

Categorical Exclusion Title Page
Rawlins Field Office

EA Number: WY-030-CX14-198

Project/Case File Number: N/A

Applicant(s):	Bureau of Land Management		
Project Name:	Mill Creek South Forest Health Timber Harvest		
Location:	Township (T) 16 North (N.), Range (R) 87 West (W.), Sections 29, 30.	County:	Carbon
Proposed Action:	Mechanical timber harvest.		

Document Review

Note: Specialists for each resource discipline should verify that the site-specific design features of the proposed action, with applicable SOPs and BMPs, conforms to the EIS Record of Decision (if a tiered EIS exists) and subsequent NEPA decisions (RMP, etc.). Any discrepancies (new design features/SOPs/BMPs) should be brought to the attention of the document author or project lead once your review is complete.

Review Initiated: 8/12/2014

Name	Title	Date		Edits *	Initials/Date Reviewed**
		Received	Due		
Christopher Otto	Author /		---	---	CRD 8/12/14
Garth Ross	Wildlife Biologist				GR 8-12-14
Bonnie Bruce	Archaeologist				BB 8/12/14
Maureen Hartshorn	Forester				MH 8/12/14
Kelly Owens	Hydrologist				KO 8/12/14
Ray Ogle	Reclamation Specialist				RO 8/12/14
SUSAN FOLEY	Soil Scientist				SF 8/12/14
CHERYL NOBBERY	Rangeland Management Specialist				CN 8/12/14
Sheila Lehman	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	LAST TO INITIAL			SL 8.18.2014

* If you have made edits that you wish to review in the final document **before you initial**, write a "Y" in the edit column.

** Approval indicates that all consultation and supporting documentation is complete, consistent with the document, and ready for the Field Manager's decision.

Activity Code 3100

Tim Novotny	Assistant Field Manager – Resources	TM 8-12-14
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U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Rawlins Field Office

Categorical Exclusion Not Established by Statute

A. Background

BLM Office: Rawlins Field Office, Carbon County Wyoming

Lease/Serial/Case File Number: WY-030-CX14-198

Proposed Action Title/Type: Mill Creek South Forest Health Timber Harvest Project

Location of Proposed Action: Carbon County, Wyoming, Township (T) 16 North (N.), Range (R) 87 West (W.), Sections 29, 30.

Description of the Proposed Action:

The Rawlins Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to treat approximately 43.5 acres of forest vegetation within the Little Snake River watershed. The Proposed Action is to mechanically harvest marketable/merchantable timber within the identified polygons (Map 1). In general, timber targeted for harvest would include marketable/merchantable conifer species: including but not limited to lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Engleman spruce. The primary species being targeted for removal would be mountain pine beetle infested or killed lodgepole pine. Timber would be harvested via a variety of methods, to include hand (i.e. manual falling) and mechanized with the utilization of wheeled (timber skidders, log trucks) and tracked (harvesters) equipment, or some combination of each of these methods. Access to the proposed project area would be across adjacent private lands on existing roads and trails. No new temporary roads are anticipated. At a minimum, the Wyoming State Forestry Division forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs – see attached) would be required as part of the overall project.

Project Units: Treatment boundaries for the proposed project, on BLM administered lands, are depicted on Map 1. The project, as proposed, does not identify any exclusion areas, buffer zones, or areas of restricted activities. The proposed harvest units encompass approximately 43.5 acres of public lands. Initially, it is estimated that there would be approximately 10 to 15 thousand board feet (MBF) of marketable timber per unit acre.

Prescription: Stand diagnosis indicated a sanitation/salvage prescription as a proposed treatment method for the area. This would entail all dead and dying trees being removed, as well as green trees if there is a high susceptibility of wind-throw. The prescription (or subsequent marking guide) would specify the type and size of timber to be harvested [i.e. species, height, and Diameter Breast Height (DBH)]. The prescription and marking guide would also identify any exclusion areas, buffer zones, and/or areas of restricted activities. . Following the timber harvest, stand restocking would be accomplished through natural re-vegetation of residual cones left on-

site following logging operations and through seed dispersal from surrounding un-cut stands. . It is also expected that many areas would regenerate as a result of aspen sprouting following the timber harvest, should an aspen component be present. Residual pockets of healthy conifer trees (sub-merchantable juvenile trees) may be left in place in an effort to help re-stock the stand. . Timber material not meeting sawlog merchantability requirements would be piled at a landing site for subsequent burning by the BLM.

