

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2004-111-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC67534

PROJECT NAME: Greasewood Power Line to Northwest Pipeline's Rectifier Sites

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado

T. 1 S., R. 96 W.,
Sec. 18, lot 7, 8;
Sec. 19, SW¹/₄NE¹/₄, NE¹/₄NW¹/₄, N¹/₂SE, SE¹/₄SE¹/₄.

T. 1 S., R. 97 W.,
Sec. 1, lot 8-10, 15, 18, 19;
Sec. 2, NE¹/₄SE¹/₄;
Sec. 12, lot 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 16;
Sec. 13, lot 1.

APPLICANT: White River Electric Association

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: White River Electric Association (WREA) has applied for a right-of-way to provide power to Northwest Pipeline rectifier sites.

Proposed Action: The proposed action is for the construction and maintenance of an overhead 7.2 kV powerline for 4.4 miles up Greasewood Gulch and then proceeding down Northwest Pipeline's right-of-way to two rectifier sites. It is estimated that approximately 78 poles spaced 300 feet apart to complete this power line. Equipment used will be a 2-ton, 4-wheel digger/derrick truck, basic utility trucks, and 4-wheelers for stringing wire and possibly a backhoe if needed. The anticipated construction time will be 3-weeks. The intention is to parallel the existing Northwest Pipeline right-of-way and in doing so the cutting of brush will be kept to a minimum, however, for safety and clearance reasons, larger trees which will be beneath the proposed powerline will need to be cut. This powerline is needed to supply a more efficient and reliable source of power for the rectifier sites.

This action will be authorized under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative the application would be denied and the situation would remain as is.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The power line is required in order to provide a more reliable source of power to the rectifier stations on the pipeline.

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

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

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special air quality designations or non-attainment areas in the vicinity of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. However, airborne particulate matter should not exceed Colorado air quality standards on an hourly or daily basis.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed power line route has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Pennefather-O'Brien, Elizabeth, Patrick Lubinski and Michael D. Metcalf 1992, Conner, Carl E 2004, Compliance Date 5/12/2004) with no cultural resources identified along the proposed power line route.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will not impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The invasive annual grass cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is present throughout the project area. The noxious weeds houndstongue and mullein also occur in this area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action occurs within an elevational and precipitation range that is well suited to cheatgrass establishment and proliferation. Areas of earthen disturbance will be invaded and dominated by cheatgrass and noxious weeds unless they are promptly revegetated.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Promptly revegetate *all* disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3 and monitor the right of way for a minimum of three years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and /or invasive species. Eradicate all these as they occur using materials and methods approved by the Authorized Officer.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The project area is comprised primarily of bottomland basin big sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands. The proposed line would closely parallel a cleared pipeline right-of-way and involve an additional 5-10 feet of cleared width. There are a number of migratory birds that fulfill nesting functions in these types during the months of May, June, and July, including several species identified as having higher conservation interest by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program (i.e., Brewer's sparrow, green-tailed towhee, gray flycatcher, pinyon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, and violet-green swallow).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: This project would be implemented late in the summer or early fall of 2004, beyond the point when all viable nesting attempts have been completed. Vegetation clearing and powerline installation activity would have no influence on the breeding activities of migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action immediately authorized that would have potential to disrupt the breeding activities of migratory

birds. Alternate means of providing power to this site may involve timeframes that interfere with the breeding activities of migratory birds.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no animals listed under the Endangered Species Act or included on BLM's sensitive species list that inhabit or derive important benefit from the area potentially influenced by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no immediate action authorized that would have potential to affect special status animals or associated habitat. However, alternate plans to provide power to this site would likely be developed. It is possible that alternate alignments would originate from Magnolia Camp to the south—a route that would necessarily involve historic northern sage grouse (i.e., a BLM sensitive species) habitat. Although the suitability of this sagebrush habitat is currently suppressed by tree and deciduous brush expression, Colorado Division of Wildlife and the BLM have recently initiated a series of projects to enhance the suitability of these ranges. There is strong evidence to suggest that sage grouse habitat is subject to high levels of disuse in the vicinity of elevated features such as powerpoles that can be used as raptor perches.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: Because there are no special status animals potentially influenced by the proposed action, a land health standard finding is not relevant. Under the proposed action, there would be no change in the status of the land health standard for threatened & endangered animals in the region. Under the no-action alternative, there may be potential to involve and degrade the future utility of sage steppe habitats that have potential for use by northern sage grouse. In the event sage grouse habitat restoration efforts by the agencies are successful, meeting the land health standards for special status species in the short term would be impaired through project life.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: The Piceance Creek Basin encompasses outcroppings of the Thirteen Mile Creek Tongue of the Green River Formation. This outcropping is host to the Dudley Bluffs bladderpod (*Lesquerella congesta*) and Dudley Bluffs twinpod (*Physaria obcordata*). Both species were listed as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act

