

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Glenwood Springs Field Office
50629 US Highway 6 & 24
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-140-2008-022 EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: 0507717

PROJECT NAME: Grazing Permit Renewal

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T.8S., R.91W., Sec. 8, 17, & 20

See attached map, Pole Creek and Cottonwood Allotment # 08126

APPLICANT: 0507717

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

PROPOSED ACTION: The Proposed Action is to renew a term grazing permit for the above applicant. The proposed grazing schedule changes livestock numbers, period of use, and percent public land. The change reflects trailing use on the BLM and intermingled private lands and matches permitted numbers on the Forest Service. Grazing preference in animal unit months (AUMS) will remain unchanged from the previous permit. The permit would be issued for a 10-year period, unless the base property is leased for less, but for purposes of the EA, we are assuming 10 years of grazing by this or another applicant (in case of transfer). The proposed action is in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.2. The tables below summarize the level of scheduled grazing use and grazing preference for the proposed permit renewal.

Current Grazing Schedule:

Allotment Name/No.	Livestock No./Kind	Grazing Period	%PL	AUMS
Pole Creek and Cottonwood 08126	115 Cattle	05/16 - 06/15	100	117

Proposed Grazing Schedule:

Allotment Name/No.	Pasture	Livestock No./Kind	Grazing Period	%PL	AUMS
Pole Creek and Cottonwood 08126	Home	202 Cattle	05/01 – 05/29	5	10
	Pole Cr Cottonwood	202 Cattle	05/29 - 06/15	75	90
	Pole Cr Cottonwood	202 Cattle	10/15 – 10/16	75	10
	Home	202 Cattle	10/17 – 10/30	5	5

Grazing Preference (AUMS)

Allotment Name/No.	Total	Suspended	Active
Pole Creek and Cottonwood 08126	122	7	115

The following term and condition was included on the previous permit and will be included on the renewed permit:

Maintenance of range improvements is required and shall be in accordance with all approved cooperative agreements and range improvement permits. Maintenance shall be completed prior to turnout.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED:

The No Grazing alternative has been eliminated from further consideration. No unresolved conflicts involving alternative use of available resources have been identified. For this reason, discontinuance of grazing use (No Grazing) will not be considered or assessed.

The No Action alternative has also been eliminated from further consideration. The No Action alternative would involve reissuing the permit/lease with current terms and conditions and no additional stipulations would be added to the permit/lease. Reissuing the permit/lease without the new stipulations would be unrealistic due to current Washington Office and Colorado State Office policies.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:

These permits/leases are subject to renewal or transfer at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior for a period of up to ten years. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has the authority to renew the livestock grazing permits/leases consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and Glenwood Springs Field Office 's Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. This Plan/EIS has been amended by Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado.

The action is needed for the following reasons: (1) to meet the livestock grazing management objective of the Resource Management Plan of providing 56,885 animal unit months of livestock forage commensurate with meeting public land health standards, (2) to continue to allow livestock grazing on the specified allotment, (3) to meet the forage demands of local livestock operations, (4) to provide stability to these operations and help preserve their rural agricultural lands for open space and wildlife habitat, and (5) to allow use of native rangeland resource for conversion into protein suitable for human consumption.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The proposed action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan.

Date Approved: Jan. 1984, revised 1988, amended in November 1991 - Oil and Gas Leasing and Development - Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; amended Nov. 1996 - Colorado Standards and Guidelines; amended in August 1997 - Castle Peak Travel Management Plan; amended in March 1999 - Oil and Gas Leasing & Development Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; amended in November 1999 - Red Hill Plan Amendment; and

amended in September 2002 – Fire Management Plan for Wildland Fire Management and Prescriptive Vegetation Treatment Guidance.

Decision Number/Page: The action is in conformance with Administrative Actions (pg. 5) and Livestock Grazing Management (pg. 20).

Decision Language: Administrative actions states, “Various types of actions will require special attention beyond the scope of this plan. Administrative actions are the day-to-day transactions required to serve the public and to provide optimal use of the resources. These actions are in conformance with the plan”. The livestock grazing management objective as amended states, “To provide 56,885 animal unit months of livestock forage commensurate with meeting public land health standards.”

