



Strachan Exploration Proposed  
South Piceance Creek #3 Well Location and Access Road:  
Class III Cultural Resource Inventory,  
Rio Blanco County, Colorado

by  
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(expires 9-22-95)

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## Introduction

Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (MAC) of Eagle, Colorado performed a Class III cultural resource inventory on Strachan Exploration's proposed South Piceance Creek #3 well location in the NE/SE/SW/NW of Section 19, T3S, R95W, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. The project area is on private surface/federal minerals land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) White River Resource Area. The proposed well location lies on a steep sided, north trending ridge between Sprague Gulch and Harrison Gulch. Approximately 700 m of existing two-track will be upgraded between this locality and proposed South Piceance Creek #4 through the center of the east half of the east half of Section 19, T3S, R95W. In all, 12 acres were inventoried. Fieldwork was authorized by the BLM and carried out under the stipulations of BLM Cultural Resources Permit # C39290 (expires 9-22-95).

Fieldwork was completed on June 17, 1994 by MAC archaeologist Patrick K. O'Brien. A single isolated find (5RB3667) was recorded during this project. This resource is not recommended as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and thus there will be no adverse affect by the well pad construction. Cultural resource clearance is recommended for the proposed South Piceance Creek #3 well location and access road. All field notes, maps, and pertinent information are on file at the MAC office in Eagle.

## Environment

The project location is in the Piceance Basin subdivision of the Colorado Plateau physiographic province (Riggs 1960). The area is characterized by deeply incised canyons and remnant plateaus, ridges, and mesas. Geologically, the Piceance Basin is dominated by the Tertiary age Uinta Formation sandstones and siltstones (Tweto 1979).

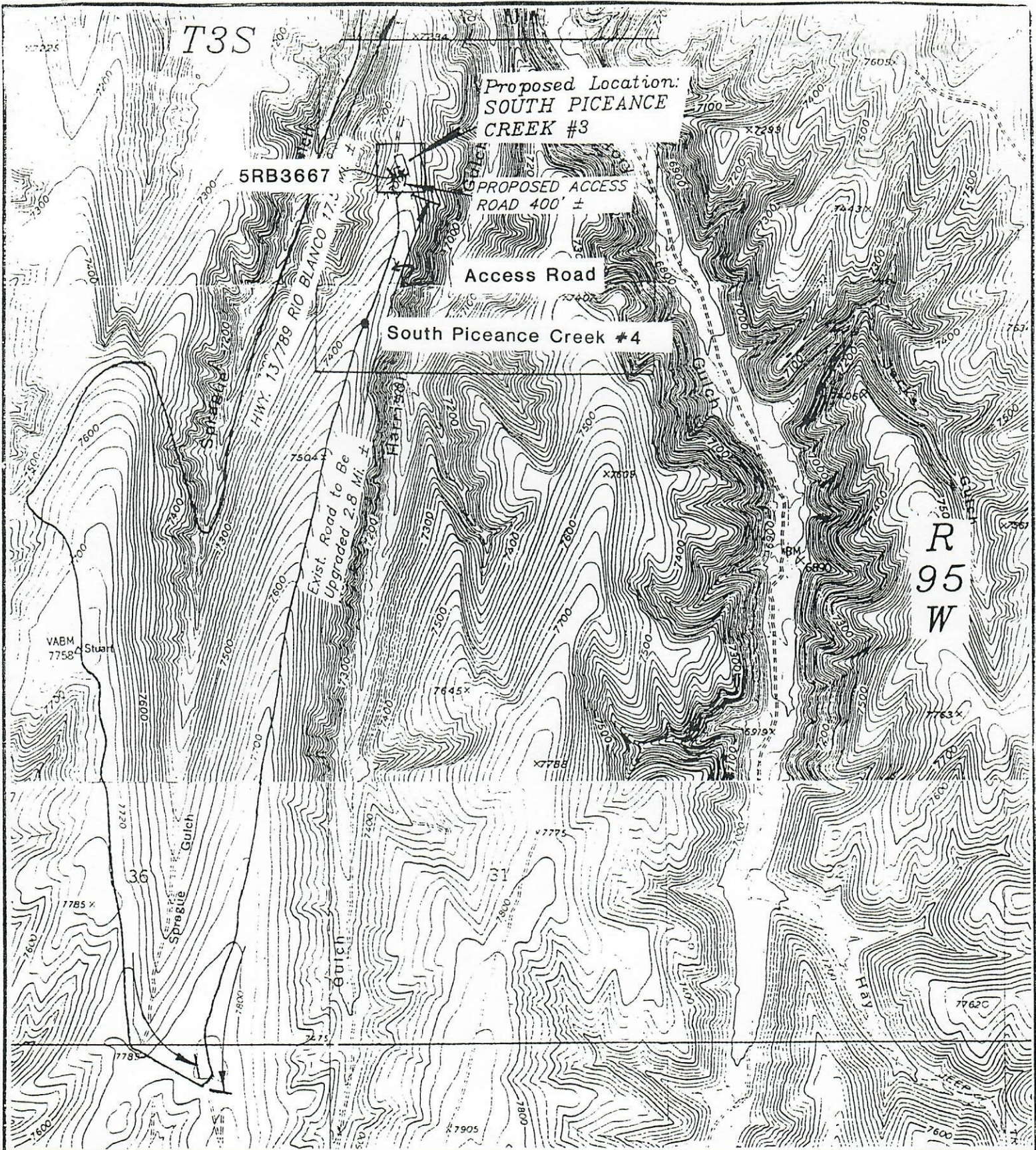
The proposed well location and access are on the top of a narrow north trending ridge. The ridge drops steeply both into Sprague Gulch to the west and Harrison Gulch to the east. The proposed well location lies on a portion of the ridge where it flattens out relative to the remaining ridge top.

