



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Montrose Service Center
2300 South Townsend Avenue
Montrose, Colorado 81401
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August 16, 2021

Mr. Dustin M. Czapla
Environmental Protection Specialist
Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety
1313 Sherman St, Room 215
Denver, Colorado 80203

RE: Weimer Ranches #4 Mine, File No. M-2021-045

Dear Mr. Czapla,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed construction materials mining operation near Nucla Colorado, also known as the Weimer Ranches #4 Mine. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has reviewed the permit application and conducted a site visit of the proposed project area. The proposed sand and gravel mining operation anticipates mining approximately 10,000 tons of gravel per year. The total surface disturbance for the mine permit boundary is 9.6 acres and is comprised of approximately 20 years of mineable material. Access to the proposed site is from the existing Country Road DD25.

CPW would like to make the following comments regarding this permit application:

The proposed area consists mainly of sagebrush and is general rangeland. Irrigated agriculture fields are located near the property boundary to the north and east. The proposed pit site is mapped as winter range, critical winter range, and winter concentration areas for both mule deer and elk. Deer frequent the area, but are typically moving through due to the degraded state of the rangeland in the proposed area. Wintering elk tend to stay further to the north and east in the irrigated fields for feed and due to the activity around the Weimer Headquarters, which is near the proposed mine.

Mule deer exhibit high site fidelity toward their selected home ranges returning to the exact same area year after year. Disturbance to mule deer winter ranges can cause them to select alternative areas that provide reduced forage quality and cover, potentially increasing their risk of conflicts with agricultural producers, predation, and decreased survival and fawning rates leading to subsequent population declines.

Proper revegetation of disturbed ground will be important for reestablishing habitat for all wildlife species that currently utilize this area. A native seed mix consisting of shrubs and forbs and to a lesser extent grasses will be needed for natural habitat restoration. Outside of direct removal of sagebrush habitat, the introduction and spread of invasive weeds poses the second greatest threat to sagebrush habitat loss through increased fire frequency, erosion, and decreased plant species diversity. As mentioned in the permit application form, CPW would encourage the control of weeds in and around the permitted area.



Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Weimer Ranches #4 Mine. If you have further questions, please contact me at 970-209-2374.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Bonacquista". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Bonacquista
District Wildlife Manager

cc: Rachel Sralla, Area Wildlife Manager
Cory Chick, Southwest Region Manager
Matt Thorpe, Deputy Southwest Region Manager
Brian Magee, Southwest Region Land Use Coordinator
Alyssa Kircher, Terrestrial Biologist
File