Standards for Public Land Health:

In January 1997, Colorado BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health. The five standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. The BLM is in the process of completing land health assessments on a landscape basis. The landscape which includes this permit is scheduled for an assessment in 2009. Since the assessment has not been completed on this allotment, there will be no determination made on achievement of the standards. However, the environmental analysis must address whether the proposed action or alternatives being analyzed would result in impacts that would maintain, improve, or deteriorate land health conditions relative to these five standards.

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 302 OF FLPMA RELATIVE TO THE COMB WASH DECISION

A review of applicable planning documents and a thoughtful consideration of new issues and new demands for the use of the public lands involved in this allotment have been made. This analysis concludes that the current land and resource uses are appropriate.

Reasons for the conclusion are: No new issues or new demands for the use of public lands involved in this grazing allotment have been identified since approval of the land use plan and amendments.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the proposed action and no action alternative. In addition, the section presents comparative analyses of the direct and indirect consequences on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the various actions.

A variety of laws, regulations, and policy directives mandate the evaluation of the effects of a proposed action and alternative(s) on certain critical environmental elements. Not all of the critical elements that require inclusion in this EA are present, or if they are present, may not be

affected by the proposed action and alternative (Table 2). Only those mandatory critical elements that are present and affected are described in the following narrative.

In addition to the mandatory critical elements, there are additional resources that would be impacted by the proposed action and alternative. These are presented under Other Affected Resources.

Table 2. Critical Elements of the Human Environment									
<i>Critical Element</i>	<i>Present</i>		<i>Affected</i>		<i>Critical Element</i>	<i>Present</i>		<i>Affected</i>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No
Air Quality	X			X	Prime or Unique Farmlands		X		X
ACECs		X		X	Special Status Species*				
Cultural Resources		X		X	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		X		X
Environmental Justice	X			X	Water Quality, Surface and Ground*	X		X	
Floodplains		X		X	Wetlands and Riparian Zones*	X		X	
Invasive, Non-native Species	X			X	Wild and Scenic Rivers		X		X
Migratory Birds		X		X	Wilderness/ WSAs		X		X
Native American Religious Concerns		X		X					

* Public Land Health Standard

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: There are no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern within the proposed action area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: N/A

CULTURAL RESOURCES and NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

Affected Environment:

Affected Environment: Range permit renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Additional range improvements (e.g., fences, spring improvements) are subject to compliance requirements under Section 106 and will undergo standard cultural resources inventory and evaluation procedures. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment (GSFO #1008-1) was completed for the Pole Creek Allotment (#08126) on January 31, 2008 following the procedures and guidance outlined in the 1980 National Programmatic Agreement Regarding the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-99-007, IM-CO-99-019, CO-2001-026, and CO-2002-029. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. A copy of the cultural resource assessment is available at the GSFO office.

Allotment Number	Acres Inventoried at a Class III level	Acres NOT Inventoried at a Class III Level	Percent (%) Allotment Inventory data Class III level	Number of Cultural Resources known in allotment	High Potential of Historic Properties (yes/no)	Management Recommendations (Additional inventory required and historic properties to be visited)
08126	118	1529	7	0	low	No additional acres need to be inventoried. 27% of the allotment has 30%+ slopes.
Total	118	1529	7	0		

Five Class III cultural resource inventories (GSFO #'s 310, 1047, 1145A, 8205-2, and 8307-2) have been conducted within this allotment. No historic properties eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places have been identified. Unidentified historic era sites within this allotment could represent a time frame from the late 1800's through the 1950's; prehistoric sites could represent a time range from 5,000 to 10,000 years before present.

Based on available data, there is a low potential for historic properties within this allotment. Subsequent site field visits, inventory, and periodic monitoring may have to be done to identify adverse grazing impacts if historic properties are identified within the term of the permit and as funds are made available. If the BLM determines that grazing activities will adversely impact the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO.

At present, there are no known areas of Native American concern within the Allotment. On November 15, 2007 the Glenwood Springs Field Office mailed a informational letter and maps to the Ute Tribe (Northern Ute Tribe), Southern Ute Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribes, identifying the proposed 2008 grazing permit renewals. No response has been received. In the past the Tribes have not had any concerns with grazing permit renewals. If new data is disclosed, new terms and conditions may have to be added to the permit to accommodate their concerns. The BLM will take no action that would adversely affect these areas or location without consultation with the appropriate Native Americans.

