



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Ecological Services  
764 Horizon Drive, Building B  
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506-3946

2006 SEP 22 PM 1:05

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
ES/GJ-6-CO-94-F017  
TAILS 65413-2006-I-0170

September 21, 2006

*[Handwritten signature]* 9/26/06  
Desa  
Louise

## Memorandum

To: Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado

From: *[Handwritten signature]* Western Colorado Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Grand Junction, Colorado

*[Handwritten signature]*

Subject: Emerald Mountain Management Plan

This responds to your undated letter received in our office on August 23<sup>rd</sup> regarding the Emerald Mountain Management Plan. The Fish and Wildlife Service has reviewed the biological assessment you provided and concur with your conclusion that the proposed Management Plan is not likely to adversely affect Canada lynx, or bald eagle for the reasons outlined below. Yellow-billed cuckoo is a candidate species and we appreciate its consideration in the biological assessment, however, your determination does not require written concurrence from the Service.

### Canada Lynx

As stated in the biological assessment, 1,985 acres of potentially suitable lynx habitat occurs on the Emerald Mountain Parcel. However this parcel is isolated from large contiguous blocks of lynx habitats on the Routt National Forest. The parcel does not contain sufficient habitat, by itself, to support an individual lynx as a home range. Due to its isolation, in terms of distance, non-lynx habitat, and human developments, it is unlikely that lynx would occupy this site for any length of time. In the unlikely event that a lynx managed to encounter the suitable habitats on Emerald Mountain, a lynx is unlikely to remain for long periods of time, returning to larger blocks of habitat to the southwest of the site.

We believe that, due to the limited quantity of available habitat, its isolation from larger blocks of suitable habitat, and the extremely unlikely event that a lynx would occupy this site, it would be unreasonable to actively manage this site as part of a lynx analysis unit, or manage it as an individual LAU. Therefore, we concur with your conclusion that the proposed management of the Emerald Mountain parcel may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect lynx.

### Bald Eagle

Your biological assessment stated that the Management Plan would have limited or no impacts to riparian habitats along Cow Creek and the BLM would manage livestock to comply with the Colorado Public Land Health Standards to provide suitable roosting habitat for bald eagles.

Power line construction would conform to standards that minimize raptor collisions and electrocutions. If any bald eagle roosting or nesting sites are identified on the parcel, the BLM will implement timing and buffer zone restrictions. Therefore, the Service concurs that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle.

The Service concurs with your determination that water depletions associated with activities proposed under the Emerald Mountain Management Plan would adversely affect the Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*), humpback chub (*Gila cypha*), and bonytail (*Gila elegans*) and their designated critical habitat. All projects anticipated under the Management Plan would be small water depletions (less than 100 acre-feet) and can be addressed by the programmatic biological opinion issued to the BLM on June 13, 1994 (amended March 2, 2000 and September 27, 2005) for small water depletions caused by BLM authorized activities in the Colorado River basin in Colorado (biological opinion number ES/GJ-6-CO-94-F017). This biological opinion does not require individual consultation for each small depletion project, but it does require the BLM to provide the Service an annual report of all water depletions associated with BLM authorized activities. Therefore, the Little Snake Field office should include the depletions associated with the Emerald Mountain Management Plan in their annual report to the BLM State Office.

If the Service can be of further assistance, please contact Patty Gelatt at the letterhead address or (970) 243-2778, extension 26.