effective March 8, 1990, due to their rarity and limited distribution (Federal Register 55 FR 4152). A pedestrian survey was conducted along the proposed line July 21, 2004. The outcropping only occurred in sections 1, 2 and 12. The proposed line is in the bottom of the gulch in sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands. One pole is located on the side of slope where the formation begins to occur. The survey did not find any BLM threatened or sensitive species occurring within a 100 foot radius of the proposed location.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None, there are no threatened, endangered or sensitive plant species occurring within the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: There is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action or no action alternative would have an influence on the condition or function of Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant species. Thus, there would be no effect on achieving the land health standard.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at this site.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment The powerline construction is in segment 16, which is all tributaries to Piceance Creek, including all wetlands, lakes and reservoirs from the source to the confluence with the White River except for specific listings in segments 17-20. A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the

303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. All actions are within the White River watershed.

The State has classified this segment as a "Use Protected" reach. Its designated beneficial uses are: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, Fecal Coliform = 2000/100 ml, and 630/100 ml E. coli. This segment retained its Recreation Class 2 designation after sufficient evidence was received that a Recreation Class 1a use was unattainable.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There is no reasonable likelihood that powerline installation would have an influence on the water quality condition of the White River.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: No additional mitigation is necessary.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The proposed action will not affect the drainages ability to meet the Land Health Standards.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands or riparian communities potentially influence by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Riparian and wetland communities would not be directly or indirectly affected by powerline installation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Although an alternate alignment would likely be presented under this alternative, it would probably be as unlikely to involve riparian or wetland resources as the proposed action.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Because there are no riparian or wetland resources potentially influenced by the proposed or no-action alternatives, a land health standard finding is not relevant. There would be no change in the status of the land health standard in downstream riparian and wetland communities.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the area affected by the proposed action. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The soils have been mapped in an order III soil survey by NRCS which is available for review at the field office. Refer to the table below for the type of soils affected by the proposed action.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Range site	Salinity	RunOff	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
36	Glendive fine sandy loam		Foothills Swale	2-4	Slow	Slight	>60
70	Redcreek-Rentsac complex	5-30%	PJ woodlands/PJ woodlands	<2	Very high	Moderate to high	10-20
73	Rentsac channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
75	Rentsac-Piceance complex	2-30%	PJ woodland/Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate to high	10-20
91	Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop complex	15-90%	Stoney Foothills		Rapid	Very high	10-20
104	Yamac Loam	2-15%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Slight to moderate	>60

Typically, the topsoil layer is a light brownish gray fine sandy loam about 4 inches thick. Permeability of these soils is moderately slow. There are no special designations delineated for these soils. The majority of the soils encountered are in the Pinyon-Juniper woodlands range site.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The powerline construction would have minimal impacts to soil resources. Compaction may occur in the vicinity of the pole placement. This impact would be short-term.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: Currently the upland soils meet the Land Health Standard. The proposed action will not cause these upland soils to *not* meet the Land Health Standards.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Vegetation in the project area is dominated by basin big sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There will be some short term disturbance of the vegetation as a result of project construction. There will be no significant impact on the native vegetation with proper application of the proposed mitigation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Promptly revegetate *all* disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3 and monitor the right of way for a minimum of three years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and /or invasive species. Eradicate all these as they occur using materials and methods approved by the Authorized Officer