Environmental Consequences: The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate include trampling, chiseling, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts, artifact breakage, and impacts from standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullying, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

If additional historic properties are located during the subsequent range developments

field inventory, these properties will also be assessed for livestock grazing impacts within the term of the permit.

Mitigation: Maintenance of range improvements not previously inventoried or new improvements may require cultural resource inventories. This Allotment may be found to contain historic properties and/or resources protected under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, E.O. 13007, or other statutes and executive orders. The BLM may require modification to development proposals to protect such properties, or disapprove any activity that is likely to result in damage to historic properties or areas of Native American concern.

Education/Discovery stipulation needs to be added to the lease renewal. The permittee and all persons specifically associated with grazing operations must be informed that any objects or sites of cultural, paleontological, or scientific value such as historic or prehistoric resources, graves or grave markers, human remains, ruins, cabins, rock art, fossils, or artifacts shall not be damaged, destroyed, removed, moved, or disturbed. If in connection with allotment operations under this authorization any of the above resources are encountered, the proponent shall immediately suspend all activities in the immediate vicinity of the discovery that might further disturb such materials and notify the BLM authorized officer of the findings. The discovery must be protected until notified in writing to proceed by the authorized officer (36CFR800.110 & 112, 43CFR 0.4).

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: Review of 2004 data from US Census Bureau indicates the median annual income of Garfield County averages \$50,119 and is neither an impoverished or wealthy county. Median annual income of Mesa County averages \$40,045 and is not an impoverished or wealthy county. U.S. Census Bureau data from 2006 shows the minority population of Garfield and Mesa County comprises less than 0.7 % of the total population of Colorado^a.

Garfield County	Mesa County
Median Household Income (2004)	Median Household Income (2004)
Estimate	Estimate
\$50,119	\$40,045

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed action and alternatives are not expected to create a disproportionately high and adverse human health impact or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations within the area.

^a Source U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report
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INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: No noxious weeds or invasive, non-native species have been officially documented on the Pole Creek & Cottonwood Allotment. However, given the widespread nature of noxious weed infestations throughout the resource area, it is assumed that some level of infestation does exist on this allotment.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Wind, water, vehicles, animals, and people transport weeds. Weeds generally germinate and become established in areas of surface disturbing activities such as road construction and maintenance, vehicular traffic, big game and livestock grazing. Livestock grazing can contribute to the establishment and expansion of noxious weeds through various mechanisms. Improperly managed grazing, (over-grazing), can cause a decline in desirable native plant species and ground cover which provides a niche for noxious weed invasion. In addition, noxious weed seed can be transported and introduced to new areas by fecal deposition or by seed that clings to the animal's coat. Conversely, properly managed livestock grazing which does not create areas of bare ground and which maintains the vigor and health of native plant species, particularly herbaceous species, is not expected to cause a substantial increase in noxious weeds.

MIGRATORY BIRDS:

Affected Environment: The Pole Creek and Cottonwood Allotment is comprised of a variety of different habitat types. Dominant vegetation includes mixed mountain shrubs, sagebrush stands and pinyon/juniper woodlands. Given the mix and diversity of vegetation present, this allotment provides cover, forage and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory bird species. Priority species on the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern List that may nest in the area include: sage sparrow, Brewer's sparrow, Virginia's warbler, grey vireo, pinyon jay and black-throated gray warbler.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Although the proposed grazing schedule for this allotment coincides with the breeding season, it is unlikely that livestock grazing would reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions. The proposed changes to the grazing system would incorporate a pasture rotation schedule, shortening the period of use in any particular part of the allotment. This grazing schedule would allow for ample growing season rest and adequate plant recovery periods, and should help to provide healthy and productive habitat for migratory bird species. No intentional take of native bird species is anticipated under the proposed action. Grazing by cattle could result in the accidental destruction of ground nests through trampling. This impact is expected to be minimal and isolated and would not influence populations of migratory birds on a landscape level.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE SPECIES (includes an analysis on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: According to the latest species list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the following Federally listed and candidate species may reside, have habitat, and/or be impacted by actions occurring in Garfield County: Canada lynx, Mexican spotted owl, western yellow-billed cuckoo, razorback sucker, Colorado pikeminnow, bonytail chub, humpback chub, Uinta Basin hookless cactus, Parachute beardtongue, and DeBeque phacelia.

