

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

Categorical Exclusion

**DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2014-0250-CX
Paleontology Excavation in Coyote Basin, UT**

PREPARING OFFICE

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



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Prepared by
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Chapter 1. Categorical Exclusion

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A. Background

DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2014-0250-CX

Paleo excavation in Coyote Basin, UT

BLM Office: Vernal Field Office, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, UT

Lease/Serial/Case File No.:

Proposed Action Title/Type: Excavation of paleontology fossils in Coyote Basin

Location of Proposed Action: Two locations: T8S R18E, SE/4 SW/4 Sec 28 and T9S R21E NE/4 SW/4 of Sec 30

Description of Proposed Action: Steve Sroka with the Utah Field House of Natural History State Park Museum in Vernal, UT is applying for a permit to excavate some fossils found by SWCA. SWCA found some scientifically important fossils near but outside the paleontology survey areas for two different well pads. Both areas have been mapped as the Wagonhound Member of the Uinta Formation (Uinta B). The two sites are located on BLM land and both are near existing roads. Less than three square meters will be disturbed at each site.

At the first location, the fossils are located between the road and the bluff as one approaches the well pad from the west. Continued heavy rains pose a threat to the specimens, as they are exposed on flats where water continues to run over them.

The second site is located in the Anadarko field associated with the NBU 921-30 well pad. This site is near the flat area southeast of the well pad.

Preparation and curation will need to be completed on collected blocks in the new Preparation lab at the Utah Field House. It is paramount that excavation be allowed to recover material known to be still in the ground, as the material could be ruined given its geographic position.

Hand tools or small mechanical equipment (generator with hammer drill/jackhammer) can accomplish removal of overburden. Heavy equipment such as a backhoe is not expected to be needed to reach the potential specimens. Standard paleontological techniques will be used in the collection of the material. The proposed work sequence is outlined below and is similar to what has been done under other BLM permits granted to the applicant.

Proposed Work Sequence:

1. Coordination with the Utah Field House and Bureau of Land Management personnel as well as appropriate volunteers before excavation of the quarry begins.
2. Preliminary work meeting; possibly on site.
3. Excavation and removal of specimens, particularly for those already exposed.
4. Use hand tools or small power tools to remove overburden and surrounding matrix.
5. Provide annual report.

6. Back filling Quarry areas and recontouring the hill will be done on completion of the project, which is undeterminate at this time.
7. Final report on fossils collected at completion of the project.
8. Copies of any professional publications regarding this site and its fossils will be supplied to all organizational participants.

Equipment to be used:

1. Small portable generator-Honda EU200i (AC 2000 Watts, 120V max output).
2. GPS.
3. Hand tools such as shovels, picks, brooms, rakes, ice picks, brushes.
4. Electric small hand tools that connect to the generator (DeWalt 1" hammer drills).
5. Plaster, Butvar glue, burlap, screens.
6. Plastic tarps (brown or green) to cover quarry area.
7. Photographic equipment for documentation of dig.

Danger is inherent in the process when rock quarry work is going on, therefore the following safety precautions are planned:

1. Supervisor, Steven Sroka, designated on the BLM permit will be on-site during all work.
2. The excavation site will be inspected daily for safety before crew begins work.
3. All personnel on site will be given safety instructions regarding the process of quarrying.
4. All personnel will wear appropriate clothing and safety gear (e.g., hats, appropriate pants, shoes, ear plugs, safety glasses).
5. Spoil will be dumped in a safe manner.
6. Equipment and personnel will access and egress along a designated route, unless another route is delineated.
7. First aid equipment will be available.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: BLM Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: October 2008

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

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

1. Locate, evaluate, and manage paleontological resources, and protect them where appropriate.
2. Facilitate suitable scientific, educational, and recreational uses of fossils.
3. Ensure that significant fossils are not inadvertently damaged, destroyed, or removed from public ownership as a result of surface disturbance or land exchanges.
4. Foster public awareness and appreciation of the area's paleontological heritage.

PAL-3 (Page 106) of the RMP states " Fossils collected under a permit remain the property of the federal government and must be placed in a suitable repository (such as a museum or university) identified at the time of permit issuance."

PAL-6 (Page 106) of the RMP states " Where scientifically significant fossils are threatened by natural hazards or unauthorized collection, the BLM will work with permittees and other partners to salvage specimens and reduce future threats to resources at risk"

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, 1.6 Nondestructive data collection.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because the project sites are small (less than 3 square meters each) and there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

I considered the proposed action, and all the extraordinary circumstances as documented in the attached worksheet.

