

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

---

**Environmental Assessment**

**Distribution Power Line for Newfield Production Company's  
Gathering Station #7  
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-0210-EA**

**PREPARING OFFICE**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
170 South 500 East  
Vernal, Utah 84078  
435-781-4400  
435-781-4410



**Environmental Assessment**  
**Distribution Power Line for Newfield Production**  
**Company's Gathering Station #7**  
**DOI-BLM-UT-G010-0210-EA**

Prepared by  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Vernal Field Office**  
**Vernal, Utah**

# Table of Contents

.....	<b>vii</b>
Finding of No Significant Impact .....	vii
Signatures: .....	vii
<b>Decision Record .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
Decision .....	ix
Stipulations .....	ix
Compliance, Monitoring, Mitigation .....	ix
Plan Conformance and Consistency .....	ix
Compliance with NEPA: .....	x
Rational / Authorities / Public Involvement .....	x
Appeal or Protest Opportunities .....	xi
Authorizing Official: .....	xi
<b>1. Environmental Assessment Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Identifying Information: .....	1
1.1.1. Title, EA number, and type of project: .....	1
1.1.2. Location of Proposed Action: .....	1
1.1.3. Name and Location of Preparing Office: .....	1
1.1.4. Identify the subject function code, lease, serial, or right-of-way number: .....	1
1.1.5. Applicant Name: .....	1
1.2. Purpose and Need for Action: .....	1
1.3. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues: .....	2
<b>2. Proposed Action and Alternatives .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Description of the Proposed Action: .....	5
2.2. No Action Alternative .....	7
2.3. Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail .....	7
2.4. Conformance .....	7
<b>3. Affected Environment: .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health .....	11
3.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors) .....	11
3.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated .....	12
3.4. Soils and Vegetation .....	12
<b>4. Environmental Effects: .....</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1. Proposed Action Alternative .....	15
4.1.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health .....	15
4.1.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors) .....	15

4.1.2.1. Mitigation Measures .....	15
4.1.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated .....	16
4.1.4. Soils and Vegetation .....	16
4.2. No Action Alternative .....	16
4.2.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health .....	16
4.2.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors) .....	17
4.2.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated .....	17
4.2.4. Soils and Vegetation .....	17
4.3. Cumulative Impacts .....	17
4.3.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health .....	17
4.3.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors) .....	18
4.3.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated .....	18
4.3.4. Soils and Vegetation .....	19
<b>5. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted: .....</b>	<b>21</b>
5.1. Native American Tribes .....	23
5.2. National Historic Preservation Act .....	23
<b>6. List of Preparers .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7. References Cited .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix A. Project Area Map .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix B. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST .....</b>	<b>35</b>

**List of Tables**

Table 3.1. Grazing Allotments and Livestock Use ..... 11  
Table 4.1. Cumulative Disturbance for Livestock Grazing & Rangeland Health ..... 17  
Table 6.1. List of Preparers ..... 27

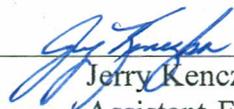
## Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-UT-G010-0210-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts (per Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-UT-G010-0210-EA), I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below will not have any significant impacts on the environment and an environmental impact statement is not required.

### Signatures:

Approved by:



---

Jerry Kenczka  
Assistant Field Manager,  
Lands & Minerals

SEP 05 2014

[Date]

# Decision Record

## Decision

It is my decision to approve and authorize Moon Lake Electric Associations amended application for Right-of-Way UTU-80334, proposal to install a new overhead 14.2/24.5kV distribution power line, to serve Newfield Production Company's Gathering Station #7 (GS#7), and to proceed as set out in the Proposed Action of the Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-UT-G010-0210-EA) subject to the applicant committed measures, stipulations, compliance and monitoring. This alternative is hereafter called the Selected Alternative. This decision applies to BLM-administered lands only.

I have determined that authorizing this selected alternative is in the public interest, and will minimize impacts so that no undue disturbance will occur.

The power line will be constructed on Public Lands within the following legal description:

SLM, UT T. 8 S., R. 16 E., Sec. 25, N1/2NE1/4.

The approximate length of the power line is 1,531.88 feet, with a permanent 50 foot width, encompassing approximately 1.76 acres more or less.

A temporary construction width of 50 feet, the length of the new power line, approximately 1.76 acres is requested for approximately 30 days (1 month). Total new disturbance for the project is approximately 3.52 acres.

## Stipulations

1. Project activities are not allowed from March 1 – August 31 to minimize impacts during burrowing owl nesting season.
2. The operator is required to apply raptor protection on all poles.

## Compliance, Monitoring, Mitigation

Compliance and monitoring checks will be conducted in accordance with BLM regulations.

## 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 Plan and the associated decision(s):

The selected alternative has been reviewed, and found to 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.

The selected alternative is also consistent with the Duchesne County General Plan, as amended in 2012. The project area is located entirely within the Uintah Basin Energy Zone in Duchesne County, which was established for the purpose of maximizing efficient and responsible development of energy and mineral resources. The highest management priority for all lands within the Uintah Basin Energy Zone, as identified in the Duchesne County Plan, is responsible management and development of existing energy and mineral resources in order to provide long-term domestic energy and supplies for Utah and the United States.

## **Compliance with NEPA:**

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.