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Vegetation in the project area currently meets the Standard. Implementation of the proposed action with mitigation will insure that the Standard continues to be met in the future.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The nearest aquatic habitats are located along Piceance Creek, about 800 feet west of the nearest point of powerline activity.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Aquatic habitats associated with the Piceance Creek would not be measurably influenced by powerline installation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Although an alternate alignment would likely be presented under this alternative, it would probably be as unlikely to involve aquatic resources as the proposed action.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Because there are no aquatic habitats or animals potentially influenced by the proposed or no-action alternatives, a land health standard finding is not relevant.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The project area consists primarily of basin big sagebrush bottomlands (about 1 mile) and pinyon-juniper woodlands with intermixed upland sagebrush parks (about 3 miles). This range is used by deer and elk predominantly during the mid-fall through early spring months and is classified as critical habitat (as deer severe winter range) by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Non-game wildlife using these habitats are typical and widely distributed in extensive like-habitats across the Resource Area and northwest Colorado; there are no narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit those lands potentially influenced by this action. A pair of red-tailed hawk nest in the cliffs along lower Greasewood Gulch adjacent to the proposed corridor. Although woodland nesting raptors (e.g., Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks) are well distributed in Magnolia's woodland habitats, it is extremely unlikely that nesting would occur within 50-100 feet of the woodland margin. These raptors generally begin nesting in May and complete broods by mid-July.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would occur in the late summer (late July) or early fall (September) months when there is very limited big game use. The proposed action would have no potential to substantively influence big game animal distribution or behavior. It is anticipated that very little vegetation clearing would be required between pole stations, but regardless, these effects would occur along the margin (5-10 feet) of the existing pipeline corridor. This temporary reduction of woody shrubs would be of no consequence to the available forage base.

This pipeline corridor does not tend to support regular motorized vehicle use. As a means of minimizing the proliferation of vehicle routes on big game severe winter ranges (White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan; Record of Decision page 2-29) any conditions altered during access preparation that serve to deter vehicle travel (e.g., rock or woody debris, topographic features) should be reestablished upon completion of work. Any woody material from trees cleared from the right-of-way should be evenly redistributed over that portion of the right-of-way from which the trees were originally removed.

Right-of-way preparation would involve the intermittent removal of about 40 trees (an average of about 1 tree per 400 linear feet) along the margin of the existing pipeline corridor. Because most nongame birds, particularly woodland raptors, tend to avoid selecting nest sites in close proximity to woodland edges, closely paralleling this feature would minimize the direct involvement of woodland habitat with more optimal utility for nongame species. The effects of powerline installation would have no measurable influence on the short or long term utility or suitability of shrubland or woodland habitats for nongame species. Because powerline installation would be accomplished in the late summer or early fall of 2004, there would be no potential to influence the red-tailed hawk nest site in Greasewood Gulch or nesting by accipiters in adjacent woodlands. Powerpole design would largely prevent raptor electrocution.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no immediate action authorized that would have potential to affect resident wildlife or associated

habitat. Any alternate alignment would likely involve impacts to big game and nongame wildlife that would be similar in type and intensity to the proposed action.

Mitigation: Although not mentioned in the application, WREA typically integrates most-current raptor protection designs in its powerline installations. Effective raptor protection measures must be incorporated with powerpole design on this project.

As a means of minimizing the proliferation of vehicle routes on big game severe winter ranges (White River ROD/RMP page 2-29) any conditions altered during access preparation that serve to deter vehicle travel (e.g., rock or woody debris, topographic features) should be reestablished upon completion of work. Any woody material from trees cleared from the right-of-way should be evenly redistributed over that portion of the right-of-way from which the trees were originally removed.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The project area generally meets the public land health standard for animal communities. This project would have no measurable influence on shrubland and woodland habitat extent or utility. The proposed action is therefore consistent with continued meeting of this land health standard.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management			X
Forest Management			X
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Paleontology		X	
Rangeland Management		X	
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action traverses a “existing roads and trails” area as identified in the White River ROD/RMP of 1997.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Following installation of poles, vehicle tracks along pipeline right-of-way may be viewed by some as a travel route through the existing roads and trails area. Pipelines are designated as closed routes to motor vehicle traffic by the White River ROD/RMP.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: In areas where right-of-way cross BLM or Rio Blanco County roads, effort should be made to place brush or another vehicle impediment to discourage motor vehicle traffic along closed right-of-way.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action falls within the D4 Little Hills Fire management polygon. This polygon is an area where unplanned wildland fire is desired and there are few to no constraints to its use. The proposed action will not change the way this polygon is currently managed.