D. Approval and Contact Information


Jerry Kenczka
Assistant Vernal Field Office Manager, Lands and Minerals

OCT 01 2014

Date

**Extraordinary Circumstances
Documentation
Paleontology Excavation in Coyote Basin, UT
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2014-0250-CX**

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Chapter 1. Categorical Exclusion Rationale

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CX Number:	DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2014-0250-CX
Date:	9/2/2014
Lease/Case File/ Serial Number:	
Regulatory Authority (CFR or Law):	

Section 1.1 Impacts on Public Health and Safety

1. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on public health and safety?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist

Rationale: The proposed action does not have significant impacts on public health and safety

Section 1.2 Impacts on Natural Resources or Unique Geographic Characteristics

2. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness or wilderness study areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist — Alec Bryan., recreation

Rationale: This action will not have a significant impact on sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands or floodplains.

There are no recreation concerns within the two areas of the proposed action: No Natural areas, WSR, etc.

Section 1.3 Level of Controversy

3. Does the proposed action have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist

Rationale: The proposed action does not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

Section 1.4 Highly Uncertain or Unique or Unknown Environmental Risks

4. Does the proposed action have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist

Rationale: The proposed action does not have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

Section 1.5 Precedent Setting

5. Does the proposed action establish a precedent for future action, or represent a decision in principle about future actions, with potentially significant environmental effects?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist

Rationale: The proposed action does not establish a precedent for future action, or represent a decision in principle about future actions, with potentially significant environmental effects.

Section 1.6 Cumulatively Significant Effects

6. Does the proposed action have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist

Rationale: The proposed action does not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects.

Section 1.7 Impacts on Cultural Properties

7. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the Bureau or office?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Erin Goslin, Archaeologist

Rationale: Two archaeological surveys were conducted in the project area (U-04–MQ-0510 and U-07–MQ-1437) and there were no eligible archaeological sites identified.

Section 1.8 Impacts on Federally Listed Species or Critical Habitat

8. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Plants: Christine Cimiluca, Acting Botanist Wildlife: Brandon McDonald

Rationale: Both sites are within the 2013 USFWS potential habitat polygon for *Sclerocactus* *ssp.* Known points have been documented at the first site, which is also in Core Conservation Area (CCA) Level 1 for the cactus species. However, these points are located on the opposite side of the access road from the project site. If a qualified biological monitor is present during the excavation, and other mitigation measures (included as conditions of approval) are followed, then the proposed project would not have significant impacts on TECP plant species.

In review of district files and a site visit there are no threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate fish or wildlife species (including their designated habitats) within the project area.

Section 1.9 Compliance With Laws

9. Does the proposed action violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist

Rationale: The proposed action does not violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Section 1.10 Environmental Justice

10. Does the proposed action have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Elizabeth Gamber, geologist

Rationale: The proposed action does not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.

Section 1.11 Indian Sacred Sites

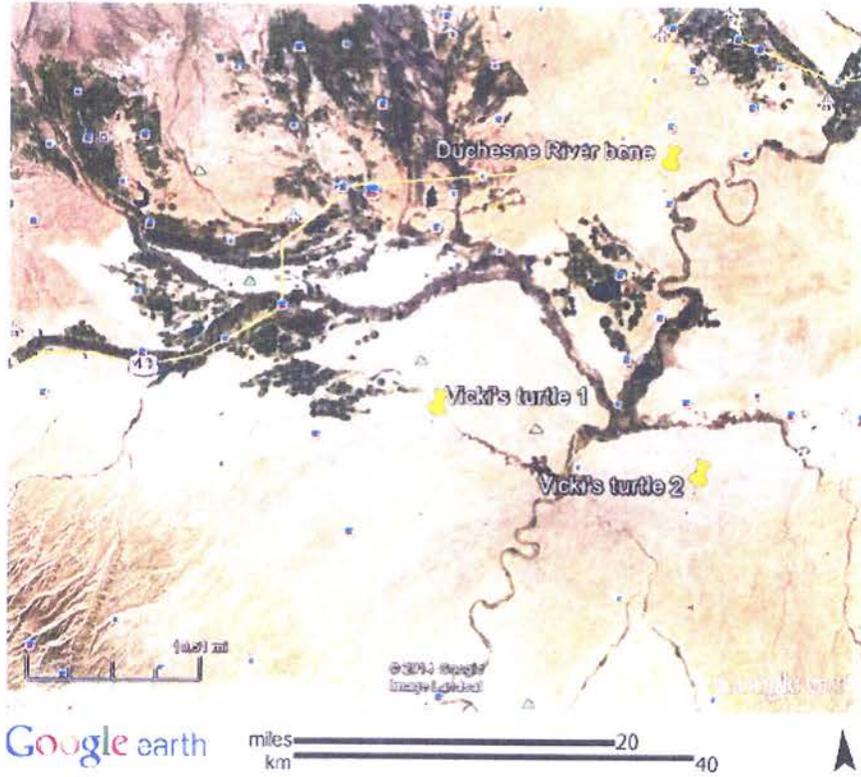
11. Does the proposed action limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners, or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Erin Goslin, Archaeologist

Rationale: There are no identified Indian sacred sites in the project area and access will not be hindered for any unidentified sacred sites.

