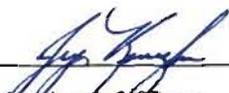
If you wish to file a petition (request) pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 2801.10 or 43 CFR 2881.10 for a stay (suspension) of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

**Standards for Obtaining a Stay**

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and

(4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Officer

**FEB 13 2012**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date