## **Rational / Authorities / Public Involvement**

The decision to authorize the 14.2 / 24.kV overhead power line to serve Newfield Production Companies Gathering Station #7 (GS#7), has been made in consideration of the environmental impacts of the proposed action. This decision has been made after considering impacts to resources within the Vernal Field Office while accommodating Moon Lake Electric Associations desire to construct the power line.

Identification of issue(s) for this assessment was accomplished by considering any resources that could be affected by implementation of one of the alternatives.

Issues identified by BLM Specialists are documented in Appendix B Interdisciplinary Team Checklist.

### **Alternatives Considered**

#### *Alternative A-Proposed Action*

Moon Lake Electric Association proposes to install a new overhead 14.2/24.5kV distribution power line, to serve Newfield Production Companies Gathering Station #7 (GS#7).

#### *Alternative B — No Action*

Under the No Action alternative, BLM would not approve the ROW grant. Moon Lake Electric would not be allowed to construct and install the over head power line to serve Newfields Gathering Station #7 (GS#7) on public land. The no action alternative effectively constitutes denial of the Proposed Action. This alternative was not selected because it would not respond to the applicant's need to install the power line.

The authority for this decision is pursuant to Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (90 Stat. 2776; 43 U.S.C. 1761).

The proposed action was posted to the public BLM E-Planning website with its assigned NEPA number on July 11, 2014. To date, no questions or comments have been received. A public comment period was not offered due to the proposed action being similar in nature to other projects in the immediate area.

## Appeal or Protest Opportunities

**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.

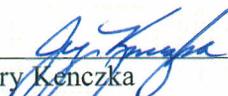
Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request 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.

### Authorizing Official:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jerry Kenczka  
Assistant Field Manager, Lands and Minerals

SEP 05 2014

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Chapter 1. Environmental Assessment

## Introduction

## **1.1. Identifying Information:**

### **1.1.1. Title, EA number, and type of project:**

Distribution Power Line for Newfield Production Company's Gathering Station #7

DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2014-0210-EA

### **1.1.2. Location of Proposed Action:**

SLM, UT T. 8 S., R. 16 E., Sec. 25 NW¼NE¼, NE¼NW¼. For a map of the project area refer to Appendix A.

### **1.1.3. Name and Location of Preparing Office:**

Lead Office -Vernal Field Office and number LLUTG011

Vernal Field Office

170 S. 500 E.

Vernal Utah 84078

435-781-4400

### **1.1.4. Identify the subject function code, lease, serial, or right-of-way number:**

Right-of-Way UTU-80334

### **1.1.5. Applicant Name:**

Moon Lake Electric Association

## **1.2. Purpose and Need for Action:**

The BLM's need is to consider approval of the amendment application for Moon Lake Electric Associations request to construct the new power line for the GS#7 in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended. BLM's purpose is to avoid or reduce impacts on sensitive resource values associated with the project area and prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands.

### **1.3. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues:**

During preparation of the EA, public involvement consisted of posting the proposal on the eplanning NEPA website. No public comment or inquiries were received. The proposed action was reviewed by an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists. For a list of all resources considered, refer to Appendix B. The only other ROW holders in the proposed project area is Newfield Production Company, so notice letters to other right-of-way holders were not mailed.

# Chapter 2. Proposed Action and Alternatives

## 2.1. Description of the Proposed Action:

Moon Lake Electric Association (MLEA) proposes to amend right-of-way UTU-80334, to construct a new overhead distribution power line on BLM owned or operated property. The proposed power line would serve the needs of Newfield Production Company's Gathering Station #7 (GS#7). This proposed power line would be a distribution line, with an operating voltage of 14.4/24.9 kV.

### Right of Way Location

The proposed power line would be built on public lands in:

SLM, UT

T. 8 S., R. 16 E.,

Sec. 25, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

(See attached map Appendix A)

The total length of the proposed power line would be approximately 1,531.88 feet in length, with a permanent 50 foot width, approximately 1.76 acres more or less. A 50 foot wide temporary construction easement is being requested for one month or (30 days). The total disturbance for the proposed right of way would encompass approximately 3.516 acres.

### Facility Design Factors

This power line will meet the National Electrical Safety Code. All requirements with respect to clearance, temperature fluctuations, wind, voltage, span length, and structure heights are incorporated into all MLEA power line designs. All MLEA power lines are designed with adequate clearances for Raptor protection. Raptor deterrents can be added if required by the BLM. All materials used for MLEA power lines meets, or exceed industry standards.

### Additional Components

This area of the county is in MLEA service territory. MLEA owns and maintains thousands of miles of power lines throughout its service territory. These lines are on Private, State, BLM, and Tribal Lands. Additional power lines may be required in the future.

### Government Agencies Involved

The BLM is the only government entity with property involved in this power line extension.

### Construction of Facilities

Construction will begin within 45 days of BLM approval and will take 20 to 30 days to complete. Construction would consist of placing 5 poles and 2 anchors on property operated by the BLM. The poles extend 35 to 40 feet out of the ground.

The construction crew will consist of 4 men to 8 men using bucket trucks, digger trucks, and smaller crew trucks, as well as a backhoe. Right of Way flagging or engineering crews will consist of 1 to 4 men using a pickup truck(s), as well as foot travel.

