

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

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**Environmental Assessment  
PSC—Xcel Pipeline Amendment & Renewal**

**July 2014**

**PREPARING OFFICE**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Royal Gorge Field Office  
3028 E. Main Street  
Cañon City, CO 81212





# **Environmental Assessment**

## **PSC—Xcel Pipeline Amendment & Renewal**

**DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2014-0054 EA**

**Prepared by**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Royal Gorge Field Office**  
**Cañon City, CO**

**July 2014**

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Identifying Information: .....	1
1.1.1. Identifying Information: .....	1
1.2. Introduction and Background .....	1
1.3. Purpose and Need .....	1
1.4. Decision to be Made .....	1
1.5. Plan Conformance Review .....	2
1.6. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues .....	3
1.6.1. Scoping: .....	3
<b>2. Proposed Action and Alternatives .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. Description of the Proposed Action .....	7
2.2. Alternatives Analyzed in Detail .....	12
2.2.1. No Action Alternative .....	12
2.2.2. Alternatives .....	12
<b>3. Affected Environments and Effects .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1. Introduction .....	15
3.1.1. Interdisciplinary Team Review .....	15
3.2. Physical Resources .....	17
3.2.1. Geologic and Mineral Resources .....	17
3.3. Biological Resources .....	18
3.3.1. Invasive Plants* .....	18
3.3.2. Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species .....	19
3.3.3. Vegetation .....	20
3.3.4. Wildlife Terrestrial .....	21
3.3.5. Migratory Birds .....	22
3.4. Heritage Resources and Human Environment .....	23
3.4.1. Wastes, Hazardous or Solid .....	23
3.5. Land Resources .....	24
3.5.1. Lands and Realty .....	24
3.6. Cumulative Impact Summary .....	25
<b>4. Consultation and Coordination .....</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1. List of Preparers and Participants .....	29
<b>5. References .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>6. Finding of No Significant Impact .....</b>	<b>35</b>
6.1. Finding of No Significant Impact .....	37

6.1.1. Environmental Assessment .....	37
6.1.2. Rationale .....	37
6.1.3. Signatures: .....	38
<b>7. Decision Record .....</b>	<b>41</b>
7.1. Decision Record .....	43
7.1.1. Compliance .....	43
7.1.2. Selected Action .....	43
7.1.3. Compliance with NEPA: .....	44
7.1.4. Public Involvement: .....	44
7.1.5. Rationale: .....	44
7.1.6. Appeal or Protest Opportunities: .....	45
7.1.7. Authorizing Official: .....	45
<b>8. Attachment .....</b>	<b>47</b>

**List of Figures**

Figure 2.1. Vail Lateral Valve Set ..... 8  
Figure 2.2. Project Overview Map ..... 9  
Figure 2.3. Project Area Map ..... 10  
Figure 2.4. Detailed Project Map ..... 11  
Figure 8.1. Pipeline Plan of Development ..... 49

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

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## **1.1. Identifying Information:**

### **1.1.1. Identifying Information:**

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC-001533

PROJECT TITLE: PSC Xcel Pipeline ROW Amendment & Renewal

PLANNING UNIT: Royal Gorge Field Office

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 6PM T 8S, R 79W, sec. 16

APPLICANT: Public Service Company of Colorado — Xcel

## **1.2. Introduction and Background**

### BACKGROUND:

This EA has been prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to analyze a right-of-way (ROW) application from Public Service Company - Xcel Energy (PSC-Xcel) for the amendment and renewal of an existing natural gas pipeline in Lake County, CO, authorized under serial number COC-01533. The proposed action is located to the northeast of Leadville, CO, off of State Highway 91, just south of Fremont Pass. This pipeline serves many mountain communities, including the towns of Frisco, Vail, Leadville, Henderson Mine and ski resorts, and was originally granted in 1979.

The proposed action specifically is: 1) to renew the existing pipeline authorization COC-01533, on approx. 2.5 acres of public lands, 2) to amend COC-01533 to include approx. 0.6 acres of Chalk Mountain Road on public lands as access to the existing pipeline valve set, 3) to amend COC-01533 to include approx. 1.0 acre of additional public lands around the existing valve set for periodic inspection of the pipeline.

## **1.3. Purpose and Need**

The purpose of this BLM action is to process a ROW application submitted by PSC-Xcel requesting the renewal and amendment of an existing grant to include authorization of the access road and three Temporary Use Areas (TUAs). The need of the BLM is to address the direction of Section 28 of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended (30 U.S.C 185) and the RGFO Resource Management Plan (RMP) May 13, 1996 to respond to the request for rights of way on a case by case basis.

## **1.4. Decision to be Made**

The BLM will decide whether to approve the proposed PSC Xcel Pipeline ROW Amendment & Renewal project based on the analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA will analyze: the renewal of pipeline ROW grant COC-01533 on 2.5 acres of public land, the inclusion of approximately 1.0 additional acre of public lands as temporary use areas, and the inclusion of approximately 0.6 acres of Chalk Mountain Road, across public land, as the access road to the site. The BLM may choose to: a) accept the project as proposed, b) accept the

project with modifications/mitigation, c) accept an alternative to the proposed action, or d) not authorize the project at this time. The finding associated with this EA may not constitute the final approval for the proposed action.

## 1.5. Plan Conformance Review

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: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision

Date Approved: May 13, 1996

Decision Number/Page: C-115

Decision Language: Allow local purpose powerlines, pipelines, communication lines and sites, and other types of rights-of-way only when a clear need is demonstrated, and the beneficial environmental effects outweigh the costs.

In January 1997, the Colorado State Office of the BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands.

Standard 1: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes.

Standard 2: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

Standard 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential.

Standard 4: Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Standard 5: The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado.

Because standards exist for each of these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in Chapter 3 of this document.

## **1.6. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues**

### **1.6.1. Scoping:**

NEPA regulations (40 CFR §1500-1508) require that the BLM use a scoping process to identify potential significant issues in preparation for impact analysis. The principal goals of scoping are to allow public participation to identify issues, concerns, and potential impacts that require detailed analysis.

Persons/Public/Agencies Consulted: Scoping, by posting this project on the Royal Gorge Field Office NEPA website, was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues.

Issues Identified: No issues were identified during public scoping.

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# **Chapter 2. Proposed Action and Alternatives**

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## 2.1. Description of the Proposed Action

Gas transmission carriers are required by Federal law to inspect and maintain the transmission gas lines, and repair any anomalies. This inspection is done with a "smart tool" or "smart pig" which is an internal device which will provide information on anomalies such as corrosion, metal loss, and dents. The proposed action would renew the right of way for COC-01533, amend the grant to authorize a portion of Chalk Mountain Road as access, and amend the grant to include approximately 1.0 acre of additional public lands as Temporary Use Areas (TUAs) surrounding the existing valve set (Figure 2.1), allowing for inspection of the existing pipeline using a "smart pig" tool. The proposed action would utilize a total of approx. 4.1 acres of public lands. The temporary use areas will be used only during the initial valve set modification and whenever reassessments are occurring (approx. every 7 years). The initial valve set modification will include a one-time excavation of three 10' X 10' areas to modify the piping as it transitions from underground to above ground. All disturbed areas will be reseeded to BLM seed specifications. After the initial modifications to the valve set, the TUAs will be used for vehicle and equipment staging and short-term material storage while testing is performed. Refer to Figure 8.1, Pipeline Plan of Development, for further details.

