

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

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2016-0001-EA**

**Plan of Operations Modification UTU-74631  
Daneros Mine**

**Location:** The Daneros Mine is located in portions of:  
T. 37 S., R. 16 E., Sections 5, 6, 7, 8, 17 and 18  
Salt Lake Meridian, Utah

**Applicant:** Energy Fuels Resources (USA) Inc.  
225 Union Blvd. Suite 600  
Lakewood, Colorado 80228

**Field Office:** Monticello Field Office  
365 N. Main Street  
Monticello, Utah 84535

February 2018



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**Environmental Assessment**  
**DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2016-0001-EA**  
**Daneros Mine Plan of Operations Modification UTU-74631**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:**

Based upon a review of the EA (DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2016-001-EA) and the supporting documents concerning the Energy Fuels Resources (USA) Inc. (Energy Fuels) proposed Daneros Mine Plan of Operations Modification UTU-74631 (MPOM or Project), I have determined that the Project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. The potential environmental effects of the MPOM do not meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27, and do not exceed those effects as described in the Monticello Field Office (MFO) Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (MFO Proposed RMP/FEIS). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below:

**Context:**

The existing Daneros Mine operation involves 4.5 acres of BLM-administered public land (BLM land). The MPOM is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 46 acres of BLM land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The Daneros Mine is located in a remote but easily accessible area of San Juan County, Utah, which uranium prospectors and miners extensively explored and mined in the past. The mine is within the White Canyon Uranium Area, which contains 107 historic mines that have produced uranium ore. Four of these historic mines are located within 0.5 mile of the Daneros Mine. The MPOM would occupy a portion of three historic waste rock dumps. The old Fry Canyon Mill is located 3.5 miles northeast of the Daneros Mine. As with the uranium ore produced at the Daneros Mine under its current plan of operations, ore produced under the MPOM would be transported by highway, approximately 65 miles, to Energy Fuels' licensed uranium mill (the White Mesa Mill) located on White Mesa approximately six miles south of Blanding, Utah. Production and/or maintenance operations have been ongoing at the Mill since 1980.

**Intensity:**

The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

**1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.**

The environmental impacts of the MPOM are fully disclosed in the attached EA. Project design features to avoid or reduce adverse impacts to the human environment are incorporated into the MPOM. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and its appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the MFO Proposed RMP/FEIS.

The MPOM would have minor direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on the human environment during the 20-year mine operation. These impacts would be both beneficial and adverse. Based on the analysis documented in the EA, the potential adverse impacts to air quality, water quality, and human health and safety would be minor and would not exceed state and Federal air emission or water quality standards. The proposed, continued processing of Daneros Mine ore at the White Mesa Mill would have negligible indirect impacts to air quality, water quality, and human health and safety.

The closure and reclamation of historic mine features affected by the MPOM would result in minor beneficial cumulative impacts to water quality, air quality, and human health and safety. Uranium produced from the Daneros Mine under the MPOM would be used to generate electricity using cleaner nuclear fuel technologies that may result indirectly in a small beneficial reduction in global carbon dioxide levels.

**2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.**

Human health and safety is analyzed in detail in the EA. Direct adverse effects considered include health risks for workers and the general public from: potential radiation exposure; direct contact with ore and development rock; potential for acid rock drainage and generation of deleterious leachate; and transportation hazards. Analysis shows that short-term and occasional exposure to unreclaimed uranium mines presents low health risks to recreational visitors. These risks would even be lower after the site is reclaimed. Based on the analysis of the MPOM as documented in the EA, the potential impacts to public health and safety would be minor. The indirect effects from processing Daneros Mine ore at the White Mesa Mill were also considered. These indirect effects are expected to be negligible based on the project design features described in the MPOM, protective measures incorporated within the permits and licenses issued by various state and federal agencies overseeing milling operations, and the small contribution of Daneros Mine ore to annual mill production at the White Mesa Mill.

**3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.**

As listed in Appendix C of the EA, the following Critical Elements of the Human Environment will not be affected because they are not present in the project area: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Prime or Unique Farmlands, Wild or Scenic

Rivers, BLM Natural Areas, and Designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas (WSA).

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), cultural resource inventories were conducted for the MPOM's Area of Potential Effect (APE). No prehistoric sites were found. Six non-eligible and one eligible National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic sites were found. The one eligible site is the remains of the historic Spook Mine. This historic mine site would be avoided in the implementation of and operations under the MPOM, so there would be no adverse effect to historic properties. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was consulted pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA, and it concurred with BLM's determination of "no effect on historic properties" following its NHPA review of the MPOM.

There are no perennial streams in the Project area. The mine facilities and structures in the MPOM would be located above the 100-year floodplain. There are no extensive wetlands/riparian zones in the Project area. A small spring/seep is present. There would be no disturbance of this small, localized riparian area, and analysis shows that underground mine operations would not affect the perched aquifer that feeds the natural spring.