It is anticipated that minimal clearing, grading or blade work will be needed for crews to access and construct this power line within the granted right-of-way; with exception of the holes drilled for pole and anchor installation. Construction travel will be confined to existing roads and the requested right-of-way.

Safety is very important to MLEA. Any holes which may need to be left open overnight, will be covered with planks to protect people and wildlife from injury.

No toxic substances are used in the construction of any MLEA power lines. All construction waste will be hauled back and disposed of in MLEA owned dumpsters.

#### Resource Values and Environmental Concerns

All surface disturbances will be kept to a minimum and confined to the right-of-way. Rubber tired vehicles are used for all construction.

It is anticipated that MLEA's surface disturbance will be minimal. MLEA's surface disturbances usually are nothing more than a two track, which is used periodically to maintain and patrol the power line as needed. MLEA will keep all vehicle travel to existing roads and within the granted right-of-way.

The visual impacts will be minimal. Wood poles and non-reflective conductors will be used in the construction of this project. Vegetation for this project consists mainly of sagebrush, prairie grasses.

#### Stabilization and Rehabilitation

##### Wet Soil Conditions:

Construction and maintenance activities will not be performed when soil conditions are too wet to adequately support vehicles and equipment, except in emergency situations. If equipment creates ruts, in excess of three (3) inches deep, all maintenance work will be postponed, if possible, until conditions are suitable for travel. If maintenance is required for immediate repair of the power line, MLEA will be responsible for the rehabilitation of disturbed areas.

#### Weed Control

MLEA will control any noxious weed that appears in their right-of way, as a result of MLEA's construction activities. All weed control will be done upon written request from the BLM office. Any weed control that is required, will be completed according to the BLM specified methodology. If Herbicides are to be used, MLEA will submit, in a timely manner, a Pesticide Use Proposal (PUP), according to the form. The PUP form shall be sent to MLEA, upon the request from the BLM, for any weed control.

#### Access

All access will be from existing roads and two tracks and along the granted rights-of-way.

#### Reclamation Re-seeding

MLEA will re-seed any area's that are cleared as a result of MLEA construction activities.

All re-seeding efforts will be completed upon written request from the BLM office. MLEA will use BLM standard drilling or broadcasting techniques for any and all re-seeding. Re-seeding techniques will be determined at the time of the BLM's request for any and all re-seeding.

MLEA will apply the BLM's recommendation of certified seed, at their application rates, for any re-seeding that is needed for this project. Any and all re-seeding will be done between August 15th and November 30th.

### Maintenance

MLEA will keep the power lines in a safe and usable condition at all times in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code.

No toxic substances are used in the construction of any of MLEA power lines. All construction waste will be hauled back and disposed of in MLEA owned dumpsters.

It is anticipated that this power line will be inspected on a semi-annual basis, with maintenance to be completed as needed. All inspections will be completed from MLEA owned vehicles and completed by authorized MLEA personnel.

MLEA will do everything within reason and within its power to prevent fires on or near the construction area during the construction of this power line, as well as throughout the term of the right-of-way. Each vehicle used on the job site will be equipped with a radio and fire extinguisher. All litter will be taken off the job site.

### Termination and Restoration

If the use of the power line is discontinued for a period of one year or longer and is no longer needed in the foreseeable future; MLEA will remove it at their expense and will restore the right-of-way, as much as possible to its original condition.

## **2.2. No Action Alternative**

Under this action, BLM would not approve the amendment application for the overhead 14.4/24.9 kV distribution power line to serve Newfield's Gathering Station #7 (GS#7) on federal land.

## **2.3. Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail**

There were no other alternatives identified aside from the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives that would meet the purpose and need of this project.

## **2.4. Conformance**

The proposal 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.

# Chapter 3. Affected Environment:

This chapter presents the potentially affected existing environment (i.e. the physical, biological, social, and economic values and resources) of the impact area as identified in the Interdisciplinary Team Checklist. This chapter provides the baseline for comparison of impacts/consequences described in Chapter 4.

### 3.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health

The proposed project is located in the Antelope Powers allotment.(see table below).

**Table 3.1. Grazing Allotments and Livestock Use**

Allotment Number	Allotment Name	Livestock Number	Livestock Kind	Begin	End	Type Use	Type Use
15879	Antelope Powers	220	CATTLE	10/01	5/01	ACTIVE	1541
15879	Antelope Powers	2207	SHEEP	10/01	5/01	ACTIVE	3091

The allotment is primarily located within the semi-arid saltshrub ecosystem; undisturbed areas are characterized by native 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. 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 characterize dense oil and gas development.

The current livestock operator of the Antelope Powers allotment has been unable to utilize their full permitted AUMs within the allotment due to the current level of disturbance, fragmentation, daily traffic, development, and most recently, drought.

#### **RANGELAND HEALTH STANDARDS:**

Rangeland Health Standards were assessed for the Antelope Powers Allotment in 2008; the Determination of Rangeland Health was signed in 2010 and the allotment was considered to be meeting Rangeland Health Standards throughout the interspaces of oil and gas development areas. However, Rangeland Health Standards are scheduled to be re-assessed during the field season of 2014, due to a severe increase in oil and gas energy development throughout the allotment – as well as projected increases in development due to the ongoing Monument Butte Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). Large portions of the vegetative surface have been removed and/or disturbed as a result of the development of oil and gas resources in the area.

