

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

**Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2016-0020-EA**

September, 2016

**Proposed Right-of-Way UTU-91621 for
Red Canyon Road (B259) Re-route**

Location: San Juan County, Utah

Salt Lake Meridian, Utah
T. 37 S., R. 14 E.,
sec. 13, SE1/4SW1/4;
sec. 24, NE1/4NW1/4.

Applicant/Address: *San Juan County*
P.O. Box 337
Monticello, Utah 84535

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Proposed Right-of-Way UTU-91621 for Red Canyon Road (B259) Re-route

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CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

INTRODUCTION

San Juan County (SJC) submitted a Right-of-Way (ROW) application, on October 02, 2015, proposing a re-route of a short section of Red Canyon Road (B259). As well as being a San Juan County maintained route, B259 is a designated route in the Monticello Field Office Travel Management Plan. It is approximately 30 miles in length and is maintained by the SJC Road Department to provide access for high clearance four wheel drive vehicles to a large and remote area of BLM public and State of Utah lands.

For a distance of approximately five to six miles road B259 follows Red Canyon Wash and includes numerous low water crossings. A few stretches of the road are located within the active wash. Red Canyon Wash is an ephemeral stream subject to short duration flows of runoff water from high intensity thunder storms during the summer and fall seasons. Road B259 has experienced substantial erosion and down-cutting to a point that no soil fines exist to fill in around the bedrock and boulders. This makes the road virtually impassible and unmaintainable, even for high clearance vehicles.

The proposed reroute is located approximately 15 miles northwest of the Highway 276 junction. At this location the existing road runs on the outside of a tight bend of the wash channel and is subject to high flows during flash flood events that render the road impassable. Heavy rain events over the last several years have caused extensive damage to the B259 within the project area. The proposed re-route would locate the road to an elevated bench on the inside of the bend of the wash in an area not subject to active water flow thereby reducing the maintenance required to keep the road open and passable to vehicle travel.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the proposed action is for the BLM to consider approval of a right-of-way that would authorize SJC to construct, operate, maintain, and terminate a road right-of-way on public lands. The applicant has proposed a re-route of a County Road, B259, which is designated in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Monticello Field Office (MFO) Travel Management Plan, 2008.

The need for the proposed action is to respond to an application for right of way (ROW) submitted under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management (FLPMA) Act of October 21, 1976 (90 Stat. 2776; 43 U.S.C. 1761). FLPMA requires the BLM to consider issuance of ROW on public lands. The federal regulations state at 43 CFR § 2801.2, "It is BLM's objective to grant rights-of-way under the regulations in this part to any qualified

individual, business, or government entity and to direct and control the use of rights-of-way on public lands in a manner that: (a) Protects the natural resources associated with Federal lands and adjacent lands, whether private or administered by a government entity; (b) Prevents unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands.”

The decision to be made by the BLM will be to decide whether or not to authorize the proposed action, and if so, under what terms and conditions.

CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)

The Proposed Action and alternative analyzed in this Environmental Assessment (EA) are in conformance the Monticello Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP), approve November 2008. The Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved RMP based on the following:

1. Lands and Realty, Goals and Objectives, page 69, which states; “Make public land available for a variety of ROWs, alternative energy sources, and permits where consistent with resource goals, objectives, and prescriptions.”
2. Lands and Realty, Management Actions, Management Decision LAR-13, page 72, which states; “Applications for new ROW on public lands will be considered and analyzed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration areas identified for avoidance and exclusion. Proposals will be reviewed for consistency with planning decisions and evaluated under requirements of applicable laws for resource protection.”
3. Lands and Realty, Management Actions, Management Decision LAR-14, page 72, which states; “Consider lands available for ROWs except for exclusion and avoidance areas (Map 4).”

RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS

FLPMA provides authority for the Federal government to issuance rights-of-ways on public lands.

