



ASSOCIATED GOVERNMENTS
OF NORTHWEST COLORADO

March 23, 2015

Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E. Market Street
Meeker, CO 81641.

ATTN: Kent Walter, Field Manager; Paul Dagget, Mining Engineer

Re: Natural Soda Inc. Expansion

Dear Messrs. Walter and Dagget,

On behalf of the member governments of the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado, we wish to express our wholehearted support for the proposed expansion of Natural Soda, Incorporated's Rio Blanco County facility.

Sustained economic development is of critical importance to our association and the people we represent. Natural Soda Inc. is a key employer in our region, and contributes in no small measure to the local economy. The company, based in the heart of our region, is one of the largest producers of sodium bicarbonate in North America, and markets their product nationwide, and also to more than 20 different countries around the world. This expansion will allow them to double their production to 500,000 tons per year, and continue to meet demand for this important and valuable product, which has applications in many industries, including food and medical. The Piceance Basin contains one of the largest deposits of this resource on the continent, and we are proud to have this industry here.

The expansion will create a number of new jobs, including up to 30 full time jobs at the plant itself. In addition, several transportation contractor jobs will be created to help move the processed material from the plant to railheads in Rifle, CO. Many more jobs will be created during the construction phase. And as with any economic development, there will be spin-off economic benefits to the surrounding communities.

All of these benefits will come without detrimental impact on the environment and the public lands on which the company operates. The company's process for extracting the sodium bicarbonate, a technique known as "solution mining", is safe and environmentally benign, leaving little footprint. The expansion will only result in the drilling of a total of 3 production well pairs, with a total disturbance per pair of only 2 acres. Interim reclamation plans reduce this impact even further. The disturbance associated with the plant expansion itself is also limited to

17 acres, all at the current plant site. We would note that the previous expansion, completed in 2013, resulted in no measurable environmental damage.

In closing, we reiterate our support for the expansion of the Natural Soda Inc. processing plant in Rio Blanco County, and applaud the preliminary Environmental Assessment's draft Finding of No Significant Impact for the proposal. We are looking forward to a final decision that will subsequently allow the expansion to proceed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Samson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Samson
Chairman, AGNC
Garfield County

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Eskelson". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a prominent vertical stroke on the right side.

Jeff Eskelson
Vice Chairman, AGNC
Rio Blanco County