Rio Blanco County (RBC) through their Strategic Emergency/Disaster Management Program determined that electrical lines servicing mining, industrial, and oil and gas facilities had the most significant exposure to wildland fire hazard within the county. Therefore powerline protection is a high priority in their Strategic Wildland Fire Management Program (RBC 2003, Rio Blanco County, Colorado; Strategic Wildland Fire Hazard Management Program).

The route proposed for the powerline goes through Basin Big Sagebrush/greasewood in the Greasewood Gulch drainage and moderate to very dense pinion juniper woodland with heavy dead and down component averaging approximately 10 tons per acre on the uplands.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is anticipated that implementing the proposed action will not change the way that the D4 fire management polygon is managed. Although there are few resource constraints and a relatively small amount of developed infrastructure currently present the powerline will change the unconstrained nature of fire use due to the lines presence and burnable nature.

Fire occurring within proximity of the powerline could threaten the powerline. Basin Big Sagebrush and pinion/juniper are very volatile fuels that when burning under environmental conditions when a wildfire can be expected moves extremely quickly. These fuels have a very rapid rate of spread with flame lengths up to 100 feet and release very intense heat that will threaten the powerline and wooden pole structures. This was demonstrated two miles east of the proposed location site during the Greasewood fire (June, 2004) which burned 35 wooden power poles during a seven mile run in four hours. The proposed powerline would also create a significant safety hazard for firefighters. Fire and dense smoke are conductors of electricity.

Electrical current can be transmitted through flame lengths and dense smoke which is highly dangerous for firefighters who may have to suppress wildfire underneath or around the line.

The proposed powerline parallels an existing pipeline that is relatively clear of woody vegetation. However, the line is proposed to be directly adjacent to the pipeline which will place the line directly into heavy woody fuels. If the line were to be placed in the middle of the cleared pipeline the threat of damage by wildfire would be greatly reduced. Should the line be threatened this would also provide a more defensible space that could be quickly and safely mitigated to protect the line.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no threat by wildfire to industrial infrastructure. There would also be no additional threat to firefighter safety when called upon to suppress a wildfire in the vicinity of the proposed action.

Mitigation: Wildfire hazards would be mitigated by constructing the powerline in the center of the cleared right-of-way for the existing pipeline utilizing metal poles. This would take advantage of an already reduced fuel situation utilizing non-combustible materials.

Should the line be constructed as identified in the proposed action then all woody, live or dead, vegetation should be removed within a twenty foot radius of each pole, as well any trees within ten feet of sagging lines should be removed. Any woody vegetation, live or dead, that is removed should either be chipped, hauled off site, or lopped into small 24” pieces and scattered well away from the line to eliminate any heavy fuel loading near the line, this process should be conducted on a regular basis to ensure reduced fuel loadings under the line.

Since the area where the powerline is designated has a signed fire management plan in accordance with White River RMP designating this area as an area where fire is desired to maintain natural ecosystem functions, the powerline owner should be expected to assume responsibility for the line and its potential loss to fire in a fire prone ecosystem.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The powerline proposal goes through pinyon/juniper woodlands. For the most part these woodlands do not contain old growth characteristics. These woodlands are used by the general public for the harvest of firewood and juniper posts.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposal does not identify the area or quantity of pinyon/juniper woodland that would be disturbed, and as such a quantitative determination of the removed material cannot be determined. Following the mitigation requirements would provide for proper treatment of woodland materials removed by the applicant.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts.