The Proposed Action is consistent with the SJC Master plan of 2008. The plan states; “San Juan County desires land management agencies to process applications for rights-of-way, Title V, etc., in an efficient and timely manner.”

The EA is prepared in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) and in compliance with all applicable statues, regulations, and executive orders

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

An issue is defined as a point of disagreement, debate, or dispute with a proposed action based on some anticipated environmental effect. Issues point to environmental effects and may lead to identification of design features incorporated into the proposed action or mitigation measures.

The Proposed Action was published on BLM's ePlanning website on March 22, 2016 to notify the public about this action and that an EA was being initiated. The public has not provided any input regarding the Proposed Action.

BLM identifies potential issues resulting from the action by conducting an internal review of the project by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. The Interdisciplinary (ID) Team develops a Checklist to determine if there would be impacts or not to various resources. No potential impacts were identified by the ID Team as a result of the proposed action or alternatives.

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

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

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to approve SJC's right-of-way application and to issue a Right-of-Way Grant to San Juan County as follows:

Grant a right to construct, operate, maintain and terminate a realignment of the Red Canyon Road (B259) on the following described public lands:

SLM,
T. 37 S., R. 14 E.,
sec. 13, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
sec. 24, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$

The right-of-way would be 18 feet wide (12' travel surface), 1,800 feet long, and contains 0.74 acres, more or less.

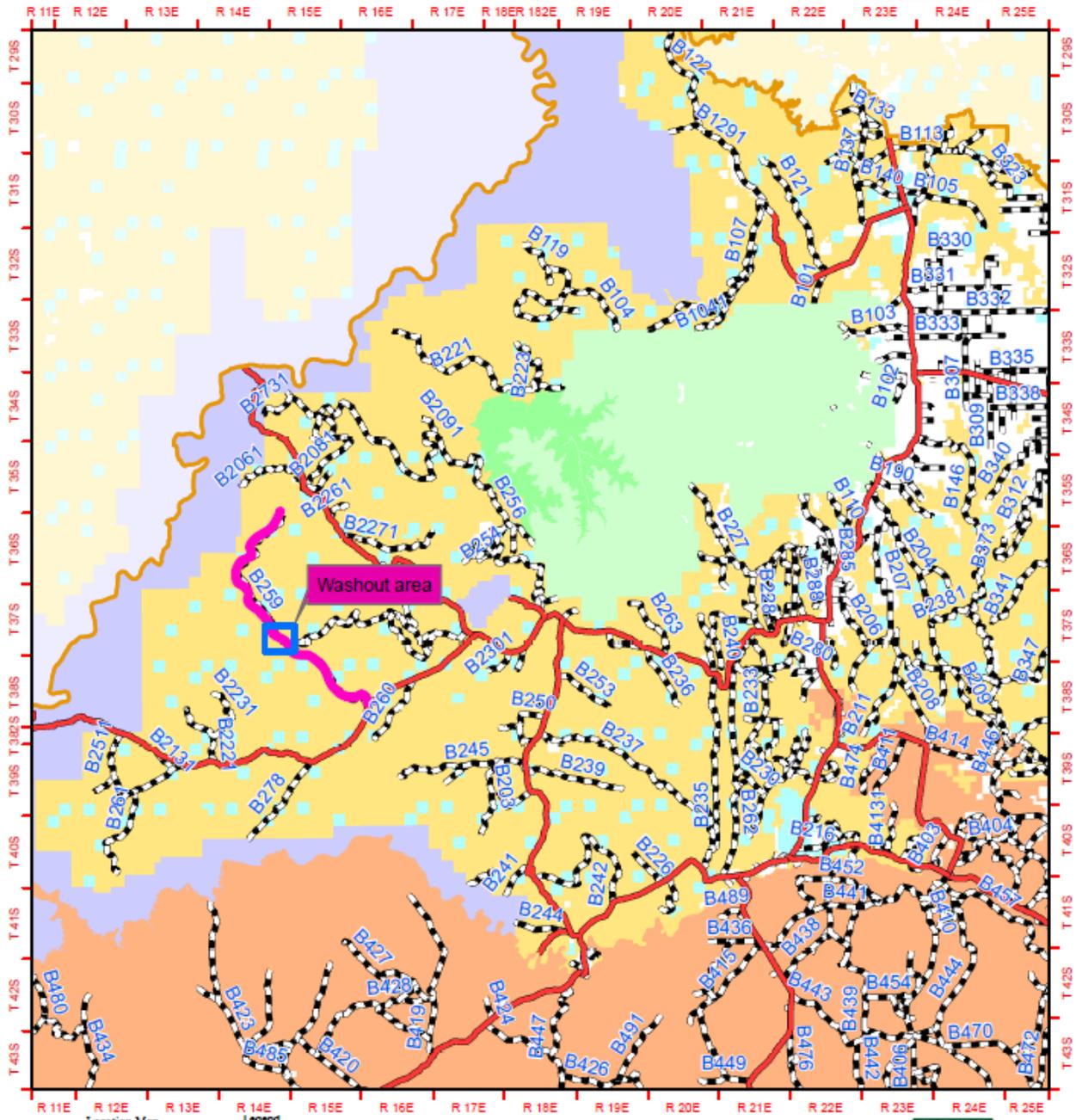
The ROW would be issued in perpetuity as long as the right-of-way continues to be used for the authorized purpose.

