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**Cultural Resource Inventory Report
on the
Proposed Park Mountain #2-26-2-104 Well Location
and Related Access in
Rio Blanco County, Colorado
for
Mitchell Energy Corporation**

Declaration of Negative Findings

GRI Project No. 9342

July 3, 1993

Prepared by

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Submitted to

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Introduction

At the request of Mitchell Energy Corporation and the Craig District Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), a cultural resource inventory of the proposed Park Mountain #2-26-2-104 well location in Rio Blanco County, Colorado, was conducted by Carl E. Conner of Grand River Institute under BLM Antiquities Permit No. C-52775. This work was done to meet requirements of Executive Order 11593, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and other Federal Laws and regulations that protect cultural resources. A prefield check-in/files search made through the BLM White River Resource Area Office on 1 July 1993 showed no cultural resources were previously recorded in the study area. Field work was performed on 2 July. A total of about 10 acres was inspected and no cultural resources were identified. Accordingly, archaeological clearance is recommended.

Location of Project Area

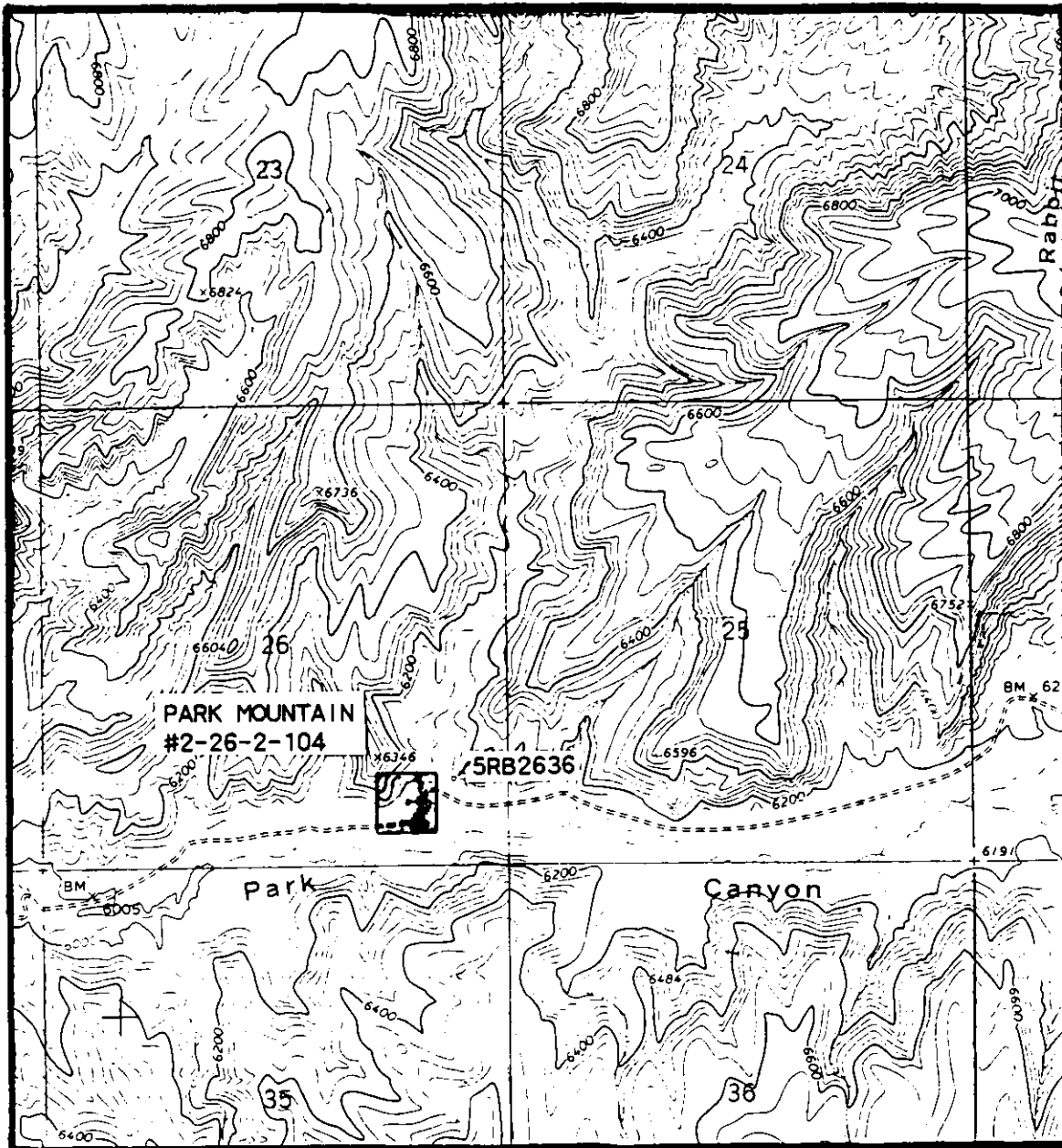
The project area is in northwest Colorado about 24 miles southwest of Rangely. The well location lies in T. 2S., R. 104W., Section 26, 6th P.M. (Figure 1).