### 3.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors)

All migratory birds and their nests are protected from take or disturbance under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (16 U.S.C., 703 et seq.). These protection laws were implemented for the protection of avian species. Unless permitted by regulations, it is unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any species covered under these Acts. In addition, Executive Order 13186 sets forth the responsibilities of federal agencies to further implement the provisions of these Acts by integrating bird conservation principles and practices into agency activities and by ensuring that federal actions evaluate the effects of actions and agency plans on protected avian species.

The BLM has reviewed district files and completed a field visit for raptor nesting and migratory bird habitat within all lands up to ½ mile of the proposed project area. The project area is located within burrowing owl nesting habitat. The burrowing owl is a Utah State and BLM species of concern. In Utah, prairie dog burrows are the most important source of Burrowing owl nest sites. Burrowing owl use of abandoned prairie dog towns is minimal, and active dog towns are the primary habitat for the owls.

The following addresses migratory birds that may utilize the project area for nesting or foraging activities, including those species classified as Priority Species by Utah Partners-in-Flight. Utah Partners-in-Flight is a cooperative partnership among federal, state, and local government agencies as well as public organizations and individuals organized to emphasize the conservation of birds not covered by existing conservation initiatives.

*Desert/Shrub Areas:* American robin, American white pelican, bald eagle, blue-gray gnatcatcher, black-billed magpie, black-capped chickadee, black-chinned hummingbird, black-throated sparrow, bobolink, Brewer's blackbird, Brewer's sparrow, broad-tailed hummingbird, common raven, mountain bluebird, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, short-eared owl, song sparrow, western burrowing owl, and western kingbird.

### **3.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated**

The BLM has reviewed district files and completed a field visit for wildlife species. In summary, the entire project (1.76 acres) is located within white-tailed prairie dog (potential burrowing owl nesting) habitat.

### **3.4. Soils and Vegetation**

The soils in the area are typically mixed with a high content of clay and sandy loams, often with rocky or cobbly substrate on the surface. Elevation in the Project Area is approximately 5,400 feet, and the terrain is relatively flat. The surface layer (topsoil) tends to be very thin, approximately 3 inches, and generally less than 6 inches. A soil survey has not been completed in the Project Area..

The Project Area is located in a mixed desert shrub community. Dominant species that occur in the Project Area include Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), milkvetch sp. (*Astragalus* sp.), shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), Gardner saltbush (*Atriplex gardneri*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), rubber rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), purple springparsley (*Cymopterus purpureus*), bottlebrush squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*), Mormon tea (*Ephedra viridis*), broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), plains pricklypear (*Opuntia polyacantha*), budsage (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), galleta grass (*Pleuraphis jamesii*), black greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), scarlet globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*), and spineless horsebrush (*Tetradymia canescens*).

## **Chapter 4. Environmental Effects:**

This chapter describes the direct and indirect impacts that would be expected to occur upon the implementation of the considered alternative. It also discloses the expected cumulative impacts, which are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.

## **4.1. Proposed Action Alternative**

### **4.1.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health**

Under the Proposed Action approximately 1.76 acres of surface disturbance would occur. The allotment would continue to be used below authorized levels due to the increase in the amount of disturbance. The increase in disturbance and development activity, although slated for ancillary reclamation usually increases weed vegetation and general fragmentation of the landscape, which continues to hinder livestock operations. Therefore, both direct (loss of forage, invasive weeds, etc.) and indirect (increase in vehicle traffic, landscape fragmentation, etc.) impacts affect the livestock grazing operation on the allotment.

Rangeland Health Assessments have been done on the allotment. Throughout the last few years energy development has continued to boom in the area through the implementation of the Castlepeak-Eightmile Flat EIS ROD. 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.

Under the Proposed Action approximately 1.76 acres of new surface disturbance would occur. This would contribute to soil loss, weed invasion, and continued fragmentation of grazing allotments, affecting livestock movement patterns and forage availability.

Although, much of the disturbed landscape is slated for reclamation; those efforts have not proven to be highly successful within the area for rangeland forage. Therefore, it is assumed that ecological impacts are continuing to occur which has the potential to directly and indirectly affect Rangeland Health Standards.

### **4.1.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors)**

As identified in Chapter 3, the entire project area contains burrowing owl nesting habitat. Potential effects of the Proposed Action Alternative on avian species include direct loss or degradation of potential nesting and foraging habitats and indirect disturbance from human activity (including harassment, displacement, and noise). By following the mitigation measures outlined below these impacts would be minimized or completely negated.

#### **4.1.2.1. Mitigation Measures**

1. Project activities are not allowed from March 1 – August 31 to minimize impacts during burrowing owl nesting season.
2. Moon Lake Electric is required to apply raptor protection on all poles.

### **4.1.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated**

Under the Proposed Action Alternative surface disturbing activities would result in the loss of approximately 1.76 acres of white-tailed prairie dog habitat. As project related activities increase, adjacent habitats may be avoided due to human presence. Habitat quality for this species can also be degraded by the introduction of noxious and invasive weeds. Weed invasions may lead to a decrease in the amount of native perennials and bare ground, thereby degrading habitat for prairie dogs by decreasing visibility, forage quality, and burrow development. Overall, the Proposed Action Alternative may affect individuals through displacement or habitat degradation, but would not likely result in a trend towards federal listing of the species.