The proposed re-route is approximately 15 miles north of Highway 267. Native soils would be used to construct the road surface on the re-routed section. SJC would use heavy equipment such as a bull dozer, back hoe, and road grader to construct and maintain the re-routed section.

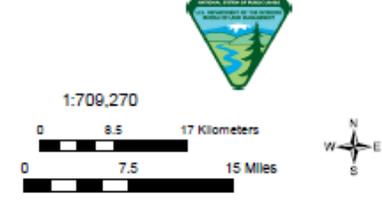
The south end of the re-route construction will start by descending from the existing road surface down the cut bank approximately 20 feet to the wash below. The re-route would then traverse across the bottom of the wash for approximately 200 feet and ascend the bank on the opposite side to the bench that parallels the inside curve of the wash channel. Once on the bench the re-route would follow an old disturbance that looks to be an old mining road. The old road will be graded and widened to the requested 18 foot width. While traversing the bench the re-route would cross a large drainage that empties into the wash. Construction of the road at the drainage crossing will require heavy equipment to rip bedrock in order create the approaches on either side of the drainage. Currently the edges of the drainage are 1 to 2 foot high rock benches that are not passable with full size vehicle. The final portion of the re-route will descend back into the wash, cross the wash, and join back with the existing B259. The descent back into and out of the wash will again require ripping of bedrock to smooth the descent or ascent for vehicle passage. A detailed map of the re-route and picture at several locations are show in Figure 2 thru Figure 7.

Red Canyon Road - General Location Map

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- Legend**
- RedCanyonRoad_B259
 - Field Office Boundary
 - MonticelloMask
 - StateHighways
 - ClassBRoads
- Land Status**
- ut_lgd**
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
 - Indian Reservation (IR)
 - National Park Service (NPS)
 - Other Federal
 - Private
 - State
 - State Parks and Recreation
 - US Forest Service (USFS)
 - USFS Wilderness Area



