

### 33.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The following sections describe the existing environment (Affected Environment), as presented by individual resource elements that would be affected by the Proposed Action and Alternatives; and the potential direct and indirect impacts (Environmental Consequences) of the proposed Quitchupah Creek Road. This chapter also evaluates direct and indirect impacts of the Alternatives to the Proposed Action that are designed to reduce or eliminate potential impacts resulting from the Proposed Action.

The BLM's NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) requires that all EIS documents address certain Critical Elements of the Human Environment. The following Critical Elements are not present or are not affected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives and are not discussed in this EIS:

#### **Critical Elements of the Human Environment Not Carried Forward for Analysis in this EIS**

##### Hazardous or Solid Wastes:

No hazardous or solid waste concerns exist in the Project Area. The Proposed Road would not result in the introduction of hazardous wastes to the area. Further, all Project related solid waste would be disposed of properly.

##### Drinking Water/Groundwater Quality:

There are no drinking water sources in or near the Project Area watersheds, or downstream of the project, thus drinking water would not be impacted as a result of the Proposed Action or Alternatives. Only minimal, isolated occurrences of groundwater are expected to be intercepted during road construction (i.e. near wetlands and stream crossings) and construction methods would not affect the quality of this groundwater. Road usage would not affect groundwater.

##### Topography, Geology, and Minerals:

The road construction and operation would not affect overall topography or geology in the area. Changes to topography due to road cuts/fills and changes to exposed rock surfaces due to blasting in the road corridor would be localized. No mining claims are located in the immediate Project Area (BLM records). Each road alternative alignment follows canyon bottoms where locatable mineral deposits would not be economically feasible to mine. None of the authorized Federal oil and gas leases in the Project Area are currently active. The coal leases near the Project Area belong to Canyon Fuel Company, the owners of the SUFCO Mine. There are no other leases for minerals and no authorized disposal sites for saleable minerals, such as sand and gravel. Sand and gravel would be extracted for road construction from an existing aggregate borrow source located on private lands east of SR-10.

##### Air Quality:

The Clean Air Act Amendments, National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), are health-based standards which serve to limit the concentrations of the following air pollutants: particulates less than 10 microns ( $PM_{10}$ ); sulfur dioxide ( $SO_2$ ); oxides of nitrogen ( $NO_x$ ); carbon monoxide (CO); and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) (VOCs are regulated because they are a precursor of ozone). The Project Area is an attainment area for all NAAQS pollutants. No NAAQS would be impacted by the proposed project or alternatives. Additional Federal regulations, Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD), limit the degradation of air quality in any area which is attainment for NAAQS. Class II is the most common designation, which applies to the Project Area; this designation would not be impacted by the project. Although

vehicle traffic on the current road results in emissions of criteria pollutants, no standards would be affected by the project. A fugitive dust control plan would be required by the State of Utah to suppress particulate emissions during project implementation.

#### Noise:

The Project Area is generally characterized as rural or undeveloped. Ambient or background noise in the majority of the Project Area is typically natural outdoor and wildlife sounds. Additional noise at the west end of the Project Area results from mining and coal truck activity associated with the SUFCO Mine. The town of Emery, 3 miles northeast of the Project Area, can be characterized as a rural community. Local traffic and community activity are also noise sources associated with the town of Emery and are classified as ambient noise. Coal from the SUFCO Mine is currently transported through the town of Emery. The CONSOL Mine also transports coal along SR-10 and through Emery, utilizing a road which connects with SR-10 just north of Quitchupah Creek. There would be no additional coal transported in association with this project, and no additional noise in the vicinity of Emery.

#### Environmental Justice:

Under Executive Order 12898, each Federal Agency must identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs on minority populations and low-income populations. There are no high or adverse human or environmental effects from implementation of the Alternatives, and no specific minority or low-income populations would be affected by the Alternatives; therefore, there are no impacts to environmental justice.

#### **Critical Elements of the Human Environment Carried Forward for Analysis**

The following Critical Elements are present within the Proposed Action area or may be affected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives, and are carried forward for analysis:

Water Resources and Floodplains - Section 3.2

Soils, including Prime or Unique Farmlands - Section 3.3

Vegetation and Wetlands, including Riparian Zones and Noxious Weeds - Section 3.4

Wildlife Resources - Section 3.5

Fisheries and Aquatic Resources - Section 3.6

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species - Section 3.7

Range Resources - Section 3.8

Land Use - Section 3.9

Visual, Recreation, and Wilderness - Section 3.10

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Wild and Scenic River Eligibility – Section 3.11

Cultural and Paleontological Resources - Section 3.12

Native American Concerns - Section 3.13

Transportation - Section 3.14

Socioeconomic Resources - Section 3.15

The construction and continued operation of the proposed road would result in **irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources, residual adverse impacts, and cumulative effects**. These types of impacts are described below and addressed for each resource in the Affected Environment.

An **irretrievable commitment of a resource** includes use or consumption of a resource that is neither renewable nor recoverable for use by future generations. An example of this would be the mining and

extraction of coal reserves. An **irreversible commitment of a resource** is a primary or secondary impact that limits the future options for a resource. **Residual adverse impacts** are those effects remaining after implementation of mitigation measures. **Cumulative effects** result from the incremental effects of the Proposed Action or an action Alternative when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

Implementation of the Proposed Action or Alternatives would cause resources to be consumed, committed, or lost during and after closure of the project. Lands committed to the right-of-way would be irreversibly lost to other uses as the proposed road would be a public road integrated into the public transportation system of Utah. There are no connected actions or other facilities to be built in conjunction with the proposed road.

The USFS and the BLM have reviewed all aspects of the Proposed Action (Alternative B - Quitchupah Creek Road Alignment) and the following Alternatives to the Proposed Action: Alternative A - No Action Alternative; Alternative C - Alternate Junction with SR-10 and Alternate Design of Quitchupah Route; Alternative D - Water Hollow Road. The review included applicant committed measures to avoid, minimize, and reduce adverse impacts to the environment.