### **4.1.4. Soils and Vegetation**

The Proposed Action would disturb approximately 1.76 acres of soils and vegetation. All disturbed areas that do not need to remain cleared for maintenance or safety purposes would be subject to interim reclamation following completion of construction/installation. If interim reclamation is successful, direct long-term impacts to vegetation would occur only in those areas that remain clear throughout the life of the power-line. If interim reclamation is not successful, up to the entire 1.76 acres could remain disturbed for the long term.

The project would contribute an estimated additional 3.0 tons of soil per acre per year above the current natural erosion rate for the first year of development. After the first year, the soil erosion attributed to the project would reduce to 1.5 tons per acre per year until the power-line corridor is fully reclaimed. Erosion rates are higher during the first year due to disturbance during construction.

Direct impacts to soils include mixing of soil horizons, soil compaction, short-term loss of topsoil and site productivity, and loss of soil/topsoil through wind and water erosion. Loss of soil/topsoil in disturbed areas would reduce the revegetation success of seeded native species due to increased competition by annual weed species. Annual weed species are adapted to disturbed conditions, and have less stringent moisture and soil nutrient requirements than do perennial native species.

Additional direct impacts to vegetation are primarily associated with clearing of vegetation during construction. Indirect impacts to vegetation resources include the invasion and establishment of introduced, undesired plant species. The severity of these invasions would depend on the success of reclamation and revegetation, and the degree and success of noxious weed control efforts.

Impacts to soils and vegetation would be partially mitigated by reclamation of disturbed areas with desired native vegetation and the control of noxious and invasive weeds by mechanical and chemical treatment.

## **4.2. No Action Alternative**

### **4.2.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health**

The No Action Alternative would not result in any impacts to livestock grazing or Rangeland Health.

### 4.2.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors)

The No Action Alternative would not result in any impacts to migratory birds or raptors.

### 4.2.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated

The No Action Alternative would not result in any impacts to wildlife.

### 4.2.4. Soils and Vegetation

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no direct disturbance or indirect effects to soils and vegetation from surface-disturbing activities associated with this power-line installation. Current land use trends in the area would continue, including increased industrial development, increased off-highway vehicles (OHV) traffic, and increased recreation use for hunting, bird watching, and sightseeing.

## 4.3. Cumulative Impacts

### 4.3.1. Livestock Grazing and Rangeland Health

The cumulative impact analysis area (CIAA) for Rangeland Resources is the Antelope Powers, Castle Peak and Eight Mile Flat Allotments. The allotments include approximately 40,466, 51,824, and 27,546 acres, respectively. Within the CIAA, negative impacts have occurred and continue to occur for grazing resources as a result of disturbance from oil and gas energy development. Invasive species such as: halogeton, tumbleweed, tumble mustard and cheatgrass usually dominate disturbed sites throughout the CIAA. The current landscape within the CIAA is heavily fragmented by hundreds of miles of surface pipelines, roads, well pads (abandoned and active), compressor stations, and other infrastructure typically associated with the oil and gas industry. **Table 5.2** depicts existing disturbance. Cumulative existing disturbance for the CIAA is approximately 5,782 acres, including 453 miles of ancillary roads. The Proposed Action would contribute an additional 0.60 acres to the overall cumulative disturbance. The No Action alternative would not contribute additional disturbance impacts in the CIAA.

The amount of total surface disturbance reduces the available forage for livestock and wildlife within the allotments, and would continue to result in direct effects to grazing operation via probable AUM reductions as a direct result of forage loss and fragmentation. Surface impacts include increased traffic and landscape fragmentation and disturbance near water improvements that are specifically managed for livestock grazing.

**Table 4.1. Cumulative Disturbance for Livestock Grazing & Rangeland Health**

Type of Disturbance (11.10.2012)	Count	Acreage*	Other Metrics	Source
<b>Energy Development</b>				
Drilling Locations	54	270	NA	DOGM Data
Operations Center	6	39	NA	DOGM Data
Producing Wells	1237	6,185	NA	DOGM Data
Shut In Well Locations	91	455	NA	DOGM Data

Temporarily Abandoned	12	280	NA	DOGM Data
Newfield Major Pipelines (estimated 3.5 acres/mile)	Approx. 80	280	80 miles	Available Newfield GIS Data
Reasonably Foreseeable Well Pads				
Gasco	198	990	NA	DOGM Data
MBU	946	4730	NA	DOGM Data
<b>Other (County, Livestock, Etc.)</b>				
Ponds and/or Guzzlers recorded in RIPs	Approx. 33	Estimated 20		
Ancillary Roads		1,492	373 miles	Assumption for acreage is based on an average width of 30 feet/mile of road (approx. 4 acres/mile)
<b>Total Estimated existing Cumulative Disturbance</b>		<b>5,782 acres</b>	<b>453 miles</b>	
<b>*Acreage is based on GPS data and is a rough estimate</b>				

### 4.3.2. Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors)

The cumulative impact analysis area for migratory birds is defined as the project area. Future actions of the Proposed Action could increase human presence in the area, fragment and manipulate the surrounding habitats, and increase the presence of non-native invasive plant species. In general such an environmental shift would probably have negative impacts on wildlife species and would favor non-native and readily adaptive species. The Proposed Action would contribute 1.76 acres of surface disturbance. The No Action Alternative would not result in an accumulation of impacts.

