

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2016-0058EA**

**January 2016
Special Recreation Permit for Experimental Sounding Rocket
Association**

Location: T. 23 S., R. 18 E, section 21 (near Ten Mile Point and Blue Hills road intersection)

Applicant/Address: Paul Mueller III, 665 N. 400 E., Logan, UT 84321

Moab Field Office
82 East Dogwood
Moab, UT 84532
435-259-2100



**Special Recreation Permit for Experimental Sounding Rocket Association
DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2016-0058**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

INTRODUCTION

The Experimental Sounding Rocket Association (ESRA) seeks a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) to conduct a rocket competition on specified lands managed within the Moab Field Office. ESRA has had permits with the Moab BLM for this event during two previous years (2005 and 2009). The competition took place in those previous years on lands near, but not identical to the current proposal. There was a need to move the location to remove the competition further from the high-tension power lines to the north.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The BLM received an application for a Special Recreation Permit within the Moab Field Office. According the regulations at 43 CFR 2932.25, the BLM must provide a response to the application.

CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)

The proposed action has been determined to be in conformance with the terms and conditions of the Moab Resource Management Plan (approved in October, 2008) as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Moab's RMP states the following:

- **REC-46** "Special Recreation Permits are issued as a discretionary action as a means to: help meet management objectives, provide opportunities for economic activity, facilitate recreational use of public lands, control visitor use, protect recreational and natural resources, and provide for the health and safety of visitors." (page 97)

and

- **REC-47** "All SRPs will contain standard stipulations appropriate for the type of activity and may include stipulations necessary to protect lands or resources, reduce user conflicts, or minimize health and safety concerns... Issue and manage recreation permits for a wide variety of uses to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities, provide opportunities for private enterprise, manage user-group interaction, and limit the impacts to such uses upon natural and cultural resources." (page 98).

RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS

The proposed action is consistent with page 48 of the Grand County General Plan Update (2004), which states: "The public lands of Grand County should be managed for the enjoyment and benefit of people of Grand County and the nation so as to maintain the integrity and value of natural and cultural resources. Furthermore the Grand County General Plan Update states under the category "Economic use of public lands: Grand County encourages the expeditious

processing of use permits for economic uses of public lands consistent with the policies of the Plan, and specifically, film, mineral extraction, and recreation, for the benefit of Grand County

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

This EA focuses on the Proposed and No Action alternatives. No other alternatives were considered. The No Action alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the proposed action.

PROPOSED ACTION

ESRA seeks a SRP to offer an intercollegiate rocket engineering competition in lands managed by the Moab BLM. The competition would take place over three days, with one day for set-up and one “rain day” (from June 14 to June 19, 2016). Rockets would be launched from a location on the Ten Mile Point “B” road (about one mile south of its intersection with the Blue Hills Road). One to two observers would be stationed at the end of a designated dead end road on a bluff overlooking the competition area. (These observers track the trajectory of the rocket to help in rocket recovery). Staging and parking would occur on a dead end side road (which ends at a drill pad) directly adjacent to the launch location. Set up would occur one or two days before the launches begin; staff numbers 25 people, including 7 judges.

Rockets would be launched from launch rails spaced at least 750 feet apart. The rails would be set up along the Ten Mile Point Road. These rails “point” the rocket towards its intended goal. Rockets would be recovered on foot once the end of the nearest designated road were reached.

Spectators would park only on the berm of the designated roads or on the drill pad. Parking attendants would be provided to assist spectators in responsible parking techniques.

All vehicles, including ATVs, would be restricted to designated roads.

The proponent commits to the following stipulation: paleontological resources will not be collected under this Special Recreation Permit. All collection of paleontological resources will otherwise be in accordance with the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2009 and a permit may be required. All vertebrate fossils, including tracks and traces, are prohibited from collection and surface disturbing activities. Common invertebrate and plant fossils may be collected without a permit. Collection of petrified wood is limited to 25 pounds a day, 250 pounds a year, for non-commercial purposes. The permittee must contact the Moab BLM in advance for determination of permit requirements.