Processing: After felling, trees would be whole-tree skidded to identified landing sites where they would be processed (limbs, tops, and butts removed), stacked on decks, and loaded onto trucks for transport to a saw-mill. Products Other than Logs (POL), i.e., post and pole sized material are considered optional material, and may be removed or piled, along with the slash, for burning.

Access: Access/egress routes for heavy equipment and log trucks are depicted on Map 1. It is not anticipated that any new temporary roads would be needed to facilitate removal of the timber. There may be some minor improvements (culverts, cattle-guards, etc.) to existing primitive roads and trails. The exact location of any improvements would be agreed upon with the timber purchaser. Skid trails would be located throughout the project units where trees and logs would be dragged or “skidded” by wheeled equipment to landing sites. Landing sites and skid trail locations would not be specifically specified in the sales contract, but would be agreed upon with the timber purchaser/contractor and identified under the guidelines of the Best Management Practices prior to commencement of the timber harvest.

Slash Removal: Slash or POL material would be piled, compact and dirt free, near the landing site and burned during the fall, winter, and spring seasons following treatment. . Depending upon the fuel moisture content, slash piles may be allowed to dry for a year following harvest prior to burning. Slash burning would occur with the objective of removing 90%+ of the piled material. Following burning, the remnants may be scattered or re-piled for additional burning.

Reclamation: Soil disturbing activities would be evaluated by the BLM reclamation specialist and recommended reclamation practices would be included in the sales contract. Removal and reclamation of any “temporary” road construction would be subject to provisions of the sales contract, with the timber purchaser/contractor being responsible for the closing of any temporary roads. The units would be evaluated by the Rawlins Field Office Forester and the Wyoming State Forestry Project or District Forester to determine what, if any, reforestation and/or reclamation practices would be necessary. Weed control practices of the site would be evaluated following timber treatments, and subject to the sales contract. Burn pile locations would be scarified and seeded with native species following any burning activities.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance (LUP)

Land Use Plan Name: Rawlins Resource Management Plan (RMP)
Date Approved/Amended: 24 December 2008

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Rawlins Field Office Final Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (ROD/RMP, 2008) as amended.

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Rawlins Field Office ROD/RMP because it is specifically provided for in Section 2.3.4 Forest Management (pg. 2-14), which specifies as management goals:

“Manage forest stand communities for health, composition, and diversity (considering density, basal area, canopy cover, age class, stand health, and understory) through forest management practices and to provide late successional vegetation for timber production while providing for multiple use.”

Management objectives for Forest Management (pg. 2-15) specify:

“Maintain, restore, and enhance all forest communities in accordance with Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands (forestlands), the Healthy Forest Initiative, and Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003. Where there are adjoining private and state forestlands, work cooperatively to attain the objective.”

“Maintain, restore, and enhance commercial forest communities for sustainable production and, where feasible, meet public demand for harvest of wood products (both minor and commercial; i.e., saw timber, post and poles, firewood, Christmas trees, wildlings/transplants) and improve opportunities to harvest forest products while providing for other forest values and uses. Where there are adjoining private and state forestlands, work cooperatively to attain the objective.”

“Maintain, restore, and enhance forest stands to supply forest products to the public consistent with forest health, landscape restoration, and reduction of forest fuels objectives in coordination with private, local, state, and federal plans and policies.”

“Maintain, restore, and enhance aspen communities”

Harvest methods specified in the Proposed Action, are specifically described as Forest Management Practices in Appendix 19 – Vegetation Treatments, Forest Practices, and Range Improvements. The Proposed Action, commercial harvest of timber via Sanitation/Salvage cutting, and slash disposal through piling and burning, is described on pages A19-13 and A19-14.

C. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, C. Forestry, (8) Salvaging dead or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 mile of temporary road construction.

This Categorical Exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment. None of the Extraordinary Circumstances, as outlined in 516 DM 2, Table 1, apply to this project.

These circumstances, and those specific to this Categorical Exclusion, are listed and described in detail below.

Persons and Agencies Consulted

The following agencies/individuals were consulted during development of this project:

Josh Van Vlach - Wyoming State Forestry

Mick Hood - Wyoming State Forestry

Mike Crimmins – Kelley Land and Cattle Company, LLC

Larry Hicks – Little Snake River Conservation District

Maureen Hartshorn – BLM Forester

Chris Otto – BLM Project Lead

Garth Ross – BLM Wildlife Biologist

Ray Ogle – BLM Reclamation Specialist

Kelly Owens – BLM Hydrologist

Bonnie Bruce – BLM Archeologist

Susan Foley – BLM Soils/Weeds Specialist

Cheryl Newberry - BLM Rangeland Management Specialist

Annette Treat - BLM Supervisory Realty Specialist

Mark Newman - BLM Geologist

Sheila Lehman – BLM Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Andy Skordas – BLM Engineer

I considered the Proposed Action and the previously described design features in my evaluation, and I find that the Proposed Action would not have significant impacts to the human environment.

Special project stipulations will be included as part of the Proposed Action as the project lies within Greater Sage Grouse habitat. As such, surface disturbing and disruptive activities, geophysical surveys, and organized recreation activities are prohibited from March 1 – July 15 within identified nesting/early brood rearing habitats.

This project also lies within the Wyoming Governor's Greater Sage-Grouse Core habitat. DDCT review is not required.

In order to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, operators would ensure that equipment is cleaned prior to entering the project location and between projects.

