

# BLM HOLLISTER FIELD OFFICE

## National Environmental Policy Act

### CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ANALYSIS AND DECISION RECORD

Date Initiated: June 29, 2016

NEPA #: DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2016-0027-CX

#### **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

##### **Description of Proposed Activity:**

###### *Sundry Notice for Surface Work in Support of E72-32J Rework Activities*

California Resources Production Corporation (CRPC) is proposing to install a 3.5" fiberspar line, electrical line and level the well pad in support of rework activities for E72-32J in Kettleman North Dome. The well and installation of equipment will be located in Section 32, T21 S, Range 17E. Installing the 3.5" fiberspar line includes placing the line adjacent to an existing road way in a previously disturbed footprint. The line will connect to an existing production line. Installation of the electrical work will include off-road travel and setting 8 poles. Furthermore, in order to access the pad a portion of the pad that was previously disturbed will need to be leveled. This will include excavating a portion of the pad to ensure it is leveled with the well.

###### *Conditions of Approval*

1. Prior to construction, cultural and paleontological resources surveys are required for the proposed powerline developments. Based upon the project map from Stantec (Figure No.2 Location Map) the survey areas should be focused on the pole placement/ installation sites and the associated access routes to the installation sites.  
Note: the pole sites on the existing developed pad site do not require survey.
2. Collection of artifacts and/or fossils is prohibited.
3. Inadvertent discovery of artifacts and/or fossils must be immediately reported to BLM Central Coast Field Office.
4. No more than 14 days prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a final pre-construction survey of the project area to insure that no special-status wildlife species have recently occupied the project site.
5. A biologist shall be present immediately prior to and during ground disturbing activities that have potential to impact sensitive species and their habitats to identify and protect potentially sensitive resources.
6. Project site shall be clearly delineated by stakes, flagging and/or rope or cord to minimize inadvertent degradation or loss of adjacent habitat during construction activities.
7. An Environmental Awareness Training program shall be conducted to orient all employees involved in project activities in the field. The program shall consist of a brief presentation in which biologists knowledgeable of endangered species biology and legislative protection shall explain endangered species concerns. The program shall include a discussion of special-status plants and sensitive wildlife species.
8. CRPC will implement the following measures for the proposed well project. These measures are based on guidelines in the USFWS Standardized Recommendations for Protection Of The Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior To Or During Ground Disturbance (USFWS 2011):

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- (a) For kit fox dens within 200 feet of the construction area exclusion zones shall be established prior to construction by a qualified biologist. Exclusion zone fencing should comprise either large flagged stakes connected by rope or cord, survey laths or wooden stakes prominently flagged with survey ribbon. The configuration of exclusion zones around the kit fox dens should have a radius measured outward from the entrance. Minimum distances for exclusion zones are:  
Potential or atypical den 50 feet,  
Known den 100 feet
  - (b) Only essential vehicle operation on existing roads and foot traffic should be permitted. Otherwise, all construction, vehicle operation, material storage, or any other type of surface disturbing activity should be prohibited or greatly restricted within the exclusion zones.
  - (c) Exclusion zone barriers shall be maintained until all well pad construction and drilling activities have been completed, and then removed.
  - (d) Limited destruction of kit fox dens may be allowed, if avoidance is not a reasonable alternative, provided the following procedures are observed. Destruction of any known or natal/pupping kit fox den requires takeauthorization/permit from the Service.
  - (e) Known or potential dens occurring within the footprint of activity or within 50 feet of the project must be monitored by a qualified biologist for three days with tracking medium or an infra-red camera to determine the current use. If no kit fox activity is observed during this period, the den should be destroyed immediately to preclude subsequent use.
  - (f) Destruction of a potential den may proceed without prior notification to USFWS if no current or previous use of the den by kit foxes, as determined by a qualified biologist, is evident. However, if during excavation any potential den is determined to currently be or recently used (e.g., if kit fox sign is found), the BLM and USFWS shall be notified immediately.
  - (g) If, after following all procedures detailed in these recommendations, the qualified biologist is unable to successfully ensure protection of individual kit foxes, they shall contact the BLM and USFWS for further guidance.
  - (h) For dens outside of the construction zone, but within 50 to 200 feet, the buffer shall include all areas within the radii stated above. Dens in the buffer areas shall not be excavated. If such dens were determined to be empty they shall be covered with plywood or other firmly secured, suitable material to prevent access by kit foxes. Covers shall be installed no more than 14 days prior to the start of construction and remain in place for the duration of construction, after which they shall be removed.
9. In order to avoid or reduce potential impacts to nesting migratory bird species, biologists will conduct preconstruction nesting surveys for these species in appropriate habitat during the appropriate nesting period for these species. Where active nests of these species are identified or suspected to occur during preconstruction surveys, a qualified biologist will establish the following buffer zone around nest sites, and no disturbance activities will occur within these buffer zones until young birds have fledged. Migratory bird species typically nest and rear young from February through August. In order to avoid and minimize impacts on migratory bird species, a 250-foot buffer will be established around active nesting sites when project activities will occur during their active nesting period. No project-related activities will occur within this zone. The buffer area can be removed prior to August if a qualified biologist determines that all juveniles have fledged from occupied nests.