See attached diagram for a depiction of the proposed event.

NO ACTION

The No Action Alternative is to deny a SRP to the Experimental Sounding Rocket Association.

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING

The affected environment was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the Interdisciplinary Team Checklist. The checklist indicates which resources of concern are either not present in the project area or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis, see Appendix A. Three resources, Paleontology, Recreation, and Wildlife (Desert Bighorn Sheep) could be impacted to a level requiring further analysis. These resources are described in Chapter 3; the impacts on these resources are analyzed in Chapter 4.

Recreation

ESRA seeks to offer an intercollegiate rocket contest in June of 2016. The participants and spectators of the event seek an experience that cannot be found in many locations.

Recreation use of the proposed area is light, especially in the month of June. During the spring months, the area sees some motorized touring (although most of this activity takes place at the White Wash Sand Dunes, which is southwest of the proposed location). The Ten Mile Point Road is expected to have very little traffic during June of 2016.

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS

PROPOSED ACTION

Recreation

The intercollegiate rocket launching event would provide a recreation benefit to its participants, who would further their engineering knowledge and engage in an enjoyable competition. Spectators of the event would also have an enjoyable recreation experience. Associated lectures and dinners would take place in Moab, adding economic benefit to the Grand County economy at a time when tourism is low.

Very few other recreation users are expected to be bothered by the existence of the event because, in the middle of June, very few other recreation users would be present. Those few that happened upon the event are expected to be amused, rather than annoyed.

NO ACTION

The No Action alternative, while meeting the BLM's purpose and need of responding to an SRP application, would not allow for the increased recreational or economic benefits of issuing the permit. There would also be none of the environmental impacts that would have been caused by permitting the rocket competition.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or

person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts are expected to be negligible because the direct impacts of allowing a rocket competition are negligible.

CHAPTER 5 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

During preparation of the EA, the public was notified of the proposed action by posting on ePlanning on December 24, 2015. No one has contacted the BLM in response to the notice. A public comment period was not offered because very little interest in the proposal has been expressed.

List of BLM Preparers

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s)
Ann Marie Aubry	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Floodplains, Soils, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Water Resources
Katie Stevens	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Visual Resources, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Recreation
Jared Lundell	Archeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns
David Pals	Geologist	Wastes, Geology, Paleontology
Bill Stevens	Outdoor Recreation Planner	BLM Natural Areas, Socioeconomics, Wilderness/WSA, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Environmental Justice
Pam Riddle	Biologist	Fish and Wildlife, T&E Animal Species, Migratory Birds, Utah Sensitive Species
Dave Williams/Jordan Davis	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Health Standards, Invasive Species, Livestock Grazing, Vegetation, T&E Plants, Vegetation, Woodland
Joshua Relph	Fuels Specialist	Fuels/Fire Management
ReBecca Hunt Foster	Paleontologist	Paleontology
Jan Denney	Realty Specialist	Lands

Appendix A: Interdisciplinary Team Checklist

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

Project Title: Special Recreation Permit for Experimental Sounding Rocket Association

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2016-058 EA

File/Serial Number: MFO-Y010-16-026R

Project Leader: Katie Stevens

DETERMINATION OF STAFF: *(Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)*

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for relevant impact that need to be analyzed in detail in the EA

The following elements are not present in the Moab Field Office and have been removed from the checklist:

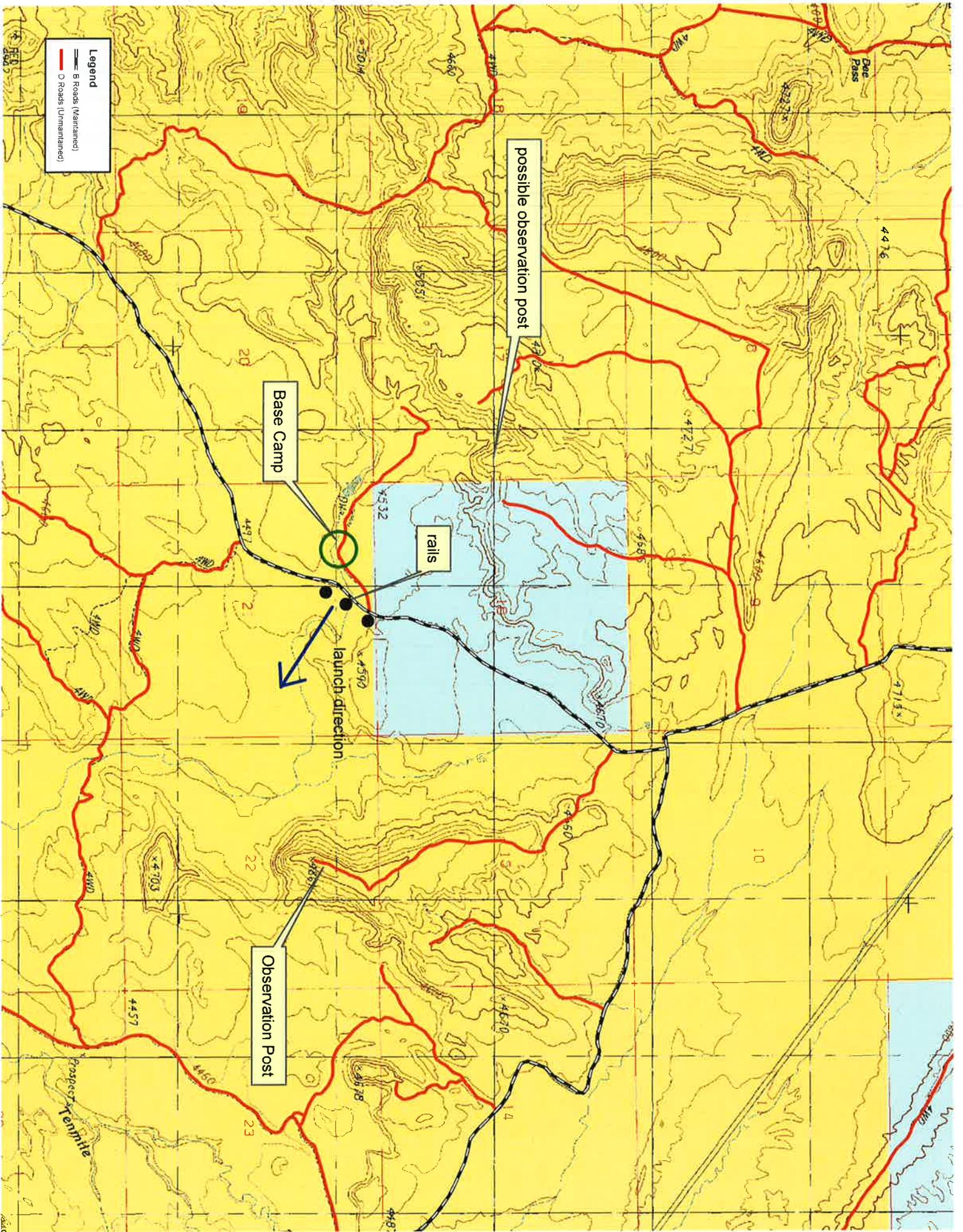
Farmlands (Prime or Unique), Wild Horses and Burros.