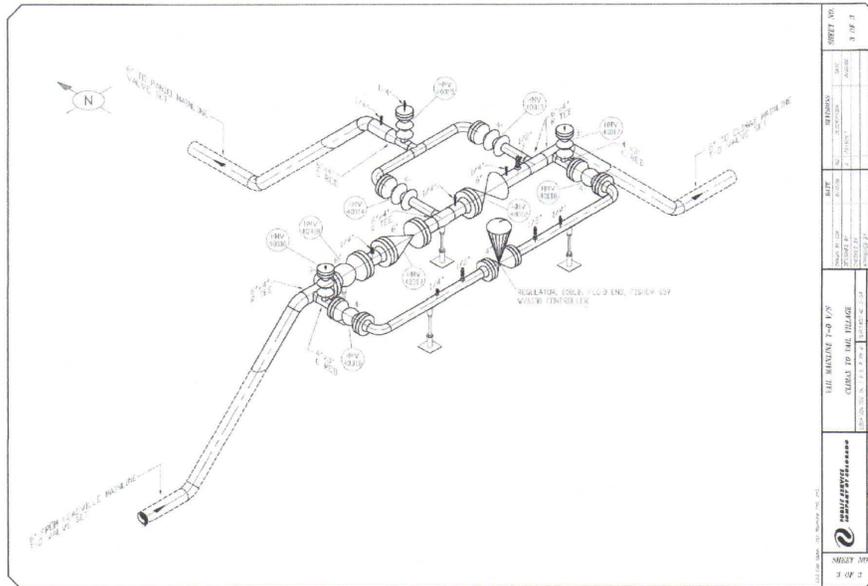


Project Name: Pre-Eng for 6" Climax to Vail Village Lateral

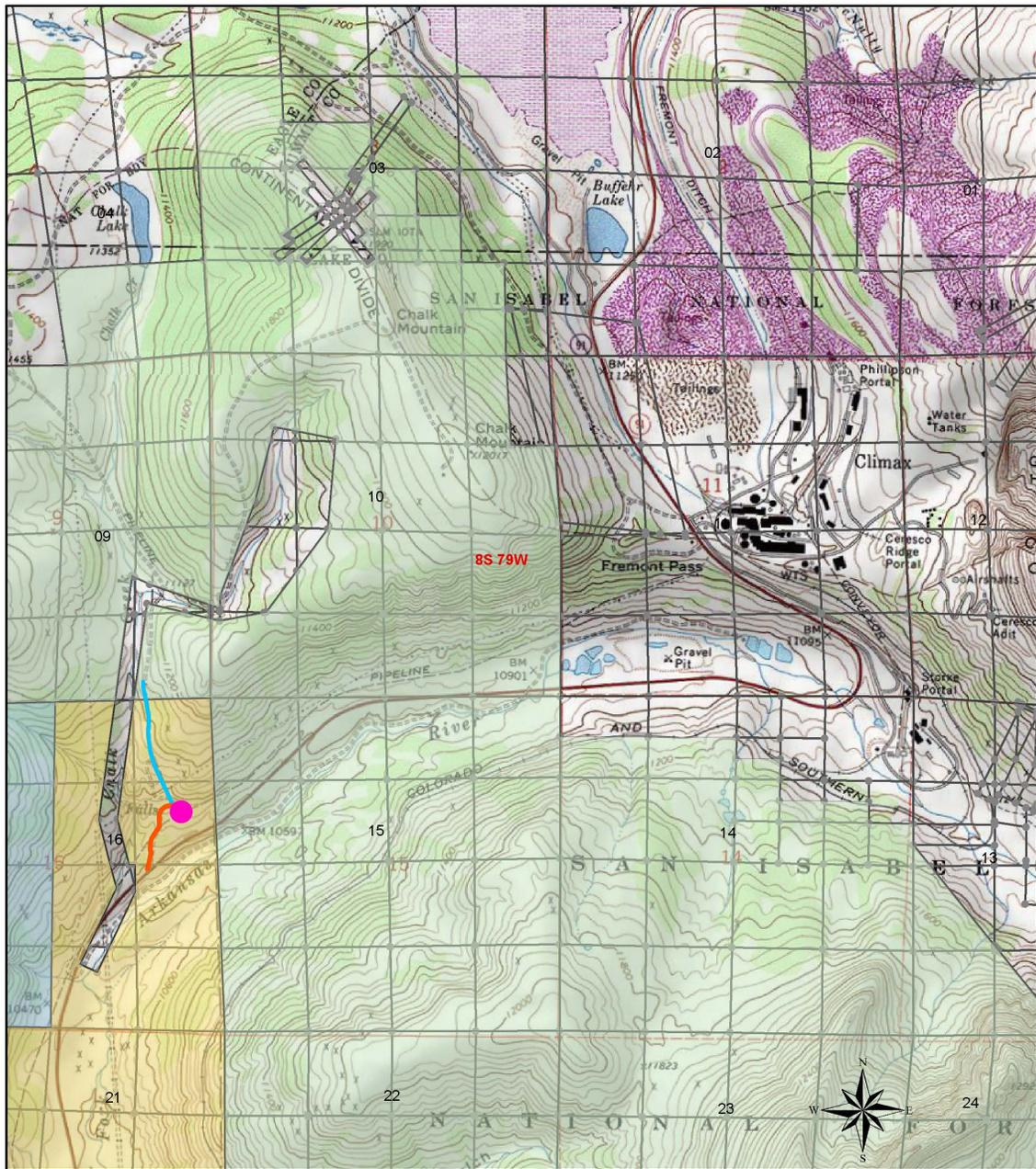
Capital WO# 11869218

### 5.1. Vail Lateral MNLNT-O V/S

- This launcher site will require temporary modifications. This will require the pipe to be excavated back to tie-in temporary piping.