The Pole Creek and Cottonwood Allotment does not provide habitat for any ESA listed species.

West Divide Creek is located just west of the allotment and contains roundtail chub, flannelmouth sucker, and bluehead sucker – all BLM sensitive fish species.

There are no known special status plants or potential habitat for special status plants within the allotment.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Roundtail chub, flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker:

These native fish have been documented in West Divide Creek located just west of and downstream of the allotment. Proposed grazing should have no impact on these fish as the allotment is located outside of the occupied habitat and no grazing will occur directly along the creek. In addition, these fish are adapted to high sediment loads and any potential increases in sediment would not be an issue.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species: A formal Land Health Assessment has not been completed for this area. Proposed grazing should have minimal impact on the watersheds ability to meet, maintain, or move towards meeting Standard 4.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes an analysis on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: Proposed activities would occur south of the Town of Silt within the 18,794 acre West Divide Creek above Alkali Creek 6th field watershed. Within the project area are four mapped ephemeral drainages that run roughly east to west and are directly tributary to the perennial West Divide Creek. Two of these ephemeral drainages are unnamed and are located within Sections 8 and 17. The other two ephemeral drainages, Pole Creek and Brook Creek, are located within Sections 17 and 20.

At this time, none of the four ephemeral drainages mentioned above are listed on the State of Colorado's *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 37) list, the *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 93), or the *Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE, Water Quality

Control Commission, Regulation No. 94) as waterbodies suspected to have water quality problems. In addition, no water quality data are currently available for these ephemeral drainages.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Grazing activities would result in soil compaction and displacement that increase the likelihood of erosional processes, especially on steep slopes and areas devoid of vegetation. Soil detachment and sediment transport are likely to occur during runoff events associated with spring snowmelt and short-duration high intensity thunderstorms. Due to the close proximity of the proposed activities to area drainages, there is a high potential that additional sediment associated with grazing practices could reach the four drainages mentioned above and could in turn be transported to West Divide Creek. With the implementation of grazing standards and guidelines, it is expected that the potential negative impacts described above would be short-term and localized. Consequently, no additional site specific mitigation is recommended at this time.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Water Quality: The proposed action would not likely prevent Standard 5 for Water Quality from being met.

WETLANDS and RIPARIAN ZONES (includes an analysis on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: The table below lists known riparian areas and their Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment for the Pole Creek and Cottonwood Allotment:

Riparian Area Name	Approximate Miles	Year Assessed	Condition Rating
Pole Creek	0.6	1995	Proper Functioning Condition
Brook Creek	0.9	1994	Proper Functioning Condition

The Proper Functioning Condition assessments above did not raise or identify any issues with livestock grazing. Current monitoring, inventory or documented field observations is limited for affected riparian areas other than the proper functioning condition assessments listed above. A riparian photo plot/point was established on Brook Creek in 2007; however, most of the photos appear to be of upland vegetation adjacent to the riparian zone. The riparian area appears to be in good condition based on those photos showing the riparian zone. Stubble height measurements were also taken at the same site. Data shows an average stubble height of 6 inches or greater for the plant species measured; however, these were primarily upland species and transect may not have been in the riparian zone.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The Proposed Action would allow grazing use on the pasture containing the riparian areas for 18 days in the late spring and two days in the fall. This would reduce the duration of grazing use from what the previous permit authorized (31 days in the spring). The period of use proposed would allow for

ample grazing rest and recovery time for riparian plant species. In consideration of this and the conditions of riparian zones described in the Affected Environment, renewal of the permits (including the proposed changes in grazing use) is not expected to cause adverse impacts to riparian zones. The condition of riparian areas would be maintained or improved. There would be no cumulative impacts.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: The proposed action would not result in failure to achieve this standard and should maintain and/or improve land health conditions for riparian systems.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: There are no un-studied rivers, rivers found to eligible or designated Wild and Scenic Rivers within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: N/A

WILDERNESS

Affected Environment: There are no designated Wilderness areas, Wilderness Study Areas or citizens' wilderness proposal areas within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: N/A

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

SOILS (includes an analysis on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: At this time, soil survey data within the project area only exists for Section 8 and the northernmost portion of Section 17. According to the *Soil Survey of Rifle Area, Colorado: Parts of Garfield and Mesa Counties* (USDA 1985), proposed activities in Section 8 and Section 17 would occur on the soil map units Bucklon-Inchau loam, Lamphier loam, Torriorthents-Camborthids-Rock outcrop complex, and Villa Grove-Zoltay loams. In addition, portions of the project area are mapped CSU 4 (controlled surface use) for erosive soils on slopes greater than 30% and NSO 15 (no surface occupancy) for slopes greater than 50%. Following is a brief description of the four soil map units found within Sections 8 and 17.