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)				
NI	Air Quality Greenhouse Gas Emissions		Ann Marie Aubry	12/29/15
NP	Floodplains		Ann Marie Aubry	12/29/15
NI	Soils	Very rocky area – hard to disturb	Ann Marie Aubry	12/29/15
NP	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)		Ann Marie Aubry	12/29/15
NI	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		Mark Grover	12/29/15
NI	Aquatic Species		Mark Grover	12/29/15
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	See 2008 RMP.	Katie Stevens	12/29/15
PI	Recreation	Would provide benefit to participants	Katie Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	See 2008 RMP.	Katie Stevens	12/29/15
NI	Visual Resources	Temporary activity over one weekend.	Katie Stevens	12/29/15
NP	BLM Natural Areas	See 2008 RMP.	Bill Stevens	12/29/15
NI	Socio-Economics	Slight economic benefit to Moab economy	Bill Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Wilderness/WSA	See 2008 RMP.	Bill Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	See 2008 RMP.	Bill Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Cultural Resources	BLM conducted a literature search and a Class III archaeological inventory of the project area. The BLM found no properties eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. The BLM, therefore, made a determination of No Historic Properties Affected. Details of these finds are discussed in the Cultural Resource Inventory Report (U16BL0205 b). BLM will consult with the Utah SHPO in accordance with the threshold procedures for small projects specified in the Utah BLM/Utah SHPO Statewide Small-scale Undertakings Programmatic Agreement.	Jared Lundell	3/22/16

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	No known sites of religious or cultural significance to Native American tribes are within the project area	Jared Lundell	3/22/16
NI	Environmental Justice		Bill Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Wastes (hazardous or solid)		David Pals	12/31/15
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species		Pam Riddle	12/29/15
NI	Migratory Birds	Short term transient disturbance may occur if individuals are in vicinity	Pam Riddle	12/29/15
NI	Utah BLM Sensitive Species	Short term transient disturbance may occur if individuals are in vicinity	Pam Riddle	12/29/15
NI	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFW Designated Species	Bighorn lambing/pronghorn; short term transient disturbance may occur if individuals are in vicinity.	Pam Riddle	12/29/15
NI	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds		Jordan Davis	12/29/15
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species		Dave Williams	12/29/15
NI	Livestock Grazing		Jordan Davis	12/29/15
NI	Rangeland Health Standards		Jordan Davis	12/29/15
NI	Vegetation Excluding USFW Designated Species		Jordan Davis	12/29/15
NP	Woodland / Forestry		Jordan Davis	12/29/15
NI	Fuels/Fire Management		Josh Relph	1/6/16
NP	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production		David Pals	12/31/15
NI	Lands/Access	No conflicts with existing uses.	Jan Denney	12/29/15
NI	Paleontology	In PPYC 5 area, near known paleo site and highly fossiliferous exposures. Provide paleo stipulations with permit.	ReBecca Hunt-Foster	12/29/15

FINAL REVIEW:

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator	Katie Stevens <i>KS</i>	3/23/16	
Authorized Officer	Jennifer Jones <i>JJ</i>	3/23/16	



Legend
B Roads (Maintained)
D Roads (Unmaintained)