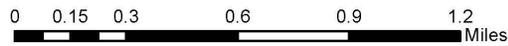
**Figure 2.1. Vail Lateral Valve Set**



### PSC Xcel Pipeline Amendment & Renewal Overview Map

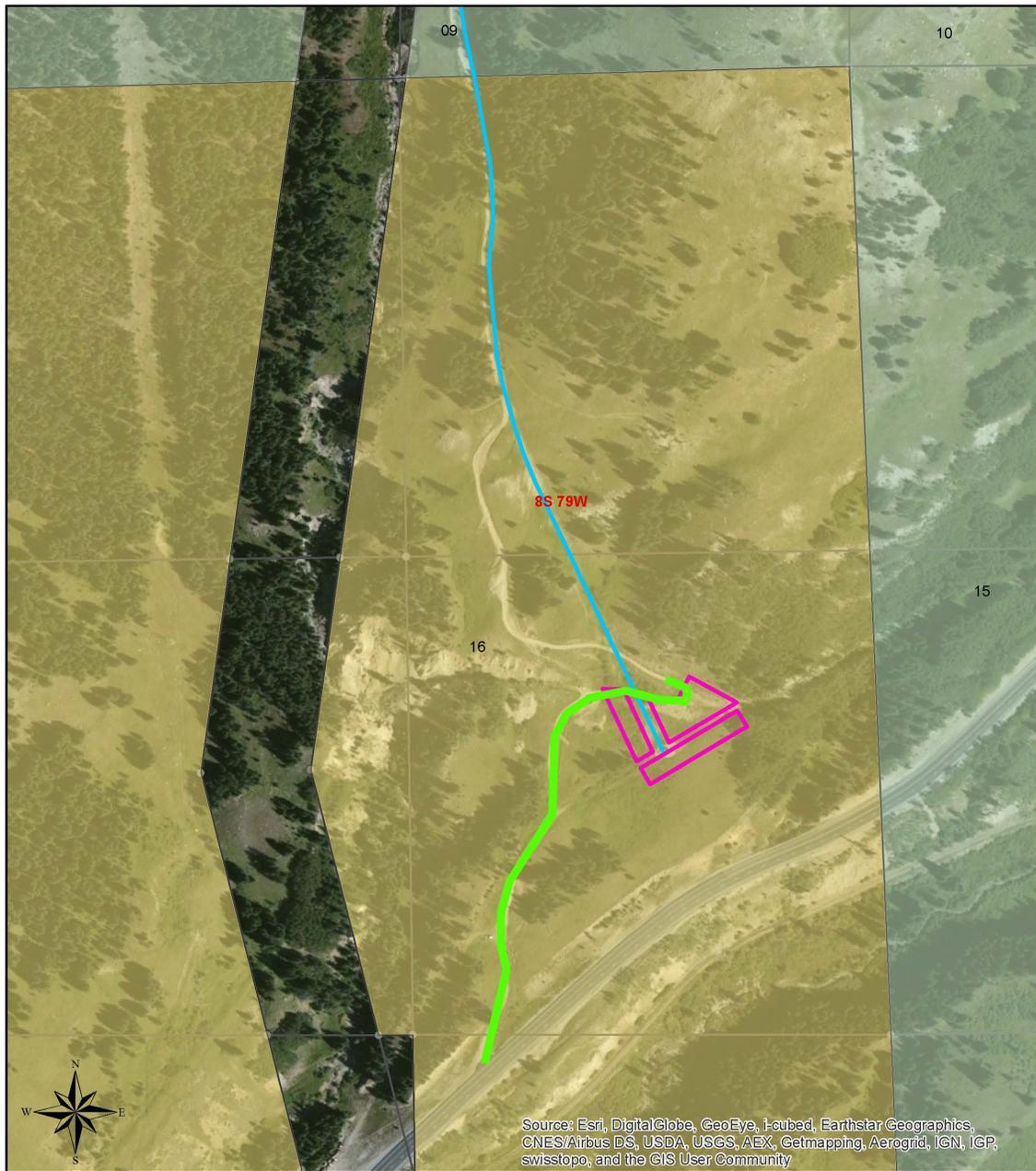
- Legend**
- Temp. Use Areas
  - Chalk Mtn Access Rd
  - Gas Pipeline

DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2014-0054 EA



**NOTE TO MAP USERS**  
 No warrantee is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the data layers shown on this map. The official land records of the data providers should be checked or current status on any specific tract of land.

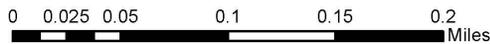
**Figure 2.2. Project Overview Map**



**PSC Xcel Pipeline Amendment & Renewal Project Map**

- Legend**
- Chalk Mtn. Access Rd.
  - Gas Pipeline
  - Temporary Use Areas

DOI-BLM-CO-F02-2014-0054 EA



**NOTE TO MAP USERS**  
 No warrantee is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the data layers shown on this map. The official land records of the data providers should be checked or current status on any specific tract of land.

**Figure 2.3. Project Area Map**

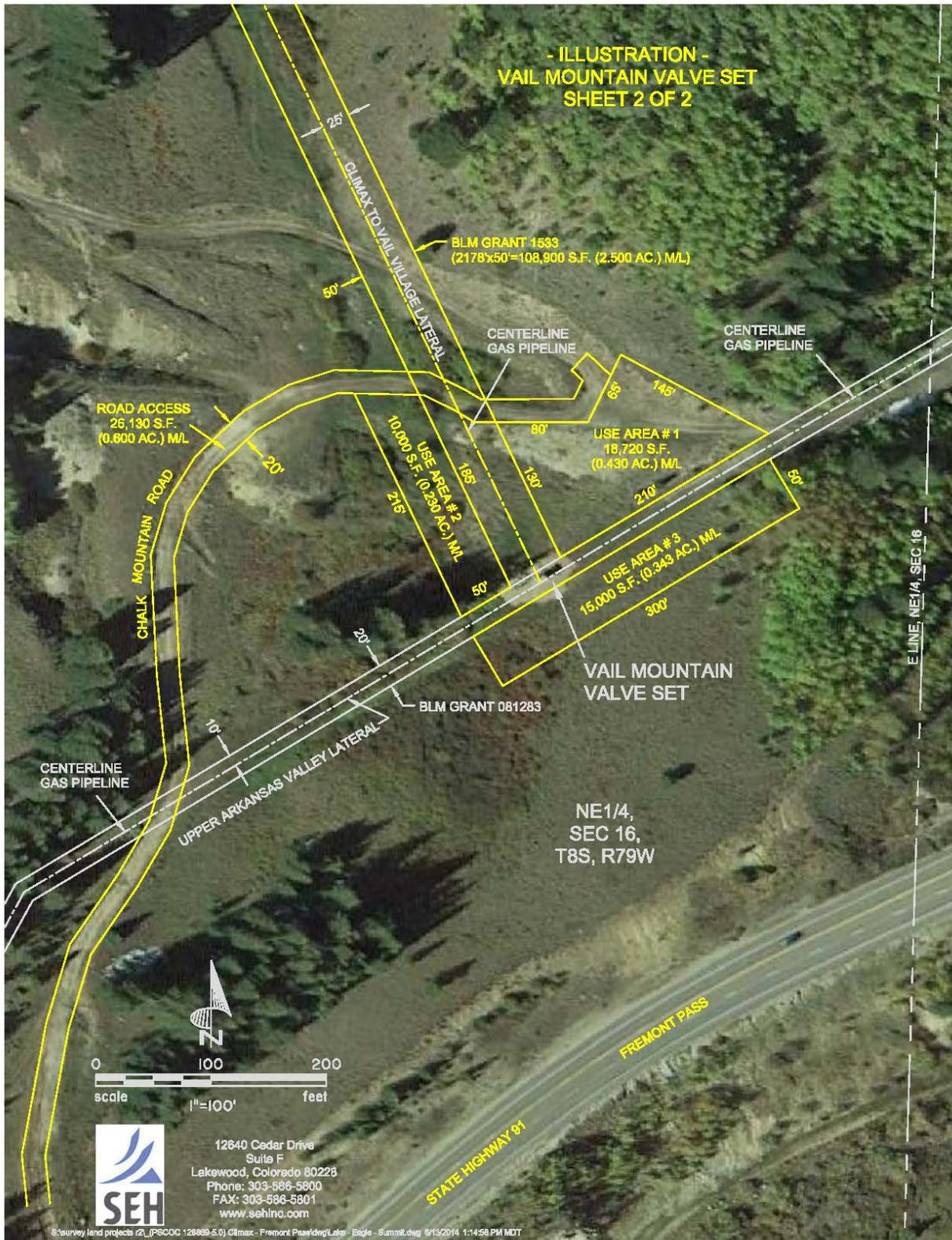


Figure 2.4. Detailed Project Map

## **2.2. Alternatives Analyzed in Detail**

### **2.2.1. No Action Alternative**

If no action is taken, the existing ROW would remain expired, a portion of Chalk Mountain Road would continue to be used as access to the site, and PSC-Xcel would be unable to inspect the pipeline.

