



ORIGINAL



**Categorical Exclusion Documentation Format When Using  
Categorical Exclusions Not Established by Statute**

**CX No.: WY070-CX11-304**

**A. BACKGROUND**

**BLM Office:** Buffalo Field Office

**Lease/Serial/Case File No.:** WYW170245

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** Reno 3D Seismic Project

**Location of Proposed Action:** T. 44N, R.79W, Sections: 1, 4, 9, 10, 15 & T. 45N, R.79W, Sections: 21, 22, 25, 27, 30, 35. The project will encompass 2,575 acres of BLM administered surface. The remaining project area is on private surface & State surface (~26,322 acres). The entire project is in Johnson County, Wyoming

**Description of Proposed Action:** On March 8, 2011, Dawson Geophysical Company filed a Notice of Intent and Authorization to Conduct Oil and Gas Geophysical Exploration Operations. The project is for Hilcorp Energy Company. On March 14, 2011 BLM assigned a team to the Reno 3D Project. On March 23, 2011 deficiencies were sent to Dawson Geophysical Company electronically and in the mail. On May 12 the operator and BLM met to discuss the project at the Buffalo field office, per the meeting the operator was informed about items that were yet deficient which included a class III cultural report and wildlife surveys if they were planning to commence work prior to August 1, 2011. BLM received deficiencies on July 12, 2011 from the operator. The deficiencies were not completely addressed by the operator until August 24, 2011.

The Reno 3D Seismic Project area contains approximately 2,575 acres of BLM administered surface. The approval of this Notice of Intent is for the public surface only. Dawson Geophysical Company will obtain a permit to conduct geophysical operations on the private surface from the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

Receiver lines will be laid out at 1,320' spacing in a north/south direction, 220' incline station interval. Source lines will be laid out by surveyors at 1760' spacing in northeast/southwest direction cross line spacing. Source points or vibroseis points will be laid along these lines at 220' intervals, because of the slant the distance flag to flag is 311.11'. Three vibroseis units weighing in excess of 62,000 pounds will traverse the source lines stopping to vibrate simultaneously at each source point. This data can then be processed to build a profile of the various lithology and thickness. In addition, there will be eight (8) one ton line trucks and nine (9) ATV's for support.

**B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE**

**Land Use Plan Name:** Buffalo Resource Management Plan **Date Approved:** 1985, 2001 Update

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): Minerals Management – Oil and Gas

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

**Decision Record MM-7 – Continue to lease and allow development of federal oil and gas in the Buffalo Resource Area**

**C: COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9(B)(6):

**“Approval of Notices of Intent to conduct geophysical exploration of oil, gas, or geothermal, pursuant to 43 CFR 3150 or 3250, when no temporary or new road construction is proposed”.**

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. I’ve reviewed the proposed action and none of the extraordinary circumstances described below and in 516 DM 2 apply.

Class III cultural resource inventory was performed for the Reno 3D seismic project prior to on-the-ground project work (BFO project no. 70110071). A class III cultural resource inventory following the Archeology and Historic Preservation, Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines (48CFR190) and the *Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office Format, Guidelines, and Standards for Class II and III Reports* was provided to BFO by Golder Associates. Clint Crago, BLM Archaeologist, reviewed the report for technical adequacy and compliance with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) standards, and determined it to be adequate. The following resources are located in or near the project area.

Site Number	Site Type	Eligibility
48JO111	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Not Eligible
48JO134	Bozeman Trail	Eligible
48JO730	Homestead	Unevaluated
48JO802	Townsend Wagon Train Fight	Unevaluated
48JO1135	Historic Debris	Not Eligible
48JO3059	Telegraph Line	Eligible
48JO4287	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4288	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4289	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4290	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4291	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4292	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4293	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4294	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4295	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated

Site Number	Site Type	Eligibility
48JO4296	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated
48JO4297	Prehistoric Lithic Scatter	Unevaluated

All unevaluated or eligible sites within the project area will be avoided by project activities. Following the Wyoming State Protocol Section VI(A)(4) the Bureau of Land Management electronically notified the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on 8/16/2011 that no historic properties will be affected by the project.