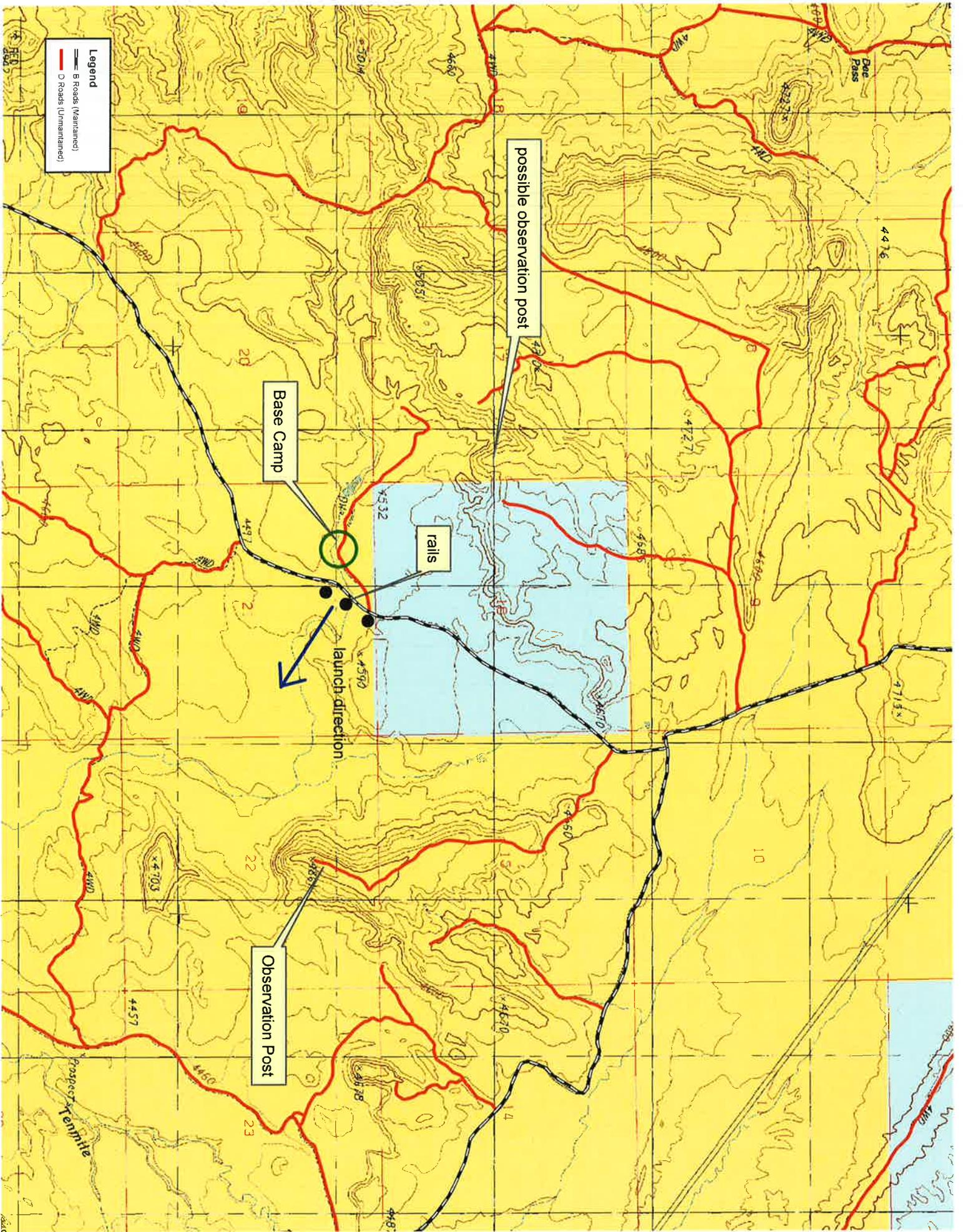
possible observation post

Base Camp

raia

launch direction

Observation Post



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD**

**Experimental Sounding Rocket Association
DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2016-0058 DNA**

FONSI: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the present document, I have determined that the action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and an environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

DECISION: It is my decision to issue a Special Recreation Permit for the Experimental Sounding Rocket Association to operate in the areas listed under the Proposed Action. This decision is contingent upon meeting all stipulations and monitoring requirements attached.

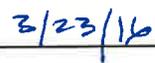
RATIONALE: The decision to authorize the Special Recreation Permit for Experimental Sounding Rocket Association has been made in consideration of the environmental impacts of the proposed action. The action is in conformance with the Moab Resource Management Plan, which allows for recreation use permits for a wide variety of uses to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities, provide opportunities for private enterprise, manage user-group interaction, and limit the impacts to such uses upon natural and cultural resources.

APPEALS:

The decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. Public notification of this decision will be considered to have occurred on March 25, 2016. Within 30 days of this decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at the Moab Field Office, 82 East Dogwood, Moab, Utah 84532. 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.



Authorized Officer



Date