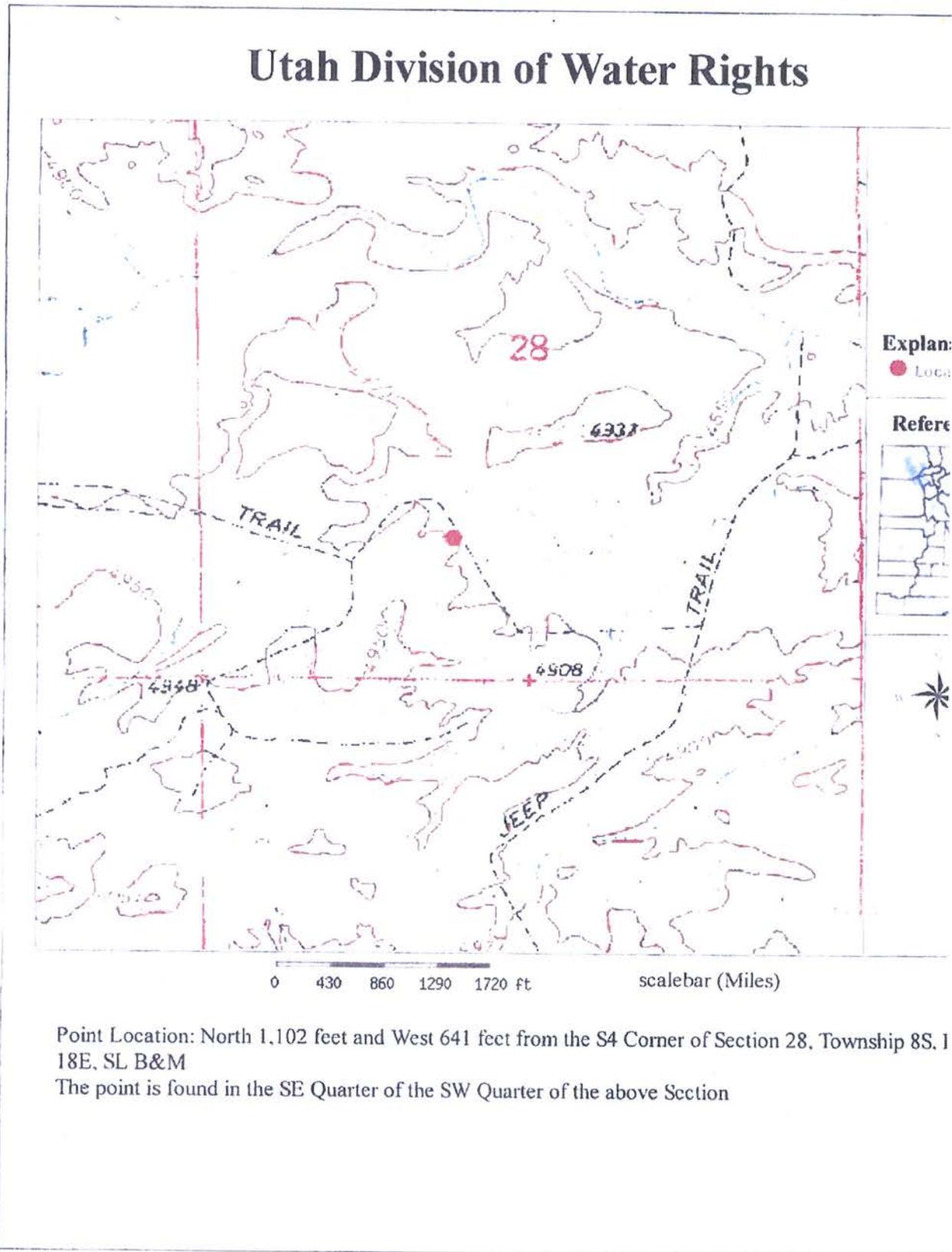
Section 1.12 Noxious and Non-Native Invasive Species

12. Does the proposed action contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Christine Cimiluca, Acting Botanist

Rationale: The proposed action should not contribute to the introduction, continued existence or spread of noxious weeds and invasive plant species due to the small amount of surface disturbance and the location of the proposed activities.