Soils are residual and colluvial, tan to brown sand, with angular sandstone gravels. Tabular sandstone bedrock is eroding on the ridge top, especially on its edges. Vegetation consists of a piñon-juniper woodland, but is predominately piñon. Also observed were service berry, mountain mahogany, scrub oak, prickly pear cactus, grasses, forbs, sagebrush, and snakeweed. The vegetation coverage was between 40-50 % resulting in good visibility.

## Existing Data and Literature Review

A files search was requested through the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) in Denver on June 9, 1994. An additional search was done by BLM White River Resource Area archaeologist Michael Selle in Meeker, Colorado on June 10, 1994. No previous cultural resource inventories were completed in Section 19, T3S, R95W, and no cultural resources have been recorded.

General research objectives for Northwest Colorado are outlined in the Colorado RP-#3 documents for history (Husband 1984) and prehistory (Grady 1984).



**No Name Ridge 7.5' 1952**  
**McCarthy Gulch 7.5' 1971**  
 T O P O G R A P H I C .  
 M A P " B "  
 SCALE: 1" = 2000'  
 DATE: 6-13-94 D.J.S.



**Figure 1**  
**STRACHAN EXPLORATION**  
 SOUTH PICEANCE CREEK #3  
 SECTION 19, T3S, R95W, 6th P.M.  
 • 1980' FNL 1250' FWL

General prehistoric research concerns for Northwest Colorado include the development of a local chronology, settlement and subsistence patterning, cultural change (diachronic processes), regional variations (synchronic distributions) and paleoenvironmental data (Grady 1984:53, 57-62). A moderate number of cultural resource studies have been conducted in northwest Colorado. Four studies which provide some historic and prehistoric overviews for this area are Athearn (1982), Creasman (1981), Grady (1980) and La Point et al. (1981).

Cultural phases of northwest Colorado (Grady 1984) have been divided into four stages: Paleoindian, Archaic, Formative, and Protohistoric/Historic. Regionally, the Paleoindian stage is represented only by surface finds in the form of projectile points. The Archaic period is manifested by sites representing broader based subsistence strategies. The Formative Period reflects sedentism, horticulture, and presence of ceramics. Sites assigned to the Fremont culture, a representative of the Formative period, are fairly well represented in the general region of the current project. The Protohistoric period is also well represented in the general area with Numic occupation sites. Historically, the land was used primarily for ranching, limited mining activities, and energy development. Various historical themes include Ute-Euroamerican Contact, Early Mining and Transportation, Railroads, Ranching, Logging, among others (Husband 1984). In modern times, the area has been used primarily for ranching, recreation, and energy development.

#### Statement of Objectives

Following the mandated National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) guidelines, this project was inventoried to detect presence of cultural resources. Any discovered cultural resources would be evaluated to their significance with respect to eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Eligibility would be determined via surface evidence of artifacts and/or features, or possibility of intact sub-surface cultural materials. This eligibility is based on NRHP criteria and the resources's integrity (36 CFR §60.4).

#### Field Methodology

A ten acre block centered on the proposed center stake location was inventoried using pedestrian transects spaced at no more than 20 m and oriented east-west. A 50 foot corridor was surveyed for the proposed access road. The access road will be routed around large piñon and juniper so a wider corridor was surveyed around these trees. Areas of subsurface exposure (cutbanks, rodent burrows, ant hills) were given special attention.

#### Results and Recommendations

A single isolated find (5RB3667) was recorded during this inventory. It is a stage 3 biface fragment of brownish maroon mottled quartzite. There is diagonal parallel flaking along one face, and the artifact appears to have broken along an inclusion. 5RB3667 is recommended as not eligible for inclusion on the

NRHP, and thus will not be adversely affected by the construction of the well pad. Cultural resource clearance is recommended for the proposed South Piceance Creek #3.

#### References Cited

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