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

Figure 1: General location of B259 and re-route

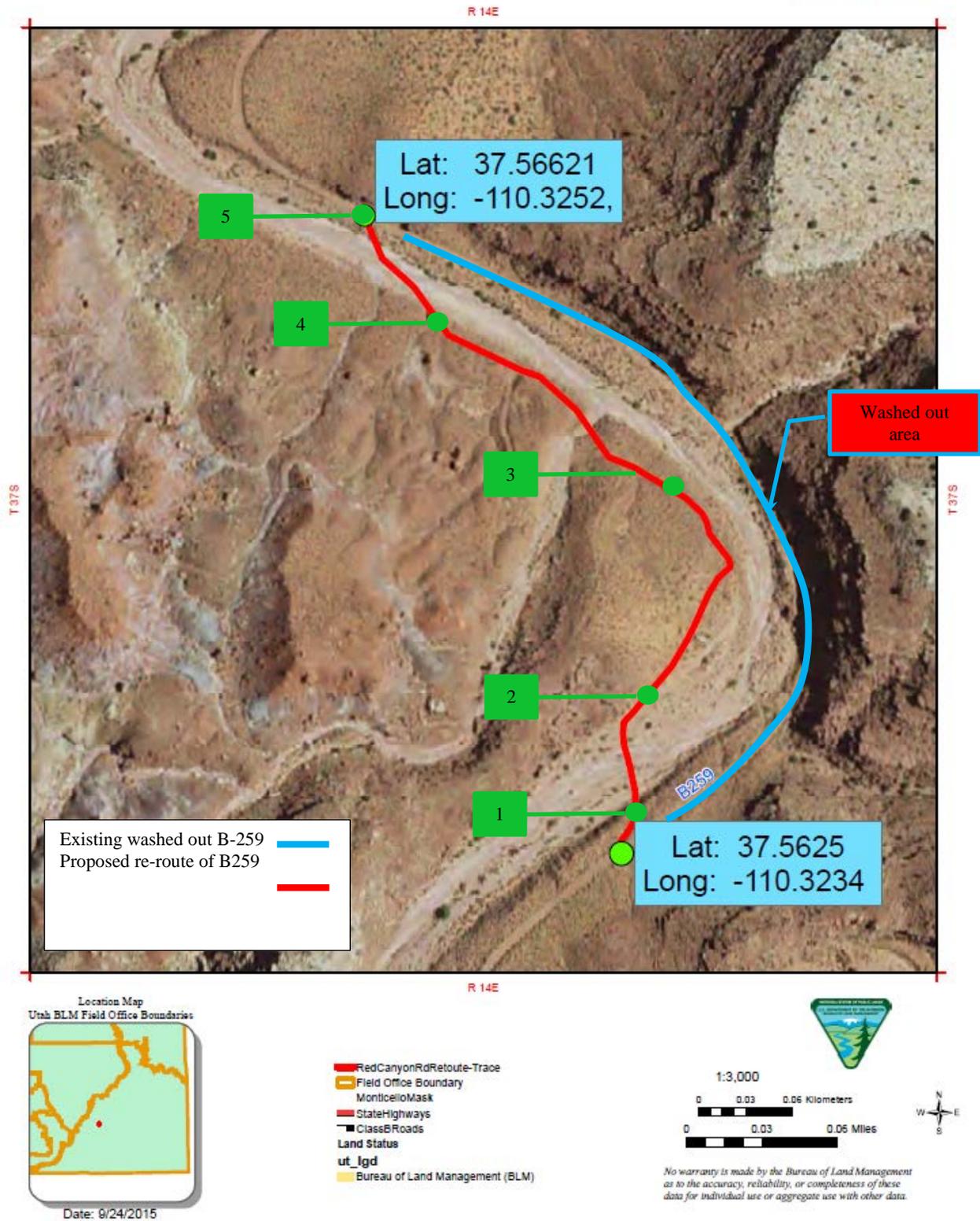


Figure 2: Detail of proposed re-routed section



Figure 3: Point 1 looking N at proposed cut down bank into wash leaving existing B-259.



Figure 4: Point 2 looking NE along proposed re-route.



Figure 5: Point 3 looking SE along proposed re-route and old road surface.



Figure 6: Point 4 looking SE at proposed exit out of wash onto bench.



Figure 7: Point 5 looking NW at proposed location to exit wash and rejoin existing B-259

NO ACTION

The no action alternative would be to deny SJC's application and not authorize the re-route of County Road B259. Selection of this alternative would keep the status quo for B259 and SJC would have to continue to maintain the road along its existing alignment.