### **2.2.2. Alternatives**

No other alternative were considered because this is an existing ROW with an existing access road. The proposed temporary use areas are as minimal as needed for the proposed action to be completed..

# **Chapter 3. Affected Environments and Effects**

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### 3.1. Introduction

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and presents comparative analyses of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the actions under the Proposed Action and other alternatives analyzed.

#### 3.1.1. Interdisciplinary Team Review

The following table is provided as a mechanism for resource staff review, to identify those resource values with issues or potential impacts from the proposed action and/or alternatives. Those resources identified in the table as impacted or potentially impacted will be brought forward for analysis.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Initial and date</b>	<b>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</b>
<b><u>Air Quality</u></b> Ty Webb, Chad Meister, Forrest Cook	TW, 07/28/2014	The proposed action will have no foreseen impacts to air quality.
<b><u>Geology/Minerals</u></b> Stephanie Carter, Melissa Smeins	MJS, 7/23/2014	See affected environment
<b><u>Soils</u></b> John Smeins	JS, 7/18/14	The Proposed Action essentially renews and authorizes the use of existing disturbances with the exception of adding 1 acre of temporary use. The temporary use is expected to result in very little impact to soils.
<b><u>Water Quality Surface and Ground</u></b> John Smeins	JS, 7/18/14	The Proposed Action essentially renews and authorizes the use of existing disturbances with the exception of adding 1 acre of temporary use. The temporary use is expected to result in very little to no impact to water quality.
<b><u>Invasive Plants</u></b> John Lamman	JL, 7/25/14	See affected environment
<b><u>T&amp;E and Sensitive Species</u></b> Matt Rustand	7/24/2014, MR	See affected environment
<b><u>Vegetation</u></b> Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman	JW, 7/24/2014	See affected environment.
<b><u>Wetlands and Riparian</u></b> Dave Gilbert	7/7/2014 DG	This action occurs in upland habitat and no wetlands are present as long as erosion protections measures are followed.
<b><u>Wildlife Aquatic</u></b> Dave Gilbert	7/7/2014 DG	This action occurs in upland habitat and no aquatic habitat is present as long as erosion protections measures are followed.
<b><u>Wildlife Terrestrial</u></b> Matt Rustand	7/24/2014, MR	See affected environment
<b><u>Migratory Birds</u></b> Matt Rustand	7/24/2014, MR	See affected environment

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Initial and date</b>	<b>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</b>
<b><u>Cultural Resources</u></b> Monica Weimer, Michael Troyer	MMW, 7/17/14	No historic properties were found in the area of potential effect [see report CR-RG-14-117 N]. Therefore, the proposed undertaking will have no effect on any historic properties (those eligible for the NRHP).
<b><u>Native American Religious Concerns</u></b> Monica Weimer, Michael Troyer	MMW, 7/17/14	No possible traditional cultural properties were located during the cultural resources inventory (see above). There is no other known evidence that suggests the project area holds special significance for Native Americans.
<b><u>Economics</u></b>	mw, 7/9/14	This action will not result in significant impacts to the socio economics of the region or individuals.
<b><u>Paleontology</u></b> Melissa Smeins, Stephanie Carter	MJS, 7/23/2014	Paleontological resources not likely to be present.
<b><u>Visual Resources</u></b> Kalem Lenard	KL, 7/21/2014	This action will not introduce any new disturbances or associated contrasts with the existing environment and would therefor not have any impacts to visual resources
<b><u>Environmental Justice</u></b> Martin Weimer	mw, 7/9/14	The proposed action affects areas that are rural in nature. The land adjacent to these parcels is mountainous terrain, as a result, there are no minority or low-income populations in or near the project area. As such, the proposal will not have a disproportionately high or adverse environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.
<b><u>Wastes Hazardous or Solid</u></b> Stephanie Carter	SSC, 7/23/2014	See affected environment
<b><u>Recreation</u></b> Kalem Lenard	KL, 7/21/2014	This project would not affect or alter any recreation settings or access to public lands therefore recreation resources would not be impacted.
<b><u>Farmlands Prime and Unique</u></b> Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman	JW, 7/23/2014	Not Present.
<b><u>Lands and Realty</u></b> Greg Valladares	GDV, 07/28/2014	See Affected Environment.
<b><u>Wilderness, WSAs, ACECs, Wild &amp; Scenic Rivers</u></b> Kalem Lenard	KL, 7/21/2014	Not present.
<b><u>Wilderness Characteristics</u></b> Kalem Lenard	KL, 7/21/2014	An updated inventory was conducted in 2013 and the project area was found to not possess wilderness characteristics. Therefore there would be no impacts to wilderness characteristics.
<b><u>Range Management</u></b> Jeff Williams, Chris Cloninger, John Lamman	JW, 7/24/2014	Not Present
<b><u>Forest Management</u></b> Ken Reed	KR, 07/22/2014	No vegetation cutting will be conducted without appropriate special forest products permits from BLM.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Initial and date</b>	<b>Comment or Reason for Dismissal from Analysis</b>
<b>Cadastral Survey</b> Jeff Covington	JC, 7/15/14	The project area was dependently resurveyed in 1972. The GCDB point reliability is +/- 10 ft. This action will not result in significant impacts to the survey markers in the project area.
<b>Noise</b> Martin Weimer	mw, 7/9/14	This action will not result in any significant impacts due to noise or result in any increased noise levels. Levels of noise will increase during construction but will be temporary in nature.
<b>Fire</b> Ty Webb	TW, 07/28/2014	The proposed action will have no foreseen impacts to fire management.
<b>Law Enforcement</b> Steve Cunningham	mw for SC, 7/9/14	NA

The affected resources brought forward for analysis include:

- Geologic and Mineral Resources
- Invasive Plants
- Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species
- Vegetation
- Wildlife Terrestrial
- Migratory Birds
- Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
- Lands and Realty

## 3.2. Physical Resources

### 3.2.1. Geologic and Mineral Resources

#### Affected Environment:

The proposed pipeline is located in Leadville, CO within 2 miles of the Climax molybdenum mine. While Leadville is well known for its past gold and silver production, Molybdenum is currently the primary producer. The proposed area has a high potential for producing molybdenum. The area also has potential for uranium and vanadium, rare earth minerals, and also limestone as construction material.

#### Environmental Effects

#### **Proposed Action:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

There are geologic and mineral resources present, however, this project will not have a direct adverse impact to the resource.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:**

The federal minerals in the proposed project area are open to mineral location, therefore requiring coordination between surface uses as applicable. If there are unpatented mining claims that are active in the proposed project location, any associated claim markers encountered during project implementation cannot be disturbed. However, as of July 23, 2014, there are no active claims in these areas.

