



**COLORADO**  
Division of Reclamation,  
Mining and Safety  
Department of Natural Resources

August 30, 2024

Randy Riggs  
Big Bull Dog Trucking, Inc.  
PO Box 271  
Creede, CO 81130

***RE: Soward Ranch Gravel Pit, File No. #M-1988-021 Conversion (CN-1) Agency Comments***

Dear Mr. Riggs:

Please see the attached comments from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the Division Water Resources of regarding CN-1 at the Soward Ranch (M-1988-021).

The Division will continue to review your application and will contact you if additional information is needed.

If you require additional information, or have questions or concerns, please contact me at the Division's Grand Junction Field Office.

Sincerely,

***Todd Jesse***  
Environmental Protection Specialist  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety  
101 South 3<sup>rd</sup>, Suite 301  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
Phone: (970) 243-6299

Cc: Travis Marshall, DRMS  
Steven O'Brian, Environmental, Inc.





**COLORADO**

**Parks and Wildlife**

Department of Natural Resources

Monte Vista Office  
0722 S Co Rd 1 East  
Monte Vista, CO 81144  
P 719.587.6900

7/30/2024

Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety  
Todd Jesse  
1313 Sherman Street, Room 215  
Denver, CO 80203

RE: Soward Ranch Pit - Big Bull Dog Trucking Inc. – File No. M-1988-021

Dear Mr. O'Brian,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Soward Ranch Pit - Big Bull Dog Trucking Inc. Permit Conversion to M1988021 and expansion proposal in Mineral County. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has a statutory responsibility to manage all wildlife species in Colorado; this responsibility is embraced and fulfilled through CPW's mission to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state parks system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. CPW has reviewed the proposal and would like to offer the following comments on potential impacts on wildlife.

The proposed sand and gravel mining project would occur on a 1,390-acre private property owned by Soward Ranch of Creede, CO. This project would encompass ~56 acres, including ~10 acres currently permitted as a sand and gravel pit. The area is currently used for cattle grazing and drops off a bench to the Rio Grande River and associated riparian areas on the north and west sides. It is flanked to the south by Red Mountain Creek and its associated riparian areas and USFS Road #523 to the east. The proposed project area flora consists of native grasses and forbs, fringed sage, and rabbit brush.

Numerous wildlife species utilize the proposed project area and its direct surrounding habitats, including big game species such as deer and elk, small game species such as Gunnison's prairie dogs and coyote, and non-game species such as small mammals, songbirds, and raptors. River otter, a state-listed Threatened species, is also found in the Rio Grande River and its tributaries. CPW offers these comments regarding potential conflicts with wildlife in the proposed project area.

**Big Game:**

Big game species, including elk and mule deer, utilize the proposed project area for forage and travel. Mining activities may impact these species' concentrations and increase conflicts with surrounding private lands. The project area is located within or adjacent to winter range and migratory pathways for these species. The project is within a mapped elk Severe Winter Range - [High Priority Habitat](#) (HPH). CPW recommends no permitted or authorized human activity from December 1st to April 30th annually in Severe Winter Range to protect elk during this vulnerable period. If this cannot be achieved, CPW



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair • Richard Reading, Vice-Chair • Karen Bailey, Secretary • Jessica Beaulieu  
Marie Haskett • Jack Murphy • Gabriel Otero • Duke Phillips, IV • James Jay Tutchton • Eden Vardy

recommends that winter mining activities be restricted to loading and hauling operations. For detailed information on these areas of concern, please contact CPW or visit [cpw.state.co.us/maps](http://cpw.state.co.us/maps) for various ways to access species activity map data. Regarding any potential fencing during the project and post-mining reclamation, CPW recommends using wildlife-friendly fencing designs to reduce wildlife injury and fence maintenance. CPWs "Fencing with Wildlife in Mind" informational PDF can be found [HERE](#).

**Aquatic species:**

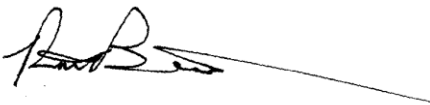
The project area lies within close proximity to Red Mountain Creek and the Rio Grande River. This portion of the Rio Grande River is classified as a Sportfish Management Water - HPH. There are special fishing regulations from the lower boundary of River Hill Campground downstream to the Highway 149 bridge at South Fork to protect fish populations and enhance public fishing opportunities for species, including rainbow and brown trout. CPW recommends no ground disturbance year-round within 500 feet of the ordinary high water mark. CPW's primary concern regarding aquatic species is maintaining water quality by limiting stream erosion and sedimentation. CPW recommends that Best Management Practices for sediment runoff control be outlined and included in the permit.

**Non-native/Invasive Weeds:**

One of the area's most visible and immediate threats to ecosystem health is non-native/invasive weeds. Invasive weeds typically flourish following surface disturbance, and active weed management should be incorporated during and after the lifespan of the proposed project. Regarding post-mining reclamation, native drought-tolerant revegetation is recommended. CPW is happy to provide a drought-tolerant native seed mix upon request, as the proposed reclamation seed mix originally was void of a native forb and shrub component.

CPW appreciates the opportunity to be actively involved throughout this planning process and would happily discuss wildlife issues with you and/or the project proponent. If you have any questions, please contact Creede District Wildlife Manager Brent Woodward at (719) 850-6366.

Sincerely,



Rick Basagoitia  
Area Wildlife Manager – San Luis Valley

cc: SW Region File, Area 17 file, SW Region Land Use Coordinator – Peter Foote





## Response to Reclamation Permit Conversion Application Consideration

DATE: July 19, 2024  
TO: Todd Jesse  
CC: Division 3 Office; District 20 Water Commissioner  
FROM: Katharine Anderson  
RE: Soward Ranch Pit, File No. M-1988-021  
Operator: Big Bull Dog Trucking, Inc  
Contact: Randy Riggs, (719) 658-2342  
Sec. 18, Twp. 40N, Rng. 1W, NM P.M., Mineral County

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### CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL

- ☒ The proposed operation does not anticipate exposing groundwater. Therefore, exposure of ground water must not occur during or after mining operations.
- ☒ If storm water is contained on-site, the applicant should be aware that, unless the storm water detention structures can meet the requirements of a “storm water detention and infiltration facility” as defined in section 37-92-602(8), Colorado Revised Statutes, the structure may be subject to administration by this office. The applicant should review DWR’s *Administrative Statement Regarding the Management of Storm Water Detention Facilities and Post-Wildland Fire Facilities in Colorado* (available at: <http://water.state.co.us/DWRIPub/Documents/DWR%20Storm%20Water%20Statement.pdf>) to ensure that the notification, construction and operation of the proposed structure meets statutory and administrative requirements. The applicant is encouraged to use *Colorado Stormwater Detention and Infiltration Facility Notification Portal*, located online at: <https://maperture.digitaldataservices.com/gvh/?viewer=cswdif>, to meet the notification requirements.
- ☒ Other: All water used on-site shall be a legal supply of water provided by an appropriate supplier. The applicant shall confirm the legality of any proposed source of water supply with the Division of Water Resources prior to use in the operation.

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**COMMENTS:** DWR office identified the location of the pit to be in section 18, which conflicts with the section 2 location claimed on portions of the application.

The local Lead Water Commissioner, Sam Rikkenbach, may be contacted at (719) 852-4351 or [Sam.Rikkenbach@state.co.us](mailto:Sam.Rikkenbach@state.co.us) regarding legal water supplies in the area.