The MPOM would disturb 8 acres of non-WSA lands having wilderness characteristics within the roughly 25,000-acre Upper Red Canyon A inventory unit. Thus, the MPOM's potential impacts to lands with wilderness characteristics within this inventory unit would be nominal. Furthermore, in its Record of Decision for the 2008 Monticello Field Office RMP, the BLM did not select these lands for "protection, preservation or maintenance of wilderness characteristics". The BLM decided that these lands would be made available to the public for other priority uses (RMP-ROD, pgs. 37-38).

On December 28, 2016, by proclamation issued pursuant to the Antiquities Act of 1906, the President designated the Bears Ears National Monument (BENM). Under the current Plan of Operations, uranium ore that is extracted from the Daneros Mine is transported to the White Mesa Mill for processing via San Juan County Road B258 (unpaved) and State Highway 95 (paved), portions of which would pass through the BENM. The MPOM would result in an increase of nine ore trucks per day on these roads and, as discussed in Chapter 4 of the EA, would have minor direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects.

On December 4, 2017, after the EA was completed, the Bears Ears National Monument (BENM) was modified by presidential proclamation, which reduced the total size of the BENM and created two monument management units (Indian Creek and Shash Jáa). While the Daneros Mine and the White Mesa Mill were always located outside of the boundaries of the BENM, the distance from these facilities to the BENM has increased because of the changes in the Monument boundary. Specifically, the distance from the Mine to the Indian Creek unit is 34 miles and the distance to the Shas Jáa unit is 18 miles, and the distance from the Mill to the Indian Creek unit is now 29 miles and the distance to the Shas Jáa unit is now 7 miles. In addition, the unpaved San Juan County Road

B258 that is used for ore haulage is no longer within the BENM, and the length of State Highway 95 within the BENM that is used to transport ore to the Mill has decreased from 44 miles to 17.6 miles, all of which is within the Shash Jáa unit. As a result of the reduction in the size of the BENM, the minimal environmental effects to it from the MPOM will be less than those previously analyzed and disclosed in the EA.

**4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.**

The potential environmental effects of the MPOM were analyzed by a team of interdisciplinary technical specialists including BLM resource specialists and consultants with expertise in the various resource issues assessed in the EA. Input from several state and Federal agencies having oversight and regulatory authority was also an important part of the assessment of the potential effects of the MPOM. The result of this assessment is the determination that such effects, discussed in Chapter 4 of the EA, will not be highly controversial.

**5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.**

The environmental effects analysis (EA, Chapter 4) demonstrates that the impacts of the MPOM are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. Uranium mining has been conducted in the United States since the early 1950s, and the potential effects of uranium mining on the human environment are well documented. A mature regulatory framework currently exists at the federal and state levels to strictly regulate uranium mining and milling and reduce the potential effects of such activities on the human environment.

**6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

The MPOM is a site-specific action under which Energy Fuels would be authorized to exercise its rights under the General Mining Law of 1872, as amended. Approval of the MPOM would authorize specific actions at the Daneros Mine, and would not establish a precedent for any future actions.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.**

The MPOM is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. As discussed in Chapter 4 of the EA, the potential cumulative effects of the MPOM were considered in connection with past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions in the relevant area, and were determined to be minor.

**8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.**

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Class III intensive cultural resource inventories were conducted for the MPOM's Area of Potential Effect (APE). No prehistoric sites were found. Six non-eligible and one eligible National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic sites were found. The one eligible site is the remains of the historic Spook Mine. This historic mine site would be avoided in the implementation of and operations under the MPOM so there would be no adverse effect to historic properties. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was consulted pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA, and it concurred with the BLM's determination of "no effect on historic properties" following its NHPA review of the MPOM.

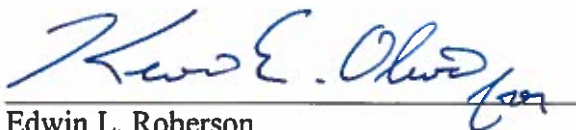
In accordance with the NHPA, the BLM also consulted with 12 Native American tribal entities in order to identify any concerns they might have related to traditional cultural properties (TCPs) or sacred sites. Section 5.2 of the EA describes this consultation process. In brief, the BLM received responses from three tribes—the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the Hopi Tribe and the Navajo Tribe, and consultation meetings were held with representatives of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Navajo Tribe. The Hopi Tribe and Navajo Tribe claimed ancestral and cultural affiliation to prehistoric cultural groups in the region, although no specific TCPs of concern to the Tribes were identified as a result of these consultations. Further, the Project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.**

A biological survey and evaluation was conducted and is included as part of the MPOM (Attachment L). The biological assessment and evaluation determined that there is no endangered or threatened plant or animal species occurring in the Project area (EA, Appendix C). The habitat in the area is not suitable for any of the listed animal species and is not within any designated critical habitat for Mexican spotted owl or the four endangered fish species. In addition, the MPOM is not within designated critical habitat of federally listed or candidate species which were listed post-survey, including the Gunnison sage grouse and yellow-billed cuckoo. Therefore, the MPOM would not affect endangered or threatened species.

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.**

The MPOM does not violate any known federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation, or policy imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, state, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Although several comments were received, none of the commenters identified a violation of applicable environmental laws, regulations, or other requirements. In addition, the MPOM is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.



Edwin L. Roberson  
State Director

23 FEB 2018

Date