**Cumulative Impacts:**

There are geologic and mineral resources present, however, this project will not have a direct adverse impact to the resource. Future mining claimants in the area would need to coordinate with the existing use in the area.

**No Action Alternative:****Direct and Indirect Impacts:**

Same as proposed action.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:**

None

**3.3. Biological Resources****3.3.1. Invasive Plants\***

**Affected Environment:** The project location is in a high montane meadow interspersed with lodgepole pine and spruce. Invasive plant species known to exist within ten miles of the project include Canada thistle, plumeless thistle, Dalmatian toadflax, Yellow toadflax, oxeye daisy, houndstongue, common tansy, and scentless chamomile.

**Environmental Effects****Proposed Action:**

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** Removal of top soil in the project area and subsequent stabilization and rehabilitation will create an environment that is susceptible to colonization by invasive plant species.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:** Equipment used to implement the proposed action should be washed prior to entering the project area to remove any plant materials, soil, or grease. Areas disturbed by project implementation will be monitored for the presence of weeds on the Colorado State Noxious Weed list. Identified noxious weeds will be treated by proponent. Monitoring is required for the life of the project and for three years following project completion and/or abandonment and elimination of identified Colorado State Noxious Weeds on the A and B species lists.

**Cumulative Impacts:** The small size of the project disturbance will be a negligible part of the total cumulative impacts in the area.

**No Action Alternative:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

\*Invasive plants are plants that are not part of (if exotic), or are a minor component of (if native), the original plant community or communities that have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the site if their future establishment and growth are not actively controlled by management interventions, or are classified as exotic or noxious plants under state or federal law. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants.

### 3.3.2. Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species

**Affected Environment:**

The project location is located along an existing route. Habitat directly adjacent to the route is montane meadow with an interspersed lodgepole pine and spruce. The primary species of concern in the area is the threatened lynx. The project area falls within the Tennessee Pass Lynx Analysis Unit. Lynx in this region are found primarily within the subalpine and upper montane forests zones typically between 8,000-12,000 ft elevation. Forage and denning habitats are most often spruce-fir, early seral lodgepole pine, white fir, aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and moist Douglas-fir with developing understory of spruce-fir and aspen in subalpine zone and timberline. Lynx require a mosaic of relatively undisturbed habitat because of their large home range and sensitivity to disturbance. Low population densities combined with the preference for wilderness areas make this species sensitive to human intrusion into its habitat although tolerance levels of individual lynx may vary.

**Environmental Effects****Proposed Action:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

The Canada lynx is a federally protected threatened species. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management have developed project decision screens that expedite the consultation process for projects of this nature. The above ground valve set associated with this pipeline has been in existence prior to the reintroduction of lynx. The project will create three separate areas of disturbance totaling approximately one acre in size. In the short-term, as construction crews are on scene, lynx are likely to avoid using the project area. However, the disturbance will be temporary and once disturbance areas are reclaimed, the setting will return to the current existing. The project decision screen determines that for right of way authorizations that disturb less than two acres of lynx habitat and “not likely to adversely affect” determination can be made. However, while the project area lies with a Lynx Analysis Unit, it does not contain primary or secondary lynx habitat, meaning no effect to lynx is expected as a result of the proposed action.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:**

None.

**Cumulative Impacts:**

The infrastructure is currently in place, therefore the project would not be creating additional impacts on the physical landscape.

**No Action Alternative:****Direct and Indirect Impacts:**

None.

**Protective/Mitigation Measures:**

None.

**Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species:**

The proposed action will have no affect on the public land health standards for threatened and endangered species.

### **3.3.3. Vegetation**

**Affected Environment:**

The analysis area takes place at an elevation of 10,500 feet and is within a subalpine ecosystem. Precipitation occurs primarily as snow, but wet thunderstorms are frequent during the short summer months. Average annual precipitation varies between 25 to 45 inches depending on the year. The average annual temperature for this area is approximately 30 degrees F. Winds are typical in the area year round and can be very strong at times. The growing season is very limited at this elevation and consists of 40 to 45 days, typically July 1 through August 15.

The area is characterized as an open mountain grassland park intermixed with spruce and fir. The dominant grasses are Thurber Fescue, Parry Oatgrass, Slender Wheatgrass, Idaho Fescue, Columbia Needlegrass and sedges. The forbs and shrubs found on the site include snowberry, penstemon, Lupin, Geranium, Cinquefoils, Meadow rue, Paintbrush and Mountain Big Sagebrush. Conifers on the site include Engelmann Spruce and Subalpine Fir.

**Environmental Effects****Proposed Action:**

**Direct and Indirect Impacts:** The analysis reauthorizes a right-of-way to administer gas pipeline activities. The project includes excavation of three 10 foot by 10 foot areas for addition of new valve sites and temporary parking areas. The Proposed Action includes rehabilitation criteria that will mitigate impacts associated with vegetation disturbance. The Proposed Action as described would not prevent the area from meeting land health standards for vegetative health.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: For re-seeding the area, BLM recommends the use of native grass species that are adapted to this site. In addition, the seed should be noxious weed free and meet certified seed quality.

Cumulative Impacts: None.

**No Action Alternative:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Under this alternative the right-of-way is not reauthorized and there is no impacts to vegetation.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

**Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities:**

The area is currently meeting standards for public land health.

### **3.3.4. Wildlife Terrestrial**

**Affected Environment:**

The project area is primarily montane meadow with spruce-fir and aspen forest adjacent. Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir are the dominant tree species. Engelmann spruce is found without subalpine fir at the lower elevations, but only on cool, sheltered sites. Lodgepole pine and aspen are often mixed in at lower and middle elevations, and limber pine and bristlecone pine are present at middle and higher elevations. Past logging activity for the mining and railroad industries removed many older trees. Most precipitation is in the form of snow, which remains on the ground well into spring. These forests produce large trees for the region, with mature specimens reaching 3 feet diameter and 120 feet tall. Understory vegetation can vary from sparse to quite dense perhaps the densest of the conifer forests in this region with blueberry, shrubby cinquefoil, and Colorado currant common components. Summer populations of deer and elk, snowshoe hare, and black bear, among others are species that commonly utilize this habitat type.

**Environmental Effects**

**Proposed Action:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

Although temporary and short-term, terrestrial wildlife would be displaced from the project site due to the use of heavy machinery. Removal of surface vegetation will result in a loss of habitat. Habitat adjacent to the disturbance footprint may not be utilized by wildlife due to its proximity to human activity. Once construction and reclamation are complete, the project area will return to a pre-project setting.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

None.

Cumulative Impacts:

The infrastructure is currently in place, therefore the project would not be creating additional impacts on the physical landscape.

**No Action Alternative:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

None.

**Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities:**

The proposed action will have no affect on the public land health standards for threatened and endangered species.