Mitigation: From the White River ROD/RMP of 1997, Appendix B. 7. All trees removed in the process of construction shall be purchased from the Bureau of Land Management. The permit holder will determine the volume of material removed in cords, and report this volume to the White River Field Office. The trees shall be cut with a maximum stump height of six inches and disposed of by one of the following methods:

a. Trees must be cut before being dozed off the area of disturbance. Trees shall be cut into four-foot lengths, down to four inches in diameter and placed well away from the edge of the disturbance.

b. Purchased trees may be removed from federal land for resale or private use. Limbs may be scattered off the area of disturbance but not dozed off.

c. Chipped and scattered.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed project occurs within a Visual Resource Management class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: As the powerline would be following an existing right-of-way and little vegetation will be disturbed, it is unlikely that this action would be noticed by the casual observer traveling Rio Blanco County Road 5 and thus would meet the objectives of VRM class III.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:

Conner, Carl E.

2004 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for a Short Section (2686 feet) of a Proposed 4.5 Mile Long Power Line on BLM Land in Greasewood Gulch for White River Electric Association in Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction Colorado

Pennefather-O'Brien, Elizabeth, Patrick Lubinski and Michael D. Metcalf

1992 Colorado Interstate Gas Company Uinta Basin Lateral 20” Pipeline: Class III Cultural Resource Final Report Utah, Colorado and Wyoming. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Caroline Hollowed	Hydrologist	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Marty O’Mara	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Caroline Hollowed	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	ORP	Wilderness
Caroline Hollowed	Hydrologist	Soils
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	ORP	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	NRS	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	ORP	Recreation
Chris Ham	ORP	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	NRS	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2004-111-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURES: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to

proceed by the authorized officer.

3. Promptly revegetate *all* disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3 and monitor the right of way for a minimum of three years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and /or invasive species. Eradicate all these as they occur using materials and methods approved by the Authorized Officer.

4. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by this project.

5. Although not mentioned in the application, WREA typically integrates most-current raptor protection designs in its powerline installations. Effective raptor protection measures must be incorporated with powerpole design on this project.

6. As a means of minimizing the proliferation of vehicle routes on big game severe winter ranges (White River ROD/RMP page 2-29) any conditions altered during access preparation that serve to deter vehicle travel (e.g., rock or woody debris, topographic features) should be reestablished upon completion of work. Any woody material from trees cleared from the right-of-way should be evenly redistributed over that portion of the right-of-way from which the trees were originally removed.

7. In areas where right-of-way cross BLM or Rio Blanco County roads, effort should be made to place brush or another vehicle impediment to discourage motor vehicle traffic along closed right-of-way.

8. Wildfire hazards would be mitigated by constructing the powerline in the center of the cleared right-of-way for the existing pipeline utilizing metal poles. This would take advantage of an already reduced fuel situation utilizing non-combustible materials.

9. Should the powerline be constructed as identified in the proposed action then all woody, live or dead, vegetation should be removed within a twenty foot radius of each pole, as well as any trees within ten feet of sagging lines should be removed. Any woody vegetation, live or dead, that is removed should either be chipped, hauled off site, or lopped into small 24" pieces and scattered well away from the line to eliminate any heavy fuel loading near the line, this process should be conducted on a regular basis to ensure reduced fuel loadings under the line.

10. Since the area where the powerline is designated has a signed fire management plan in accordance with White River RMP designating this area as an area where fire is desired to maintain natural ecosystem functions, the powerline owner should be expected to assume responsibility for the line and its potential loss to fire in a fire prone ecosystem.

11. From the White River ROD/RMP of 1997, Appendix B. 7; all trees removed in the process of construction shall be purchased from the Bureau of Land Management. The permit holder will determine the volume of material removed in cords, and report this volume to the White River Field Office. The trees shall be cut with a maximum stump height of six inches and disposed of by one of the following methods:

a. Trees must be cut before being dozed off the area of disturbance. Trees shall be cut into four-foot lengths, down to four inches in diameter and placed well away from the edge of the disturbance.

b. Purchased trees may be removed from federal land for resale or private use. Limbs may be scattered off the area of disturbance but not dozed off.

c. Chipped and scattered.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny A Brown

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline P. Halberd 7/27/04

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kent E. Walton
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 07/28/04

ATTACHMENTS: Map of the location of proposed action.

Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2004-111-EA