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10. All project activities shall be confined to the approved project footprint, and within existing pre-disturbed access roads. No activities shall take place outside the BLM approved project site.
11. A project representative shall establish restrictions on construction-related traffic to approved construction areas, storage areas, staging and parking areas via signage. Off-road traffic outside of designated project areas shall be prohibited. Project-related vehicles shall observe a 15 mph speed limit in all project areas except on County roads and State and federal highways to avoid impacts to special-status wildlife species.
12. Hazardous materials, fuels, lubricants, and solvents that spill accidentally during project-related activities shall be cleaned up and removed from the project sites as soon as possible according to applicable federal, state and local regulations.
13. All equipment storage and parking during site development and operation shall be confined to the project site or to previously disturbed, off site areas that are not suitable habitat for listed species.
14. All excavated steep-walled holes or trenches in excess of three feet in depth left open for more than one (1) work day shall be provided with one or more escape ramps constructed of earth fill or other material to prevent entrapment of endangered species or other animals. Ramps shall be located at no greater than 1,000 foot intervals (for pipelines etc.) and at not less than 45 degree angles. Trenches shall be inspected for entrapped wildlife each morning prior to onset of construction activities and immediately prior to the end of each working day.
15. Before such holes or trenches are filled they shall be inspected thoroughly for entrapped animals. Any animals discovered shall be allowed to escape voluntarily without harassment before construction activities resume, or removed from the trench or hole by a qualified biologist and allowed to escape unimpeded.
16. All construction pipes, culverts, or similar structures stored at the construction site overnight having a diameter of four (4) inches or greater shall be inspected thoroughly for wildlife species before being buried, capped, or otherwise used or moved in any way. Pipes laid in trenches overnight shall be capped. If during construction a wildlife species is discovered inside a pipe, that section of pipe shall not be moved or, if necessary, moved only once to remove it from the path of construction activity, until the wildlife species has escaped.
17. All food-related trash items such as wrappers, cans, bottles or food scraps generated during construction or during subsequent operation shall be disposed of only in closed containers and regularly removed from the project site.
18. Food items may attract wildlife species onto a project site, consequently exposing such animals to increased risk of injury or mortality. No deliberate feeding of wildlife shall be allowed.
19. To prevent harassment or mortality of wildlife species via predation, or destruction of their dens or nests, no domestic pets shall be permitted on the project site.
20. Use of rodenticides and herbicides is not permitted on the federal lease unless such use is approved on a case-by-case basis by the BLM. This is necessary to prevent primary or secondary poisoning of endangered species using adjacent habitats or depletion of prey upon which sensitive wildlife may depend.
21. CRPC staff and/or its contractors should designate a specific individual as a contact representative between CRPC and all applicable federal, state and local agencies to oversee compliance with these avoidance and mitigation measures.
22. Firearms are prohibited on site.
23. Follow BLM General Guidelines for Conserving Habitat and Minimizing Project Impacts.

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### Location of Proposed Activity:

Fresno County, California.  
Kettleman Hills North Dome,  
Sec 32 T21S R17E NENE 991 FNL 978FEL  
Well No. 32J E72

### Justification/Need:

CRPC submitted a Sundry Notice in June [2016] to complete downhole work on an existing well (E72-32J) and it was approved. However, after reviewing the well pad and associated facilities, they determined work needed to be completed on the pad in order to turn the well back into production.

**Proponent of Activity:** California Resources Production Corporation, filed under VINTAGE PRODUCTION, LLC.

## **PART II: PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW**

The proposed action is subject to the following land use plans:

### **Name of Plan:**

Hollister RMP for the Southern Diablo Mountain Range  
& Central Coast of California

### **Date Approved:**

2007

## **PART III: NEPA REVIEW**

### *Categorical Exclusion Authority*

This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005:

- Maintenance of a minor activity, other than any construction or major renovation of a building or facility.*

### *Extraordinary Circumstances*

This proposal has been reviewed to determine whether any of the extraordinary circumstances in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply. The accompanying Categorical Exclusion Checklist documents the required review.

## **PART IV: Categorical Exclusion Checklist & Screening for Extraordinary Circumstances**

12 Extraordinary Circumstances	Yes	No	Date
Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X	7-19-16
Have significant effects on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11900); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X	7-19-16
Have highly controversial environmental impacts or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		X	7-19-16

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Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X	7-19-16
Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X	7-19-16
Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X	7-19-16
Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the Bureau or the Field Office.		X	7-19-16
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.		X	7-19-16
Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X	7-19-16
Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X	7-19-16
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).		X	7-19-16
Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the species 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).		X	7-19-16

### **PART IV. REVIEW**

Environmental Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

### **PART V: DECISION**

I have determined that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act. I also find that the proposed action is in conformance with the Hollister Field Office Southern Diablo Mountain Range & Central Coast of California Resource Management Plan. Therefore, it is my decision to approve and implement the proposed activity.

Authorized Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date