**3.3.5. Migratory Birds****Affected Environment:**

The project area is primarily montane meadow with spruce-fir and aspen forest adjacent. Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir are the dominant tree species. Engelmann spruce is found without subalpine fir at the lower elevations, but only on cool, sheltered sites. Lodgepole pine and aspen are often mixed in at lower and middle elevations, and limber pine and bristlecone pine are present at middle and higher elevations. Most precipitation is in the form of snow, which remains on the ground well into spring. These forests produce large trees for the region, with mature specimens reaching 3 ft diameter and 120 ft tall. Understory vegetation can vary from sparse to quite dense perhaps the densest of the conifer forests in this region with blueberry, shrubby cinquefoil, and Colorado currant common components. Spruce-fir forests in the Southern Rocky Mountains support fewer insects and insectivorous birds and fewer neotropical migrants. The avian community in this area has a comparatively large number of seed-eating birds, a reflection of the abundant cone crops. Birds commonly found in this forest type include the gray jay, mountain chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch, ruby-crowned kinglet, hermit thrush, pine grosbeak, and pine siskin. Three species are identified as high priority in this habitat: boreal owl, olive-sided flycatcher, and Hammond's flycatcher.

**Environmental Effects****Proposed Action:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

The project will create a three separate areas of disturbance totaling approximately one acre in size. Impacts to migratory birds will occur during initial construction activity. Removal of surface vegetation will result in a loss of habitat. Migratory birds will be displaced temporarily while the site is occupied by human generated activity. However, the disturbance will be short in duration and once reclamations is complete, the site will be returned to a pre-project setting. If the project were to occur during the primary migratory bird nesting season, "take" may occur as a result of destroyed or abandoned nests in the action area.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

To be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Memorandum of Understanding between BLM and USFWS required by Executive Order 13186, BLM must avoid actions, where possible, that result in a “take” of migratory birds. Pursuant to BLM Instruction Memorandum 2008-050, to reduce impacts to Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), no habitat disturbance (removal of vegetation such as timber, brush, or grass) is allowed during the periods of May 15 - July 15, the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds. The provision will not apply to completion activities in disturbed areas that were initiated prior to May 15 and continue into the 60-day period.

An exception to this timing limitation will be granted if nesting surveys conducted no more than one week prior to vegetation-disturbing activities indicate no nesting within 30 meters (100 feet) of the area to be disturbed. Surveys shall be conducted by a qualified breeding bird surveyor between sunrise and 10:00 a.m. under favorable conditions.

Cumulative Impacts:

The infrastructure is currently in place, therefore the project would not be creating additional impacts on the physical landscape.

**No Action Alternative:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures:

None.

## **3.4. Heritage Resources and Human Environment**

### **3.4.1. Wastes, Hazardous or Solid**

**Affected Environment:** It is assumed that conditions associated with the proposed project site, both surface and subsurface, are currently clean and that there is no known contamination. A determination will be made by the operator prior to initiating the project, if there is evidence that demonstrates otherwise (such as solid or hazardous substances have been previously used, stored, or disposed of at the project site). Nothing in the analysis or approval of this action by BLM authorizes or in any way permits a release or threat of a release of hazardous materials (as defined under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq., and its regulations) into the environment that will require a response action or result in the incurrence of response costs.

#### **Environmental Effects**

**Proposed Action:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts:

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Since this project involves some type of oil or fuel use, transfer and/or storage, an adequate spill kit is required to be onsite. The project proponent will be responsible for adhering to all applicable local, State and Federal regulations in the event of a spill, which includes following the proper notification procedures in BLM's Spill Contingency Plan.

No treatment or disposal of wastes on site is allowed.

Cumulative Impacts: None

**No Action Alternative:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Same as Proposed Action Alternative

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Same as Proposed Action Alternative

## 3.5. Land Resources

### 3.5.1. Lands and Realty

**Affected Environment:** There are numerous realty actions in the vicinity of the proposed action:

COC-0-009434 — Public Service Company of Colorado , Xcel — power facility

COD-0-052257 — Public Service Company of Colorado , Xcel — power transmission line

COD-0-011779 — Public Service Company of Colorado , Xcel — power facility

COC-0-081283 — Public Service Company of Colorado , Xcel — oil and gas pipeline

COC-072001 — David Carner — road ROW

COC-038665 — Qwest Corp. — telephone/telegraph line

COC-000688 — Qwest Corp. — telephone/telegraph line

COC-058220 — Qwest Corp. — telephone/telegraph line

**Environmental Effects**

**Proposed Action:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Temporary increase in traffic along the authorized Chalk Mountain Road during modification of the existing valve set and initial testing phase. Temporary increases in traffic during periodic testing/inspection of the pipeline (every 7 years).

Protective/Mitigation Measures: Proponent should work with other utilities in the area prior to excavation activities to ensure there is no impact to existing facilities.

Cumulative Impacts: None.

**No Action Alternative:**

Direct and Indirect Impacts: None.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None.

### **3.6. Cumulative Impact Summary**

The proposed action is predominantly the renewal of existing pipeline facilities and authorization of an existing road within the area, with an additional area of disturbance of approximately 1.0 acre of public land. There is an access road right-of-way along the existing Chalk Mountain Road. The proposed action is in an area with historic mining activity and utility corridors. There are numerous realty authorizations for utility corridors within the project area, that are not expected to be impacted by the action. Cumulatively, the proposed action will have little impact on the area.

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# **Chapter 4. Consultation and Coordination**

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## **4.1. List of Preparers and Participants**

Please see Interdisciplinary Team Review list for BLM Participants.

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# Chapter 5. References

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Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 1993. Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. Royal Gorge Field Office. Cañon City, Colorado.

Bureau of Land Management. 1996. Royal Gorge Resource Area Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision. Cañon City District. Cañon City, Colorado.

Bureau of Land Management. 2008. H-1790-1 National Environmental Policy Handbook. Washington, D.C.

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# **Chapter 6. Finding of No Significant Impact**

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## 6.1. Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-CO-200-2014-0054 EA

### 6.1.1. Environmental Assessment

Based on review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects from any alternative assessed or evaluated meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined by 43 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts (per Environmental Assessment ), 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.

### 6.1.2. Rationale

**Context:** The proposed action is located in Lake County, CO, to the northeast of Leadville, CO, south of Fremont pass, north of State Highway 91 along the Chalk Mountain Road. The project location is in a high montane meadow interspersed with lodgepole pine and spruce. There are numerous rights-of-way for utility corridors in the area. The grant (COC-001533) was originally issued in 1979 and expired in July, 2009. Public Service Company of Colorado — Xcel applied for renewal in December, 2009, and amended their application to include the access road and 1.0 additional acre of public lands as temporary use areas in 2014. The proposed action would renew an existing natural gas pipeline that serves many mountain communities, including the towns of Frisco, Vail, Leadville, Henderson Mine and ski resorts. The proposed action would authorize approximately 1.0 additional acre of public land around the existing pipeline valve set, for the purpose of modifying the valve set to be inspected via an internal “smart tool” which will provide information on anomalies such as corrosion, metal loss and dents.

**Intensity:**

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the PSC — Xcel Pipeline Amendment and Renewal Project decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

**Impacts that may be beneficial and adverse:** The impacts from the Proposed Action to geologic and mineral resources, invasive plants, vegetation, wildlife, migratory birds, and hazardous wastes are considered minor or nonexistent. Impacts to lands and realty actions are considered minor and temporary. There were no impacts identified to cultural resources, threatened and endangered or sensitive species. Positive impacts would be the continued supply of natural gas to the above mentioned mountain communities.