### 4.3.3. Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated

The cumulative impact analysis area for white-tailed prairie dogs is specific to the active prairie dog complex surrounding the project area. The prairie dog complex is approximately 362 acres. Under the Proposed Action Alternative the project wells are expected to disturb 1.76 acres of the complex. Future actions of the Proposed Action could increase human presence in the area, fragment and manipulate the surrounding habitats, and increase the presence of non-native invasive plant species. In general such an environmental shift would probably have negative impacts on prairie dogs and would favor non-native and readily adaptive species. Construction and operation of facilities associated with the Proposed Action would increase both traffic and visitation to the proposed project area. In addition to direct human-caused disturbance, prairie dogs could also be affected through exposure to spills or other sources of petroleum products. Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative could also alter potential prairie dogs habitat, making it less suitable for the establishment of colonies. As traffic volumes and project-related activities increase, adjacent habitats may be avoided due to human presence, noise, and the potential influx of invasive weeds. The Proposed Action would contribute 1.76 acres of surface disturbance. The No Action Alternative would not result in an accumulation of impacts.

#### 4.3.4. Soils and Vegetation

The cumulative impacts analysis area (CIAA) will be defined as the boundary of the Castle Peak and Eight Mile Flat Oil and Gas Expansion Project EIS (BLM 2005) project area which is located in the Monument Butte/Myton Bench Oil and Gas Field in Duchesne, Utah.

The boundary of the Castle Peak and Eight Mile Flat Oil and Gas Expansion Project EIS contains approximately 64,000 acres. The current past, present, and foreseeable activity for the Castle Peak and Eight Mile Flat Oil and Gas Expansion Project EIS project area is 778 oil and gas wells. Assuming 2.5 acres of disturbance for well pad and pit and 1.0 acre of disturbance for pipelines, per well, the past, present, and future total area of disturbance due to oil and gas activity for the Castle Peak and Eight Mile Flat Oil and Gas Expansion Project EIS is approximately 2,723 acres.

Soil erosion would be increased due to the disturbance associated with oil and gas activities in the area. Each acre of disturbance adds to a cumulative effect by increasing erosion and destroying native vegetation, and through the invasion of undesired plant species. In general, soils in the Uinta Basin are very thin, slow to develop, and difficult to reclaim because of the arid climate and lack of organic material.

Direct surface disturbances to vegetation indicated by past, present, and reasonably foreseeable developments are primarily attributable to oil and gas development and vegetation management by various federal agencies. Oil and gas development, however, would continue to degrade local habitat by direct disturbance and slow reclamation of disturbed areas. Surface disturbance within the CIAA would be approximately 2,723 acres. The Proposed Action would add approximately 1.76 acres of surface disturbance. The No Action alternative would not result in an accumulation of impacts.

## **Chapter 5. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted:**

## **5.1. Native American Tribes**

Tribal consultations were conducted under the Monument Butte EIS. No concerns were brought forth. The proposed undertaking will not hinder access to or use of Native American religious sites.

## **5.2. National Historic Preservation Act**

The proposed project area has been the subject of multiple Class III cultural resource inventories. No cultural resources eligible for inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) will be affected by the proposed undertaking.

## **Chapter 6. List of Preparers**

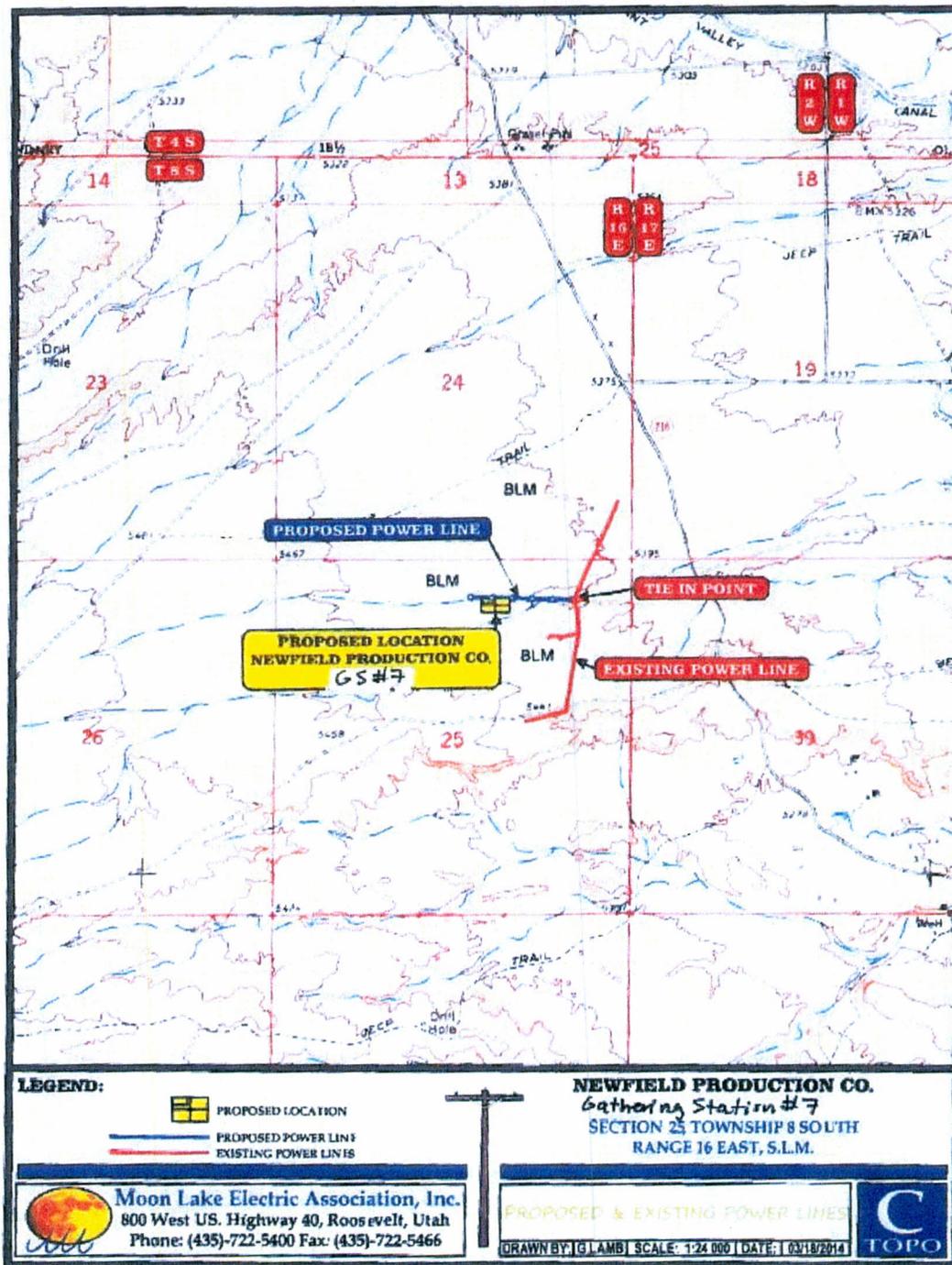
**Table 6.1. List of Preparers**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document</b>
Alec Bryan	Range Specialist	Livestock Grazing
Brandon McDonald	Wildlife Biologist	Special status fish & wildlife species (including general fish & wildlife).
Christine Cimiluca	Natural Resource Specialists	Plants
Margo Roberts	Realty Specialist	Project Lead
Stephanie Howard	NEPA Coordinator	Quality Control