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING

The affected environment was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the ID Team Checklist (APPENDIX A). The checklist indicates which resources of concern are either not present in the project area (NP), would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis (NI), or are potentially impacted (PI) by the proposed actions and alternatives. The affected environment of those resources potentially affected by the proposed action is described here in Chapter 3. Because the ID Team Checklist identified all resources as NP or NI, and no resources were identified as PI, there is no affected environment to be described here in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS

This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives on resources described in the affected environment Chapter 3.

PROPOSED ACTION

As described in the previous chapter (Chapter 3), the ID Team identified no resources as PI, therefore, there is no affected environment on which to analyze environmental impacts from the proposed action here in Chapter 4.

NO ACTION

The no action alternative to deny the Red Canyon Road (B259) Re-route application would not result in any environmental impacts beyond continues erosion and down-cutting of the road surface.

CHAPTER 5 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

During preparation of this EA, the public was notified by publication of the proposed action on BLM's ePlanning website on March 22, 2016. Public scoping was not conducted. A public comment period will be offered.

List of Preparers

BLM staff specialists who determined the affected resources for this document are listed in Appendix A. Those who contributed further analysis in the body of this EA are listed below.

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Chris Ransel	BLM Monticello FO, Realty Specialist	Project coordination and impacts to lands access.

APPENDIX A
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

Project Title: Proposed Red Canyon Road (B259) Right-of-Way UTU-91621 Re-route

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2016-0020-EA

File/Serial Number: UTU-91528

Project Leader: Chris Ransel/Cliff Giffen

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

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

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

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

NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section D of the DNA form. The Rationale column may include NI and NP discussions.

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)				
NI	Air Quality	The impacts to air quality from travel management decisions was adequately analyzed and addressed in the Monticello RMP. The proposed action conforms to the Monticello RMP. The RMP states "The BLM will provide opportunities for a range of motorized recreation experiences on public lands while protecting resources and minimizing conflicts among various users" (RMP pg. 141). The proposed action will result in emissions from the operation of internal combustion engines and from the operation of vehicles on unpaved surfaces. These emissions will be temporary, will rapidly disperse, and are unlikely to cause or contribute to a violation of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Air quality is not analyzed in detail in the EA.	Cliff Giffen	3/15/16
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	The proposed action is not located near any areas of critical environmental concern.	Casey Worth	05/04/16
NI	Cultural Resources	The project will utilize the former historic road alignment and will not adversely affect any historic properties.	Cameron Cox	6/21/16
NI	Environmental Justice	This project is located in a remote area of the San Juan County, Utah where no population exists including Minority or Low-Income populations. The road is currently open to all of the public and the re-route is only intended to allow San Juan County to better maintain the road after future high water events.	Chris Ransel	4/19/16
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	The Monticello Field Office does not include any designated prime and unique farmlands administered by the BLM (MFO FRMP/FEIS, pg 4-7).	Jed Carling	4/25/16
NI	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFW Designated Species	The proposed project area is within Critical Desert Bighorn sheep habitat. The project is anticipated to occur in the Fall. Rutting season for desert bighorn sheep occurs from October	Mandy Scott	4/5/16