**Public health and safety:** The proposed action will allow for the periodic inspection of the natural gas pipeline, which will identify any anomalies in the line requiring repair.

**Unique characteristics of the geographic area:** None present.

**Degree to which effects are likely to be highly controversial:** There is no disagreement among reviewers or ID team members over the effects of the action on a resource values.

**Degree to which effects are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:** There are no unique or unknown risks from the Proposed Action to the human environment in the project area.

**Consideration of whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts:** This decision is like one of many that have previously been made and will continue to be made by BLM responsible officials regarding rights-of-way on public lands. The decision is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

**Consideration of whether the action is related to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts:** The proposed action is predominantly the renewal of existing pipeline facilities and authorization of an existing road within the area, with an additional area of disturbance of approximately 1.0 acre of public land. There is an access road right-of-way along the existing Chalk Mountain Road. The proposed action is in an area with historic mining activity and utility corridors. There are numerous realty authorizations for utility corridors within the project area, that are not expected to be impacted by the action. Cumulatively, the proposed action will have little impact on the area.

**Scientific, cultural or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:** No historic properties were found in the area of potential effect [see report CR-RG-14-117 N]. Therefore, the proposed undertaking will have no effect on any historic properties (those eligible for the NRHP).

**Threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat:** The Canada lynx is a federally protected threatened species. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management have developed project decision screens that expedite the consultation process for projects of this nature. The above ground valve set associated with this pipeline has been in existence prior to the reintroduction of lynx. The project will create three separate areas of disturbance totaling approximately one acre in size. In the short-term, as construction crews are on scene, lynx are likely to avoid using the project area. However, the disturbance will be temporary and once disturbance areas are reclaimed, the setting will return to the current existing. The project decision screen determines that for right of way authorizations that disturb less than two acres of lynx habitat and “not likely to adversely affect” determination can be made. However, while the project area lies with a Lynx Analysis Unit, it does not contain primary or secondary lynx habitat, meaning no effect to lynx is expected as a result of the proposed action.

**Any effects that threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:** The proposed action conforms with the provisions of NEPA (U.S.C. 4321-4346) and FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) and is compliant with the Clean Water Act and The Clean Air Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Endangered Species Act.

### 6.1.3. Signatures:

**NAME OF PREPARER:** Greg Valladares

*Chapter 6 Finding of No Significant Impact  
Signatures:*

*July 2014*

**SUPERVISORY REVIEW:** Jay Raiford

**NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** /s/ Martin Weimer

**DATE:** 8/4/14

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:**

**Keith E. Berger, Field Manager**

**DATE SIGNED:**

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# **Chapter 7. Decision Record**

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## 7.1. Decision Record

### PSC Xcel Pipeline Amendment & Renewal

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
ROYAL GORGE FIELD OFFICE  
DECISION RECORD  
DOI-BLM-CO-200-2014-0054-EA

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#### 7.1.1. Compliance

The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision and conforms with the provisions of NEPA (U.S.C. 4321-4346) and FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) and is compliant with the Clean Water Act and The Clean Air Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Endangered Species Act.

#### 7.1.2. Selected Action

**DECISION:** It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in the attached EA, DOI-BLM-CO-200-2014-0054-EA. The proposed action will renew the right of way for COC-001533, amend the grant to authorize a portion of Chalk Mountain Road as access, and amend the grant to include approximately 1.0 acre of additional public lands as Temporary Use Areas (TUAs) surrounding the existing valve set, allowing for inspection of the existing pipeline using a “smart pig” tool. The proposed action would utilize a total of approx. 4.1 acres of public lands. The temporary use areas will be used only during the initial valve set modification and whenever reassessments are occurring (approx. every 7 years). The initial valve set modification will include a one-time excavation of three 10’ X 10’ areas to modify the piping as it transitions from underground to above ground. All disturbed areas will be reseeded to BLM seed specifications. After the initial modifications to the valve set, the TUAs will be used for vehicle and equipment staging and short-term material storage while testing is performed. This decision is contingent on meeting all mitigation measures and monitoring requirements listed below.

#### MITIGATION MEASURES\MONITORING:

- The holder shall construct, operate, and maintain the facilities, improvements, and structures within this right-of-way in strict conformity with the plan of development which will be approved as of the signing of this Decision Record. Any relocation, additional construction, or use that is not in accord with the approved plan of development, shall not be initiated without the prior written approval of the authorized officer.
- The holder shall revegetate all disturbed areas using a seed mixture subject to approval by the BLM authorized officer. BLM recommends the use of native grass species that are adapted to this site. The area is characterized as an open mountain grassland park where the dominant grasses are Thurber Fescue, Parry Oatgrass, Slender Wheatgrass, Idaho Fescue, Columbia Needlegass and sedges. The forbs and shrubs found on the site include snowberry, penstemon, Lupin, Geranium, Cinquefoils, Meadow rue, Paintbrush and Mountain Big Sagebrush. The seed should be noxious weed free and meet certified seed quality.

- Any cutting or removal of vegetation/timber will require written approval from the authorized officer and the purchase the appropriate BLM special forest products permit.
- The holder shall be responsible for weed control on disturbed areas within the limits of the right-of-way. The holder is responsible for consultation with the authorized officer and/or local authorities for acceptable weed control methods (within limits imposed in the grant stipulations).
- In order to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and BLM policy, BLM must avoid actions, where possible, that result in a “take” of migratory birds. Generally this requires a seasonal restriction that requires vegetation disturbance be avoided from May 15 thru July 15. This is the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds. Any action that results in a measurable impact to species populations will not be allowed.
- Construction sites shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times; waste materials at those sites shall be disposed of promptly at an appropriate waste disposal site. "Waste" means all discarded matter including, but not limited to, human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, oil drums, petroleum products, ashes, and equipment.
- If during any phase of the construction, operation, or termination of the pipeline or related facilities any oil or other pollutant should be discharged from the pipeline system, or from containers or vehicles impacting Federal lands, the control and total removal, disposal, and cleanup of such oil or other pollutant, wherever found, shall be the responsibility of the holder, regardless of fault. Upon failure of holder to control, cleanup, or dispose of such discharge on or affecting Federal lands, or to repair all damages to Federal lands resulting therefrom, the authorized officer may take such measures as he deems necessary to control and cleanup the discharge and restore the area, including, where appropriate, the aquatic environment and fish and wildlife habitats, at the full expense of the holder. Such action by the authorized officer shall not relieve the holder of any liability or responsibility

### **7.1.3. Compliance with NEPA:**

This office completed an Environmental Assessment and reached a Finding of No Significant Impact indicating that the action has been analyzed in the EA and the selected alternative will have no significant effect therefore an EIS will not be prepared.

### **7.1.4. Public Involvement:**

Scoping, by posting this project on the Royal Gorge Field Office NEPA website, was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues. No comments were received.

### **7.1.5. Rationale:**

This action will renew Public Service Company of Colorado — Xcel’s right-of-way and authorize additional use immediately around their valve assembly, allowing PSC-Xcel to inspect the existing pipeline and continue to provide natural gas service to the public.