## **Chapter 7. References Cited**

BLM. 2005. Castle Peak and Eight Mile Flat Oil and Gas Expansion Project Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision, Newfield Rocky Mountains, Inc. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Vernal District Office.

# Appendix A. Project Area Map



# Appendix B. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

## INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

**Project Title:** Moon Lake Power Line for Newfields Gathering Station #7

**NEPA Log Number:** DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2014-0210-EA

**File/Serial Number:** UTU-80334 (Amendment)

**Project Leader:** Margo Roberts

**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.

Determina- tion	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
<b>RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)</b>				
NI	Air Quality & Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Emissions will occur from vehicles in the project area, but those impacts will be short term & transitory so they will not be detectable by monitors or models.  It is anticipated that greenhouse gas emissions associated with this action and its alternative(s) would be so short term & transitory as to be negligible.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NP	BLM Natural Areas	The proposed project does not fall within the boundaries of a BLM Natural Area as per the Green River District, Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (2008) and the GIS layers database.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NI	Cultural: Archaeological Resources	The proposed project area has been the subject of multiple Class III cultural resource inventories. No cultural resources eligible for inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) will be affected by the proposed undertaking.	Cameron Cox	7/15/2014
NI	Cultural: Native American Religious Concerns	Tribal consultations were conducted under the Monument Butte EIS. No concerns were brought forth. The proposed undertaking will not hinder access to or use of Native American religious sites.	Cameron Cox	7/15/2014

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
NP	Designated Areas:  Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	The proposed project does not fall within the boundaries of an ACEC per the Green River District, Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (2008) and the GIS layers database.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NP	Designated Areas:  Wild and Scenic Rivers	The proposed project is not in an Wild and Scenic Rivers area per the Green River District, Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (2008) and the GIS layers database.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NP	Designated Areas:  Wilderness Study Areas	The proposed project is not in an Wilderness/WSA area per the Green River District, Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (2008) and the GIS layers database.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NI	Environmental Justice	No minority or economically disadvantaged communities or populations would be disproportionately adversely affected by the proposed action or alternatives.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NP	Farmlands  (prime/unique)	No prime or unique farmlands as identified by the NRCS are located in the project area; therefore this resource will not be carried forward for analysis.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NP	Fuels/Fire Management	The project is not located within a fuels/fire management zone per the Vernal Field Office GIS data layers.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NI	Geology/Minerals/ Energy Production	No negative impacts to geology/minerals are expected to result from this action. Travel will be on existing roads and surface disturbance will be kept to a minimum. The powerline would be beneficial to energy production.	Elizabeth Gamber	7/15/2014
IP/NW: NI S&V: PI	Invasive Plants/ Noxious Weeds, Soils & Vegetation	IP/NW: The noxious weeds perennial pepperweed ( <i>Lepidium latifolium</i> ) and Russian knapweed ( <i>Centaurea repens</i> ) have been previously documented in the Project Area. Invasive plants including halogeton are also present in the Project Area. A weed management plan included with the site specific reclamation plan would be required. This would outline the applicant's plan for weed management, control and removal. If pesticides are to be used the applicant must obtain a PUP from the BLM Authorized Officer. If weed management plan is followed, then an increase in weeds in the Project Area is not anticipated as a result of the Proposed Action.  Soils and Vegetation: The Proposed Action would disturb approximately 1.76 acres of soils and remove the vegetation cover in the disturbed areas.	Christine Cimiluca	7/18/2014