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		15-December 15. The project is anticipated to take 3 days to complete. The proposed action will result in 0.75 acres of new disturbance on the uplands above the existing road segment. This segment is not located near any known rutting areas or preferred habitat for desert bighorn sheep. Because of the short duration of the project, location and minimal disturbance there will not be impacts to desert bighorn sheep.		
NI	Floodplains	The proposed reroute of designated County Road B-259 occurs within the active floodplain of Red Canyon with the addition of 2 wash crossings along an existing disturbance. Red Canyon is an ephemeral drainage, thus water flows in response to high intensity precipitation events and does not support a riparian plant community. These floods are currently undermining the current road adjacent to the wash. The proposed action results in no more than negligible impacts to floodplains as the road reroute occurs along an existing disturbance, the drainage / floodplain is ephemeral in nature, minimal vegetation would be removed within floodplain (i.e. area is relatively barren naturally), the realigned road already has numerous wash crossings, and the functionality of the overall floodplain would remain intact. Thereby, the action meets the exception criteria for the stipulation of No Surface Occupancy (NSO) in active floodplains in the MFO RMP (Appendix B), because impacts are not to a degree that influences floodplains beyond negligible effects and there are no other practical alternatives. Also, the NSO stipulations do not apply to vehicle travel on designated routes, which is not considered a surface disturbing activity (RMP Appendix B). The proposal is to maintain vehicle travel on a designated route in a safe and efficient manner. Overall, there are no impacts to a degree that detailed analysis is required.	Jed Carling	4/25/16
NI	Fuels/Fire Management	The issuance of a road realignment ROW will result in no impact to wildland fire response or hazardous fuels reduction operations. Fire and fuels need not be analyzed further in the EA.	Paul Plemons	3/16/16
NI	Mineral Resources/Energy Production	The proposed road realignment would not encumber access to public lands for purposes of conducting authorized mineral prospecting, exploration, and development activities. As such, the proposed action would not interfere with future exploration or production of mineral resources.	Ted McDougall	4/19/16
NI	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds	The proposed road in Red Canyon will not significantly enhance the propagation of invasive species or noxious weeds.	Nephi Noyes	5/2/16
NI	Lands/Access	Red Canyon Road is a designated in the Monticello Field Office Travel Management Plan and is maintained by San Juan County, Utah as a B road. The right-of-way is not exclusive and will not limit access to public lands. There are no active or pending mining claims or land use authorizations in the project area.	Chris Ransel	3/22/16
NI	Livestock Grazing	The proposed road re-route is located in the Red Canyon Pasture of the Lake Canyon Allotment. The proposed action and associated work will not measurably influence livestock grazing management, cattle distribution, and/or available forage. This is due to the limited amount of disturbance (~0.75 acres) in relation to the scale of the allotment (~395,882 BLM acres), the road and associated traffic already exist, and the site being previously disturbed and supports	Jed Carling	4/25/16

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		minimal vegetation / forage. Thereby, there are no impacts to a degree that detailed analysis is required.		
NI	Migratory Birds	The short duration of the proposed project and minimal disturbance will not impact migratory birds or their habitat.	Mandy Scott	4/5/16
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	The project will not hinder use of, or limit access to Native American religious sites. There are no known sites or issues.	Cameron Cox	6/21/16
NI	Paleontology	Paleontological resources are present in the project area, known within the Chinle Formation (PFYC 5). A field survey was completed prior to any surface disturbing activities by the BLM Canyon Country District Paleontologist. No fossils were observed. Add COA that if fossils are found during surface disturbing activities, work should cease in that area and the BLM Canyon Country District Paleontologist should be contacted for mitigation.	R. Hunt-Foster	4/18/16
NI	Rangeland Health Standards	Utah Standards for Rangeland Health are individually addressed as separate resources for determination of impacts in this checklist (Standard #1-Soils, #2-Riparian, #3-Biotic (vegetation/wildlife), and #4-Water Quality). Thereby, there are no impacts that require detailed analysis to Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines that are not already being considered by the individual resource.	Jed Carling	4/25/16
NI	Recreation	The proposed action is a minor realignment of an existing route already in the MTFO travel management plan. The proposed action will not have an impact on recreational use as it will not change current recreation use.	Casey Worth	05/04/16
NI	Socio-Economics	No socio-economic impacts, positive or negative, are likely to occur for this project because the road currently exists and is maintained by San Juan County, Utah. The re-route would be conducted by San Juan County roads staff as would the maintenance.	Chris Ransel	4/29/16
NI	Soils	The Proposed Action is consistent with the Soil and Water Resources Goals and Objectives in the Monticello RMP to provide for stable and efficient stream channels. The road reroute will move the road from a stream channel to upland Bankard family-Sheppard complex fine sandy loam soils. The proposed action will disturb approximately 0.75 acres from new road construction. The existing road (0.5 acres) located in the stream channel will be abandon and allowed to reclaim naturally. Soils resource is not impacted to the degree that would require analysis in the EA.	Cliff Giffen	3 15 16
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	There are no known threatened, endangered or candidate plant species within 0.5 miles of the proposed project location.	Mandy Scott	4/5/16
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	There are no known threatened, endangered or candidate wildlife species within 0.5 miles of the proposed project location.	Mandy Scott	4/5/16
NI	Wastes (hazardous or solid)	The Monticello RMP contains Best Management Practices and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for public land use authorizations in Appendix G. These SOPs provide adequate mitigation to prevent impacts from solid wastes. The SOP that would apply to this action states in part that, construction sites shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times, waste materials shall be disposed of promptly at an approved waste disposal facility.	Jeff Brown	3/28/16