- Bucklon-Inchau loams – These soils occur on ridges and mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,000 to 9,500 feet and on slopes of 25 to 50 percent. About 55 percent of this soil map unit is Bucklon soil and 35 percent Inchau soil. The remaining 10 percent of the soil map unit are made up of varying amounts of Cochetopa, Cimarron, and Jerry soils. The Bucklon soil is found on steep, convex areas while the Inchau soil is found on more concave areas. The Bucklon soil is shallow, well drained and has medium surface runoff with severe erosion hazard. The Inchau soil is moderately deep, well drained and has medium surface runoff with severe erosion hazard. Primary uses for these soils include wildlife habitat and limited grazing.

- Lamphier loam – This deep, well drained soil is found on fans and mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,500 to 10,000 feet and on slopes of 15 to 50 percent. This soil is derived from sandstone and shale rocks. Surface runoff for this soil is slow and the erosion hazard is classified as slight. Primary uses for this soil include grazing, wildlife habitat, and recreation.
- Torriorthents-Camborthids-Rock outcrop complex, steep – This soil map unit consists of sandstone and shale bedrock and soils of variable depth occurring on slopes of 15 to 70 percent. About 45 percent of this complex is Torriorthents, 20 percent is Camborthids, and 15 percent is Rock outcrop. The Camborthids occur on the lower toe slopes on foothills and mountainsides while the Torriorthents are found on the foothills and mountainsides below the Rock outcrop. The Torriorthents are shallow to moderately deep, and clayey to loamy with gravel, cobbles, and stones. The Camborthids are shallow to deep and clayey to loamy. Rock outcrop primarily consists of Mesa Verde sandstones and Wasatch shales with occasional basaltic boulders and stones. This complex is characterized by moderate to severe erosion hazard. Primary uses for this complex include grazing, wildlife habitat, and recreation.
- Villa Grove-Zoltay loams – These soils occur on mountainsides and alluvial fans at elevations ranging from 7,500 to 7,600 feet and on slopes of 15 to 30 percent. About 50 percent of this soil map unit is the Villa Grove soil and 40 percent the Zoltay soil. The remaining 10 percent of this soil map unit consists of varying amounts of Vale, Potts, and Morval soils. The Villa Grove soil is deep, well drained and has slow surface runoff with slight erosion hazard. The Zoltay soil is deep, well drained and has medium surface runoff with moderate erosion hazard. Primary uses for these soils include grazing, wildlife habitat, and irrigated pasture.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Grazing activities within the project area would result in some soil compaction and displacement, especially in areas where livestock would be concentrated such as watering areas and stock trails. In areas devoid of vegetation and on steep slopes, erosional processes associated with sediment detachment and transport would occur that include: rilling, rutting, and depositional plumes. With the implementation of grazing standards and guidelines, it is expected that the potential negative impacts described above would be short-term and localized. Consequently, no mitigation for soils is recommended.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Upland Soils: The proposed action would not likely prevent Standard 1 for Upland Soils from being met.

VEGETATION (includes an analysis on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This allotment supports a diverse mosaic of vegetation. Mixed mountain shrubs dominate on north-facing slopes, pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush parks dominate on south-facing slopes. There are small pockets of aspen in the drainages. Brook Creek and Pole Creek both support diverse riparian vegetation

comprised of cottonwoods, willows, aspen, a variety of riparian shrubs and some sedges and rushes.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Very little monitoring data or field observations exist on which to assess the vegetative conditions on this allotment. The proposed changes to the grazing system would incorporate a pasture rotation schedule which would shorten the period of use in any particular part of the allotment and would allow for limited grazing in the fall when grasses should be dormant and therefore, more resilient to grazing. The proposed grazing schedule provides adequate growing season rest to aid in recovery and regrowth of vegetative resources and opportunities for seed dissemination.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): A formal land health assessment has not been completed for this allotment, but the proposed grazing schedule is not likely to prevent the allotment from achieving or moving towards achieving Standard 3 for healthy plant communities. The proposed action provides for rest from grazing during critical growth periods and adequate regrowth periods for vegetation.