D: Signature



Dennis J. Carpenter
Field Manager-Rawlins Field Office

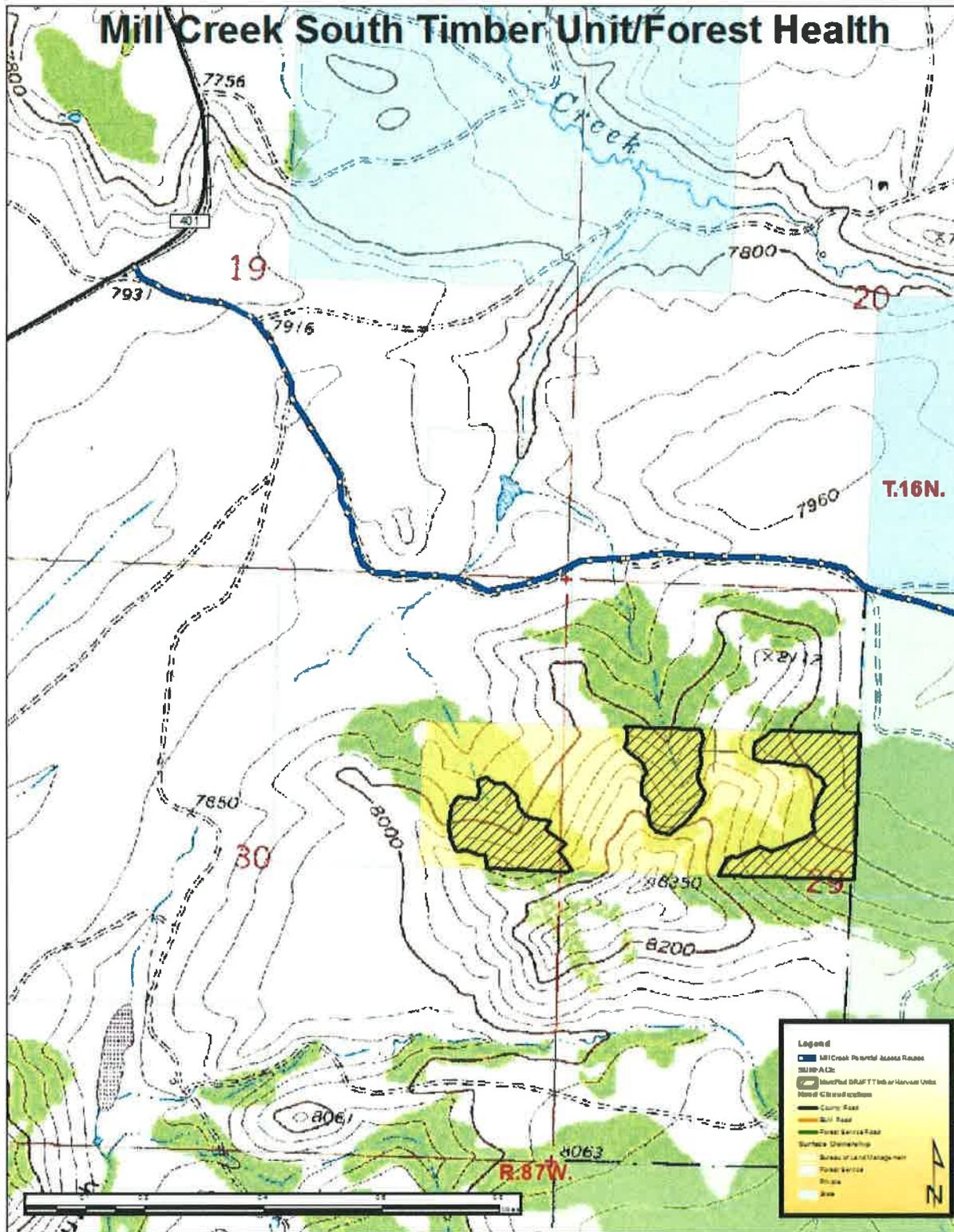
AUG 20 2014

Date

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Maureen Hartshorn, Rawlins Field Office Forester, P.O. Box 2407, Rawlins, WY 82301 or you may call (307) 328-4202.

Map 1: Mill Creek South Forest Health Project Unit



DETERMINATION OF EXCLUDABILITY

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion for the Bureau of Land Management under 516 DM 11.9, C. Forestry, (8): Salvaging dead or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 mile of temporary road construction. The Proposed Action has been reviewed to determine if any of the Extraordinary Circumstances as described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply.

2. DOCUMENTATION: Information Source (may include previous NEPA documents, fieldwork, other studies and reports, staff expertise, correspondence).

Table 1. Extraordinary Circumstances

	Extraordinary Circumstances	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
2.1	Adversely affect public health and safety.	No	The proposed project would not result affect public health or safety.
2.2	Adversely affect such unique geographic or ecological significant/critical characteristics as: Historic or cultural resources, park lands, refuge land, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, flood plains, areas on the National Register of Natural Landmarks.	No	Survey was conducted to detect potentially significant cultural/historical sites, none were found or documented (See attached Cultural Resources Clearance.)
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)).	No	Knowledge of treatments conducted in the area in the past have resulted in enhanced site characteristics(vegetation diversity and habitat potential) and give confidence in positive results from proposed activity and do not indicate any controversial environmental effects.
2.4	Have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique/unknown environmental risks.	No	Mechanical treatments and timber harvests are common practices with known risks. No identified unique characteristics have been identified.
2.5	Establish precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration with significant environmental effects.	No	Timber harvest projects such as these are routine in nature and the habitat types found within the project area are abundant. No new precedent would be set by this project.
2.6	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects	No	The Proposed Action, when directly related to other actions in the area, will not have cumulatively significant environmental effects to BLM lands and/or resources.
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 of office	No	Survey was conducted to detect potentially significant cultural/historical sites, none were found or documented (See attached Cultural Resources Clearance.)
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	No	Survey was conducted to detect potentially significant impacts to species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or designated Critical habitat for these species. No impacts were found or documented (see attached Request for Wildlife/Fisheries/Rare Plants Review, Determination of RMP Conformance, Need for ESA Section 7 Consultation, and

	species.		Biological Evaluation for Other Species).
2.9	Violate a Federal law, or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	No	The Proposed Action will not 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).	No	The Proposed Action will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.
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).	No	The proposed project will not 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
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).	No	As proposed, the project and design features will ensure that this project does not 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.