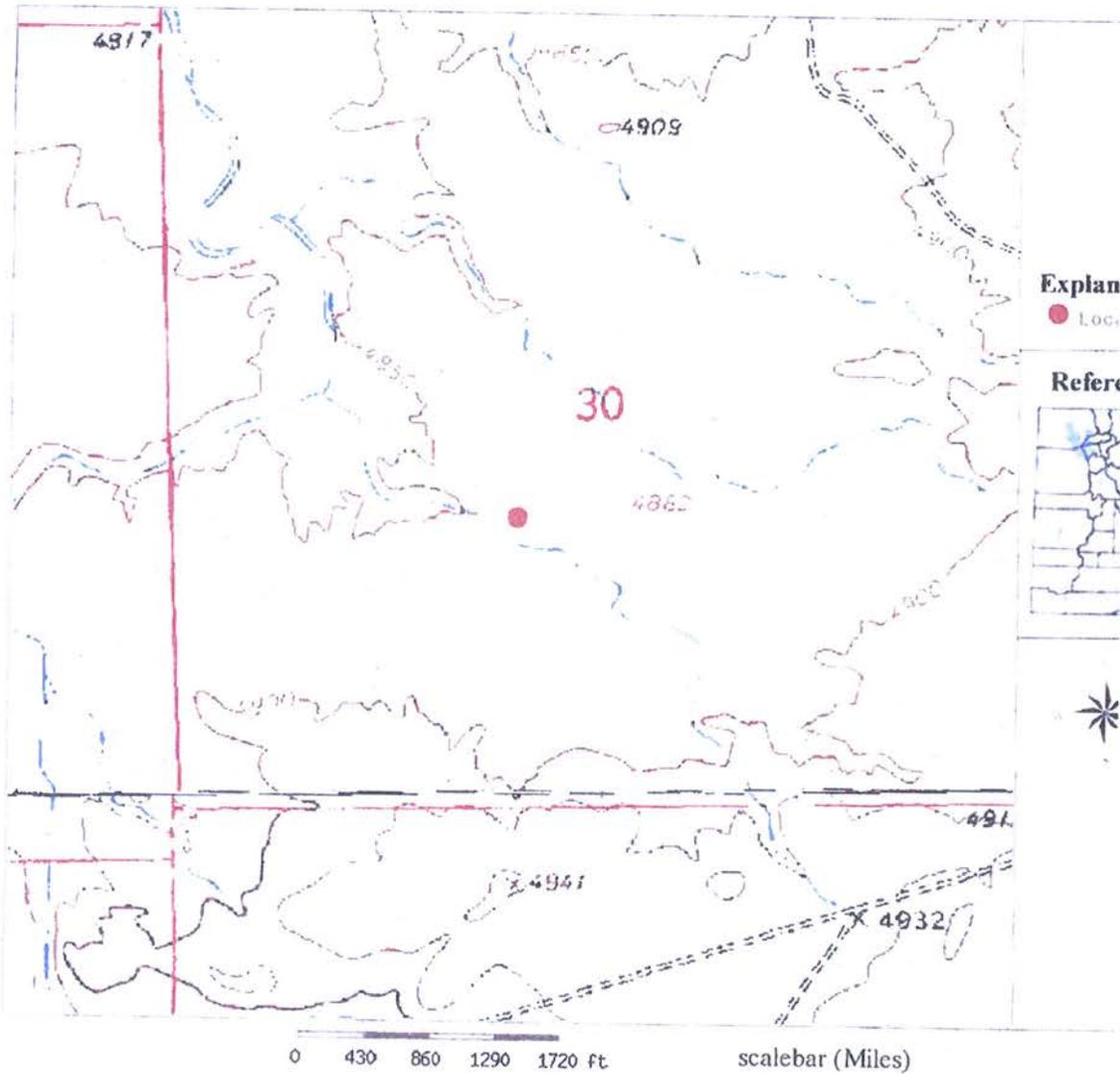


Area Map Showing Both Sites



Map of Site 1

Utah Division of Water Rights



Point Location: North 1,846 feet and West 633 feet from the S4 Corner of Section 30, Township 9S, 1 21E, SL B&M
The point is found in the NE Quarter of the SW Quarter of the above Section

Map of Site 2

Appendix A.

Botany Conditions of Approval for Coyote Basin Fossil Sites

Conditions of Approval: The following measures will be applied as a condition of approval (COA):

- Documented cactus within the 300 foot survey buffers would be flagged for avoidance during construction and drilling activities.
- A qualified biological monitor would be present during surface disturbing activities to ensure that documented individual cactus are not disturbed.
- Seed mixes to be used for reclamation should exclude introduced and non-native species.
- Erosion control measures (i.e. silt fencing) will be implemented to minimize sedimentation to *Sclerocactus ssp.* plants and populations located down slope of proposed surface disturbance activities when working in all cactus habitats.
- *Discovery Stipulation:* Initiation of Section 7 consultation with the USFWS will be sought immediately if any loss of plants or occupied habitat for Pariette cactus or Uinta Basin hookless cactus is anticipated as a result of project activities.