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		There are no proposed or suspected hazardous substances or chemicals as defined at 40 CFR 355 Appendix A or subject to reporting under Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorizations Act that would be used, produced, stored, treated, transported or disposed of in association with the proposal. Fuels and lubricants would be used in equipment at the site. Petroleum spills greater than 25 gallons shall be reported to the Utah Department of Environmental Quality as soon as practical. Any petroleum spill shall be cleaned up promptly and contaminates properly disposed of.		
NI	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)	The proposed project would move the road from the existing wash bottom to the uplands. Moving the segment of road should reduce sedimentation that may impact water resources downstream. There are no known water resources within the project area.	Mandy Scott	4/5/16
NP	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	The proposed road re-route occurs along the Red Canyon drainage that has ephemeral flows in response to high intensity precipitation events and does not support wetlands and/or riparian zones.	Jed Carling	4/25/16
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no wild and scenic river segments within the proposed project area.	Casey Worth	05/04/16
NP	Wilderness/WSA	The proposed action would not occur within any WSA areas.	Casey Worth	05/04/16
NP	Woodland / Forestry	There are no woodlands of forest resources within the proposed project area.	Mandy Scott	4/4/16
NI	Vegetation Excluding USFW Designated Species	The proposed action occurs within a Sandy Bottom Ecological Site. This site is primarily composed of dispersed native shrubs (e.g. blackbrush, rabbitbrush, broom snakeweed, and fourwing saltbush) and scattered grasses (e.g. Indian ricegrass, galleta grass, sand dropseed). The proposal with re-disturb a small segment (~0.75 acres) of this site connected with the construction of the road reroute. These actions would not impact vegetation to a degree that detailed analysis is required, because the scale of disturbance is nominal in relation to available ecological site and other vegetation in the immediate area, vegetation is naturally sparse, the area has been previously disturbed, the abandoned roadway would rehabilitate, biotic integrity would continue and be maintained at a level appropriate for the site and species involved, and it would have no negative influence on the landscape's ability to achieve the Standards for Rangeland Health.	Jed Carling	4/25/16
NI	Visual Resources	The proposed project is located in VRM Class IV, in which the objective is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape in VRM Class IV can be high. The reroute consists of .75 acres of linear disturbance located in a topographical depression, meaning that any visual impacts would be minor and localized. The proposed reroute uses native materials and follows an existing disturbance. The reroute will cause minimal contrast of form, line, color, or texture of the characteristic landscape, and is well within VRM objectives for Class IV.	Misti Haines	4/5/16

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NP	Areas with Wilderness Characteristics	The proposed action lies within areas that have been reviewed and determined to not have wilderness characteristics.	Casey Worth	05/04/16

FINAL REVIEW:

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator	<i>Bruce T. [Signature]</i>	9/7/16	
Authorized Officer	<i>Donald K. [Signature]</i>	9/15/16	