Appendix I . NEPA Critical Elements List

Critical Element	Affected	Rationale
Air Quality	No	The proposed project would have no impacts to Air Quality in the region.
Threatened or Endangered Species (T&E)	No	Potential Western Boreal Toad habitat is located within the project area. . Consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed to mitigate any possible effects to potential toad habitat. . T&E Wildlife Species are addressed in the Biological Evaluation attached.
Floodplains	No	Resource is not present.
Prime/Unique Farm Lands	No	Resource is not present.
Water Quality (Surface and Ground)	No	Ground water quality would not change with the proposed treatments. There could be a short term increase in sedimentation to water courses from ash from piles. . Sedimentation from pile burns should be low. .
Cultural Resources	No	No resources were found that could be adversely affected.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No	There is a riparian area within the proposed treatment unit, the East Fork of the Medicine Bow River, a perennial stream that supports riparian vegetation. Along this riparian area, conifer partially or fully dominates the site due to the lack of fire or other disturbance in the past 50-100 years. . There are areas with old aspen clones and willow/birch which are not reproducing due to conifer competition and the old clone dominance. Minor impacts such as a short term increase in sedimentation from pile burns may occur. However, these effects would be short-lived because of the rapid re-vegetation which characterize riparian area
ACEC	No	Resource is not present.
Wilderness	No	Resource is not present.
Native American Religious Concerns	No	No significant Native American sites exist in the treatment area.
Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	No	Resource is not present.
Environmental Justice	No	Minority or low-income concerns would not be unequally affected by the proposed alternative.
Invasive, Nonnative Species	No	Bull Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>) is present within the project area. . Treatment areas will be monitored to assess the distribution and abundance of thistle. . The BLM will identify major patches of thistle for treatment. . Communication will be maintained with the weeds specialist.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
HIGH DESERT DISTRICT
RAWLINS FIELD OFFICE

DECISION RECORD

Recommendation: Based upon the attached Categorical Exclusion (CX), WY-030-CX14-198, I have determined that the Proposed Action, Mill Creek South Forest Health Timber Harvest, involves no significant impacts to the human environment and requires no further environmental analysis.

Rationale for Recommendation: My decision to harvest timber in the identified units is based on the requirement and need to maintain, restore, and enhance forest stands to supply forest products to the public consistent with forest health, landscape restoration, and reduction of forest fuels objectives in coordination with private, local, state, and federal plans and policies. The Mill Creek South Forest Health Timber Sale will also maintain, restore, and enhance forest communities in accordance with Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands (forestlands), the Healthy Forest Initiative, and Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003, enhance commercial forest communities for sustainable production, and maintain, restore, and enhance aspen communities. The project adjoins private forestlands, and will be designed and implemented in cooperation with the private landowner in order to meet these needs and objectives. I am basing this determination on the limits described in the Proposed Action and the project design features, which provide substantial protections for sensitive resource values.

Decision: It is my decision to implement the sanitation/salvage harvest and sale of timber on approximately 43.5 acres of conifer vegetation identified in the Mill Creek South Timber Sale project units. I make this decision within the bounds of the authority provided to me within the Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11 (516 DM11). The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further NEPA documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), in accordance with 516 DM 11(C)(8).

Appeal: Notice of this forest management decision will be posted on the Rawlins Field Office website at: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/rfo.html>. The forest management decision to be made on the Proposed Action described in this Categorical Exclusion is subject to protest in accordance with 43 CFR subpart 5003. Under 43 CFR 5003.2 subsection (c), "a notice of decision will be published in local newspaper(s)". Under 43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (a), protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the notice..." Under 43 CFR 5003.3 (b), "protest filed with the authorized officer shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision". Protests must be received by close of business (4:30 pm MDT), September 2, 2014.

Authorizing Official: _____
Dennis J. Carpenter
Rawlins Field Manager



Date: _____

AUG 20 2014