### **7.1.6. Appeal or Protest Opportunities:**

This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer, and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay (43 CFR 2801.10(b)). Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at the Royal Gorge Field Office, 3028 East Main St., Cañon City, CO 81212. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

### **7.1.7. Authorizing Official:**

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Keith E. Berger  
Royal Gorge Field Office Manager

Date

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# **Chapter 8. Attachment**

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COC-01533

**Right of Way & Permits**

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 Facsimile: 303.935.9002

**Public Service Company**  
**Pipeline Plan of Development COC 1533**

Overview- Public Service Company (PSCO) has existing pipeline (6" Climax to Vail Village Take-Off Lateral) and above ground valve set in BLM Section 16 T8S R79 West, 6th PM, BLM Grant COC-1533 (expired).

This pipeline and valve set will remain in operation, however to comply with the Code of Federal regulations for gas transmission pipelines, PSCO will modify the above ground valve set to facilitate the pipeline assessment. The assessment will be repeated at least every 7 years.

Purpose and Need for the Facility/Structure

- a. Existing buried 6"/8" gas lines and above grade valve set. Valve set will be modified to allow for two temporary receivers to be used in the assessment process. Temporary use areas are used only during the initial valve set modification, and then again whenever re-assessments are performed. These areas will be primarily used for equipment staging and personnel parking.
- b. Use is transmission of natural gas to Colorado mountain communities.
- c. Capacity is 6"/8" gas line and use is continuous.
- d. Pipeline is underground.
- e. Origin is Williams Fork Compressor Station in Grand County and termination is Vail, CO following existing easement routes.
- f. Major users are towns of Frisco, Leadville, Vail, Henderson Mine, and ski resorts.
- g. Pipeline is transmission, and distribution is fed from the transmission line.
- h. These pipelines are in an existing ROW under expired Grant COC-1533, and pipelines and valve set currently exist and function in the current alignment.

Right of Way Location

- a. NE ¼ Sec 16, T8S, R79W, 6th PM Colorado, per attached exhibit.
- b. Illustration map of pipeline and temporary use areas; and access road; Illustration of valve set (attached).
  1. Pipeline and valve set- 2178' x 50' = 108,900 SF= 2.50 Acres+/-
  2. Temporary Use Area #1 18,721 SF, used infrequently for pipeline assessment at least every 7 years.
  3. Temporary Use Area #2 10,000 SF, used infrequently for pipeline assessment at least every 7 years
  4. Temporary Use Area #3 15,000 SF, used infrequently for pipeline assessment at least every 7 years
  5. Access Road – Chalk Mountain Road 26,130 SF used to access valveset CO



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Facility Design Factors

- a. Existing pipelines are 6"/8" coated steel buried minimum of 48". Valve sets and fittings 6"/8" coated steel, and safety considerations (i.e. steel bollards).
- b. No other permanent structures should be within 50' of the above grade valve sets.
- c. See above for right of way width and temporary use areas.

Additional Components

- a. Existing components: 6"/8" pipeline from Climax to Vail Village Take-Off Lateral and above grade valve sets.
- b. Future components: add temporary receivers above grade to facilitate pipeline assessment. Temporary receivers will be removed after each assessment period.
- c. n/a
- d. Permanent access is off Colorado 91, to Chalk Mountain Road and the valve set adjoins Chalk Mountain Road.
- e. n/a
- f. No permanent equipment storage; temporary use areas only required for the staging of equipment and personnel vehicles during each assessment period, usually less than 2 weeks.

Government Agencies Involved- noneConstruction of the Facilities

- a. Modification of the valve set will include three (3) 10' x 10' excavation areas, one time to modify the piping as it transitions from underground to above ground. The valve set fittings will be modified to allow the installation of temporary receivers. Excavator will be delivered on a lowboy trailer, and pre-tested pipe and fittings will be delivered on a flatbed trailer.
- b. Workforce- during the initial assessment and re-assessments. The workforce during these periods will be 7-10 personnel and vehicles.
- c. During modification of the valve set, the ROW and the temporary use areas will be fenced with orange construction fencing and signage "utility work ahead". After modification, fencing will be removed.
- d. No additional clearing or grading is anticipated for the modifications.
- e. Construction Process-
  1. Valves will be shut to stop flow of gas at valve set during construction. Each of the 10' x 10' areas will be excavated with an excavator. New piggable fittings will be installed, and the area will be backfilled and compacted after modifications are complete.



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2. Valve set fittings will be cut out and new fittings welded in place to allow the addition of temporary receivers.
  3. Safety considerations (i.e. steel bollards) will be installed within the ROW around the valve set for safety and protection.
  4. Above grade installations will be painted "Van Dyke brown".
  5. All areas used for temporary staging, parking will be scarified and re-seeded.
- f. Access will be from CO 91, to Chalk Mountain Road, and with no impedence or closure to public access.
  - g. No helicopters used.
  - h. The turnaround pads will be within the requested Temporary Use Areas.
  - i. Access to turnaround pads is directly off Chalk Mountain Road.
  - j. n/a
  - k. Safety requirements- All personnel on-site will have hardhats and safety vests and will have completed safety certification. Vehicles will be equipped with fire extinguishers and shovels.
  - l. Any wastes generated during the modification of the valve set and piping, as well as during the assessment period will be captured and removed off site to an approved disposal facility.

Resource Values and Environmental Concerns

- a. Area was already disturbed for initial gas line installation in 1965, no other impacts are anticipated.
- b. No anticipated conflicts with resources of public health and safety. An archeological and paleontological field survey and report will be completed prior to start of modifications.

Stabilization and Rehabilitation

- a. Prior to start of excavations, topsoil will be stripped and separated for replacement post-excavation. Work area will be stabilized in accordance with best management practices using silt fence, rock socks, hay bales, or "big reds" to mitigate any on site drainage.
- b. No trees or shrubs are anticipated to be removed.
- c. Re-seeding will be done to seed specifications from BLM.
- d. Fertilizer- used if specified by BLM.
- e. No limitations to access to the right of way are anticipated.
- f. No roads will be built for access.



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Operation and Maintenance

- a. Safety- all PSCO operations personnel carry all necessary Operator Qualifications (OQs).
- b. Regular operations and maintenance will not generate any waste or toxic substances.
- c. Inspection of the valve set is done monthly by PSCO operations personnel and involves one vehicle and one staff person checking the valves for safety.
- d. Work schedule of the regular operations and maintenance will be M-F 7am-4 pm
- e. Fire Control- the gas transmission pipelines have a series of valves upstream and downstream for isolation in case of forest fire or other system concerns.
- f. Long term access is directly off Chalk Mountain Road, and the pipeline ROW can be walked by inspection personnel or accessed by ATV.
- g. Signs- PSCO gas marker signs will be placed every 1000' along the pipeline ROW, and the valve set will be marked with the name of the valve set and emergency contact numbers.
- h. Regular inspections will be completed by ground transportation.

Termination and Restoration

- a. If the gas transmission pipelines are ever abandoned, the above ground facilities will be cut off and removed, and the below grade pipes will be filled with nitrogen, sealed and abandoned in place.
- b. The temporary work areas for the modification will be raked and topsoil replaced and re-seeded per BLM seeding requirements.
- c. Silt fences, and other erosion control materials will be left in place until after the disturbed areas have been stabilized and re-vegetated, and will then be removed.