WILDLIFE AQUATIC (includes an analysis on Standard 3)

Affected Environment:

The Pole Creek and Cottonwood allotment contains several small drainages. Two prominent streams are Brook Creek and Pole Creek. Brook Creek is listed as ephemeral but according to sampling records contains brook trout. It may be that brook trout persist in a large pond at the confluence of the 3 feeder streams. Pole Creek is ephemeral and contains no fish.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

The proposed changes to the grazing system would utilize a pasture system and more private land with incorporated growing season rest. Grazing has been noted as an issue along portions of Brook Creek in the past with regard to riparian condition. However, in 1994 the stream was rated as Properly Functioning in a riparian habitat assessment. Given riparian habitat condition, proposed grazing should have minimal impact to aquatic resources in the area.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): A formal Land Health Assessment has not been completed for this area. Based on the livestock grazing management in place, continued grazing should have minimal impact on the streams ability to meet, maintain, or move towards meeting Standard 3 for aquatic wildlife.

WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL (includes an analysis on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The Pole Creek and Cottonwood Allotment is comprised of a variety of different habitat types. Dominant vegetation includes mixed mountain shrubs,

sagebrush stands and pinyon/juniper woodlands. These communities typically provide habitat for big game species as well as small mammals, reptiles and birds. Portions of the allotment are mapped as important big game winter range.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Livestock grazing under the proposed action would have minimal impacts to terrestrial wildlife species. The proposed changes to the grazing system would incorporate a pasture rotation schedule, shortening the period of use in any particular part of the allotment. This grazing schedule would allow for ample growing season rest and adequate plant recovery periods, and should help to provide healthy and productive habitat for a variety of terrestrial wildlife species.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): A formal Land Health Assessment has not been completed for this allotment. The proposed action would allow for ample growing season rest and the proposed action would not prevent this standard from being met.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Travel/Access	X		
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire/Fuels Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Law Enforcement	X		
Paleontology	X		
Noise	X		
Range Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation	X		
Socio-Economics		X	
Soils			X
Transportation	X		
Visual Resources	X		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:

Notices of public scoping were issued through the Colorado BLM’s Internet web page providing the public an opportunity to obtain information or offer concerns on grazing permits or allotments scheduled for renewal. There have been no responses received specific to the

permit renewal or allotment addressed in this NEPA document. The Glenwood Springs Field Office Internet NEPA Register also lists grazing permit renewal NEPA documents that have been initiated. They are generally posted approximately one month prior to the estimated completion date.

Southern Ute Tribe
 Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Bands
 Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Area of Responsibility</u>
Isaac Pittman	Rangeland Management Specialist	Range, NEPA Lead
Mike Kinser	Rangeland Management Specialist	Riparian Zones
Jeff O'Connell	Hydrologist/Geologist	Soil, Air, Water, Geology
Kay Hopkins	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, VRM, ACEC
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	T/E/S Plants, Standards, Vegetation
Cheryl Harrison	Archaeologist	Cultural & Native American Concerns
Tom Fresques	Fisheries Biologist	Wildlife Aquatic, T&E (Fish)
Desa Ausmus	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial, T&E (Terrestrial Wildlife)
Dereck Wilson	Range Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-native Species

FONSI

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The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. The proposed action with mitigation measures result in a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

Rationale: The analysis of the proposed action with mitigation measures did not identify any impacts that would be significant in nature either in context or intensity. The grazing authorization proposed allows for adequate plant growth recovery and promotes healthy rangelands as it relates to rangeland standards. In addition, there is nothing to indicate the action is highly controversial or that it is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant actions.

SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:



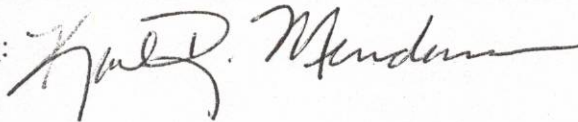
DATE SIGNED:

2/19/2008

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

3/4/2008

DATE SIGNED:



APPENDICES: None

ATTACHMENTS: Allotment Map