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
NI	Lands/Access	<p>The proposed area is located within the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan area, which allows for oil and gas development with associated road and pipeline right-of-ways. Current land uses, within the area identified in the proposed action and adjacent lands, consist of existing oil and gas development, wildlife habitat, recreational use, and sheep and cattle ranching. No existing land uses would be changed or modified by the implementation of the proposed action.</p> <p>The existing right-of-way holders in the project area have been notified of the project.</p> <p>Master Title Plats have been checked for conflicts with Public Water Reserves. There are no PWR's in the project area.</p> <p>Applicant Committed Measures: Permits from Duchesne County will be obtained.</p>	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)	The proposed project is not located within an identified Land(s) with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) area, as per the Green River District – Vernal Field Office GIS Data Layers.	Margo Roberts	7/11/2014
PI	Livestock Grazing & Rangeland Health Standards	The proposed project would occur within the Antelope Powers allotment. Full-field energy development is already adversely affecting livestock grazing by the removal of available forage and dissecting the allotment with roads and pads.	Alec Bryan	7/14/2014
NP	Paleontology	No fossils were found in this area (W Miller rpt June 15, 2012)	Elizabeth Gamber	7/15/2014
NP	Plants: BLM Sensitive	No UT BLM Sensitive plants have been documented in the Project Area and there is low potential for these species to occur in the Project Area per BLM GIS data.	Christine Cimiluca	7/18/2014

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
NI	Plants:  Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Candidate	No known populations of threatened, endangered, or candidate plant species have been documented in or near the Project Area, as per BLM GIS review.  Potential habitat for the following Federally threatened, endangered, candidate or proposed plant species has been documented near the Project Area (per BLM GIS review):  Potential habitat for threatened species Pariette cactus ( <i>Sclerocactus brevispinus</i> ) and Uinta Basin hookless cactus ( <i>Sclerocactus wetlandicus</i> ) has been documented within 0.1 mile of the Project Area (USFWS/BLM 2013 Cactus polygon, per BLM GIS review). However, there is low potential for suitable habitat in the Project Area, and the nearest known documented plant is located approximately 0.5 mile from the Project Area, per BLM GIS review. The two cactus species are unlikely to be impacted by the Proposed Action.	Christine Cimiluca	7/18/2014
NP	Plants:  Wetland/Riparian	There are no wetland or riparian areas in the Project Area, per BLM GIS data review.	Christine Cimiluca	7/18/2014
NI	Recreation	No developed recreation sites or SRMAs are present. OHV/ATV is limited to existing roads and trails.	Alec Bryan	8/11/2014
NP	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.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NI	Visual Resources	Proposed project is located within VRM Class IV per VFO GIS data base, the action would be allowed under class IV objectives	Jason West Dan Gilfillan	7/11/2014
NI	Wastes  (hazardous/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.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014
NP	Water:  Floodplains	There are no documented floodplains in the Project Area per BLM GIS review and none are anticipated to be impacted as a result of the Proposed Action.	Christine Cimiluca	7/18/2014
NI	Water:  Groundwater Quality	This project will not have any negative impacts on groundwater since gw is likely present over 500 ft below the ground surface.	Elizabeth Gamber	7/15/2014

Determination	Resource/Issue	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
NI	Water: Hydrologic Conditions (stormwater)	The proposed action will take place in an area that is mainly dry ephemeral washes that all drain into the Lower Green River. This area sees periodic fluctuations in precipitation rates and exhibits functions typical of a High Desert Ecosystem. The project will not affect hydrologic conditions to a degree that would require detailed analysis because the proposal will only affect a small amount of soils where each of the individual power-line poles will be laid.	James Hereford II	7/22/2014
NP	Water: Surface Water Quality	No surface waters exist within the proposed project area. As stated above the area is mainly dry ephemeral washes that exhibit pulse events during short precipitation events that occur in the area.	James Hereford II	7/22/2014
NP	Water: Waters of the U.S.	This project will not affect waters of the U.S. since no surface waters managed under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act are present.	James Hereford II	7/22/2014
NP	Wild Horses and Burros	The proposed project area is not within an identified Wild Horses and Burros area per the Green River District, Vernal Field Office GIS Data Base.	Margo Roberts	7/11/2014
PI	Wildlife: Migratory Birds (including raptors)	The project is located within burrowing owl nesting habitat. The operator is required to apply raptor protection on all poles.	Brandon McDonald	7/14/2014
PI	Wildlife: Non-USFWS Designated	The BLM does not identify any crucial habitat for wildlife species; however, the project is located within an active white-tailed prairie dog colony.	Brandon McDonald	7/14/2014
NP	Wildlife: Threatened, Endangered, Proposed or Candidate	There are no threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species (including their associated habitats) within the project area.	Brandon McDonald	7/14/2014
NP	Woodlands/Forestry	The proposed project is not in an Woodland/Forestry area per Vernal Field Office RMP/ROD (2008) and the GIS layers database.	Margo Roberts	07/11/2014

FINAL REVIEW:			
Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator	Stephanie Howard	8/29/2014	
Authorized Officer		9-5-2014	