**Wildlife:**

The proposed action is scheduled to occur after sensitive wildlife breeding seasons. The project is within a sage-grouse core area, but because of the minimal disturbance, will not affect sage-grouse (a candidate species), any listed or BLM sensitive species, or their habitats on public lands.

**Extraordinary Circumstances (from 516 DM 2, Appendix 2)**

Extraordinary circumstances exist for individual actions within categorical exclusions which may:

2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [National Environmental Policy Act Section 102(2)(E)].

2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

**D: SIGNATURE**

Authorizing Official: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

8/26/11

(Signature)

for

Name: Duane Spencer

Title: Field Manager

**Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:

Andy Perez

Bureau of Land Management

Buffalo Field Office

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Buffalo, WY 82834

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## DECISION RECORD

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: **WYW170245**

**Recommendation/Rationale:** I recommend approving Dawson Geophysical Company Notice of Intent to Conduct Geophysical Exploration Operations on public lands administered by the BLM in the Reno 3D Seismic Project Area with the mitigation measures described below. The Hilcorp Energy Company will utilize the subsurface information gathered by this project to explore for and develop the oil and gas resources in this area. The subsurface data will limit unnecessary drilling, reduce surface disturbance, and reduce adverse impacts to other resources.

### **Mitigation Measures:**

- (1) No Surface Disturbing activities are authorized with this action.
- (2) Disruptive activities are prohibited or restricted on public surface in the project area from March 15<sup>th</sup> through June 30 in suitable sage-grouse nesting and early brood-rearing habitat.
- (3) All identified cultural sites in the project area shall be avoided by at least 30 meters by all geophysical operations.
- (4) Vehicular travel shall be suspended when ground conditions are wet enough to cause rutting or other noticeable surface deformation and severe compaction. As a general rule, if vehicles or other project equipment create ruts in excess of four inches deep when traveling cross-country over wet soils, the soil shall be deemed too wet for vehicular use.
- (5) The staging area(s) shall be kept clean and free of litter. Appropriate human waste facilities will be provided and properly maintained. Such waste facilities shall be removed from the site upon completion of the project.
- (6) All flagging, lath, pin flags, and similar materials used in the seismic project will be removed from public land and disposed of at an authorized landfill.
- (7) Roads will not be constructed for geophysical projects authorized under a categorical exclusion.
- (8) Operators of vehicles and equipment shall be responsible for not damaging fences and keeping gates as found. As a last resort, should a fence be cut for access, that fence must be repaired to former or better condition, immediately after equipment has passed through.
- (9) If soil is disturbed to the extent that erosion is likely or visual impacts are readily apparent, the disturbed areas will be rehabilitated utilizing the following techniques:

Ruts and vehicle tracks will be filled with soil and/or obliterated by either hand raking or similar method. When completing this work, care will be taken to minimize disturbance to surrounding lands that have not been disturbed. All areas where rehabilitation work is accomplished will be reseeded with the seed mix provided below.

The seeded area should be hand raked to assure the seed is covered with approximately ¼ to ½ inch of soil.

The seed shall be certified, pure live seed, and seed tags must be available if requested by the authorized officer. Certified weed free seed is to be used to rehabilitate disturbed land.

**Loamy Ecological Site Seed Mix 10-14" Precipitation Zone**

Species	% in Mix	Lbs PLS*
<i>Western Wheatgrass</i> (Pascopyrum smithii)/ <i>Thickspike Wheatgrass</i> (Elymus lanceolatus ssp. lanceolatus)	30	4.8
<i>Bluebunch Wheatgrass</i> (Pseudoroegneria spicata ssp. Spicata)	10	1.2
<i>Green needlegrass</i> (Nassella viridula)	25	3.0
<i>Slender Wheatgrass</i> (Elymus trachycaulus ssp. trachycaulus)	20	1.2
<i>Prairie coneflower</i> (Ratibida columnifera)	5	0.6
<i>White or purple prairie clover</i> (Dalea candidum, purpureum)	5	0.6
<i>Rocky Mountain beeplant</i> (Cleome serrulata) /or <i>American vetch</i> (Vicia americana)	5	0.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>12 lbs/acre</b>

Authorizing Official: \_\_\_\_\_

*Cary Fein*  
for

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*8/26/11*

Name: Duane Spencer

Title: Field Manager