Environment

The project area is located on the border of the Uinta Basin and the Douglas Creek Arch, major geologic subdivisions of the Colorado Plateau. The basin is distinctively bowl-shaped and bounded by mountains on all sides. The geology of the basin consists of Quarternary- and Tertiary-age deposits which include Holocene and Pleistocene pediment deposits, and Eocene-age fluvial and lacustrine sedimentary rocks. The Douglas Creek Arch separates the Uinta Basin on the west from the Piceance Basin on the east. It began as a low upwarp during the Late Jurassic but never stood very high. It consists of sandstone and shales of the Cretaceous-age Mesa Verde Group (Young and Young 1977).

The well is located within Park Canyon on a bench north of a wash. This and other washes of the area drain generally northwest to join the White River. Elevations in the study area are between 6060 and 6200 feet. Two main plant communities are found in the area, sage shrublands and pinyon-juniper woodland. Vegetation cover is about 40 percent.

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Dragon Quadrangle
Colorado--Rio Blanco County
Photorevised 1972
USGS 7.5' Series (topographic)
Scale 1:24000
Contour interval 40 feet
T. 2S., R. 104W., 6th P.M.

Figure 1. Cultural resource inventory of the proposed Park Mountain #2-26-2-104 well location in Rio Blanco County, Colorado, for Mitchell Energy Corporation. Area surveyed for cultural resource is highlighted. [GRI Project No. 9342, 7/3/93]

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Numerous wildlife species inhabit the area. Mule deer, coyote and elk are common, cottontail rabbits, jackrabbits and various rodents. Predators include coyote, mountain lion, and black bear. Bird species observed include the jay, raven, flicker, long-eared owl, and various other raptors.

A cool semiarid climate prevails in the study area. Temperatures can drop to -30 degrees F during the winter and summer temperatures rarely go above 100 degrees F. There is a maximum of 100 frost-free days. Moisture in the form of snow in the winter and rain in the summer ranges from 10 to 15 inches annually (USDA SCS 1982). Paleoenvironmental data for the area are scant, but it is agreed that gross climatic conditions have remained fairly constant over the last 12,000 years. Still, changes in effective moisture and cooling/warming trends probably affected the prehistoric occupation of the area.

Files Search

A prefield check-in/files search made through the BLM White River Resource Area Office on 1 July 1993 showed no sites were recorded in the immediate vicinity of the project area. The nearest site is 5RB2636, an historic structure, which lies east of the ten-acre study area.

Regional archaeological studies suggest nearly continuous human occupation of west-central Colorado for the past 12,000 years. Evidence of the PaleoIndian Tradition, the Archaic Tradition, Formative Cultures, and Protohistoric/ Historic Utes has been found. Historic records suggest occupation or use by Euroamerican trappers, settlers, miners, and ranchers as well. Overviews of the prehistory and history of the region are provided in the Colorado Historical Society's publications entitled Northwest Colorado Prehistoric Context (Grady 1984) and Colorado Plateau Country Historic Context (Husband 1984).

Study Objectives

The purpose of the study was to identify and record all cultural resources within the area of potential impact and to assess their significance and eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The presence of resources was considered unlikely because of the lack of previous finds in the vicinity.

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Field Methods

A 100 percent pedestrian cultural resources survey of the proposed well location was made by walking a series of concentric circles around the flagged center to a diameter of 750 feet. A total of about 10 acres was intensively surveyed for cultural resources.

Cultural resources were sought as surface exposures and were characterized as sites or isolated finds. Sites were defined by the presence of six or more artifacts and/or significant feature(s) indicative of patterned human activity. Isolated finds were defined by the presence of 1 to 5 artifacts apparently surficial in nature. Cultural resources encountered were to be recorded to standards set by the Colorado Preservation Office (CPO) of the State Historical Society.

Study Findings/Recommendations

As expected, no cultural resources were encountered during the survey. The south and east portions of the study area were heavily disturbed by road construction and gully wash erosion. Accordingly, archaeological clearance is recommended.

References

Grady, James

1984 Northwest Colorado Prehistoric Context. Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

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