

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Little Snake Field Office  
455 Emerson Street  
Craig, CO 81625-1129

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**EA NUMBER:** CO-100-2008-014 EA

**PERMIT/LEASE/ALLOTMENT NUMBER:** 0501003/04523 and 04526

**PROJECT NAME:** Ten year renewal of grazing permit #0501003 on the LU 3-A, #04523, and the West Great Divide, #04526, Allotments.

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** See allotment maps, Attachments 1 and 1a.

West Great Divide Allotment #04526	T.10N. R.94W., portions of sections 22, 23, 24, 25, 30 and 36 578 acres - BLM LU 1,975 acres - Private <u>641 acres - State</u> 3,194 acres total
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LU 3-A Allotment #04523	T.10N. R.94W portions of sections 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 718 acres - BLM LU 958 acres - BLM <u>321 acres - Private</u> 1,997 acres total
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**APPLICANT:** Cleve Preece

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The Proposed Action and Alternatives are subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: April 26, 1989

**Results:** The Proposed Action is consistent with the Little Snake Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, Livestock Grazing Management objective to improve range conditions for both wildlife and livestock through proper utilization of key forage plants and adjusting livestock stocking rates as a result of vegetation studies.

The Proposed Action (both allotments) is located within the Management Unit 2 (Northern Central). The Proposed Action is compatible with the management objective for this unit, which is to provide for the development of the oil and gas resource. Public lands are open to livestock grazing. Management practices or range improvement projects will be permitted and existing range improvements will be maintained consistent with the management objectives for this unit.

The Proposed Action and Alternatives have been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

**Other Documents:**

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, as amended (43 USC 1752).

Rangeland Reform Final Environmental Impact Statement, December, 1994.

Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing in Colorado, February 12, 1997.

EA #CO-016-LS-98-013, Ten year renewal of grazing permits on LU 3-A and West Great Divide Allotments.

**NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:** BLM permit #0501003, which authorizes livestock grazing the LU 3-A and West Great Divide Allotments, expired on March 20, 2007. The permit was extended for one year until March 20, 2008, under the same terms and conditions as the existing permit, in accordance with Section 325, Title III, H.R. 2691, Department of Interior and related agencies appropriations act, 2004 (P.L. 108-108). The grazing preference is currently leased by the base property owner to Cleve Preece. The base property lease expires on March 20, 2017, therefore, this permit renewal will be for a period of nine years to coincide with the base property lease expiration date.

The permit is subject to renewal for a period of up to ten years at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, who delegated the authority to BLM. The BLM has the authority to renew the livestock grazing permits consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act*, *Public Rangelands Improvement Act*, *Federal Land Policy and Management Act*, and Little Snake Field Office's *Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. This Plan/EIS has been amended by *Standards for Public Land Health in the State of Colorado*.

In addition to the renewal of the grazing permit, three range improvement projects - the construction of a riparian enclosure fence, the drilling of a water well and associated construction of a pit reservoir, and several small brush beatings (approximately 4 treatment areas at 20 acres each) - are proposed within the LU 3-A and West Great Divide Allotments to facilitate livestock distribution and management. The proposed projects would also enhance wildlife habitat in both allotments and improve the small riparian area in the West Great Divide Allotment. The east half of section 6 in the LU 3-A allotment was seeded to a mono-culture of crested wheatgrass in the 1940s. Since that time sagebrush has slowly encroached on the seeding and current ocular

estimates indicate that sagebrush now comprises a 30% canopy cover. There is not a good representation of age classes within the sagebrush stand, nor is there adequate species diversity. The proposed brush beating would be undertaken with the objective of creating variation in vegetation age and type.

The permit would also be modified to allow either cattle or sheep grazing within the West Great Divide Allotment.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) will analyze the impacts of livestock grazing on public lands managed by BLM and the change in type of livestock from cattle to sheep. It will also analyze the impacts of the construction the proposed range improvement projects on public land managed by the BLM. The analysis will recommend terms and conditions to the permit which will improve or maintain public land health. The Proposed Action and alternatives will be assessed for meeting land health standards.

In order to graze livestock on public land, the livestock producer (permittee/lessee) must hold a grazing permit/lease. The grazing permittee/lessee has a preference right to receive the permit/lease if grazing is to continue. The land use plan allows grazing to continue. This EA will be a site specific analysis to determine if grazing should continue as provided for in the land use plan and to identify the conditions under which it can be renewed.

**PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS:** The Little Snake Field Office sent out a Notice of Public Scoping in September of 2005, to determine the level of public interest, concern and resource conditions on the grazing permits and leases that were up for renewal in FY 2007. A Notice of Public Scoping was posted on the Internet, at the Colorado BLM Home Page, asking for public input on permit/lease renewals. Individual letters were sent to the affected permittees/lessees, informing them their permit/lease was up for renewal and requesting any information they wanted included in or taken into consideration during the renewal process. The issuance of a grazing permit for these allotments has been carefully analyzed within the scope of the specific action being taken, resource issues or concerns, and public input received.

**BACKGROUND:** Both allotments are located approximately 20 miles northwest of Craig, Colorado, south of Moffat County Road (MCR) 7. MCR 44 transects the West Great Divide Allotment and the LU 3-A Allotment can be accessed via MCR 42 and 131. The elevation is generally 7,000 feet for both allotments and is not extremely variable. The terrain is gently rolling with slopes 10-20 %. Mean annual precipitation is 13-15 inches. The dominant range sites are rolling loam and sandy land. These range sites typically support mixed sagebrush-antelope bitterbrush and grass communities. The E½ of section 6 within the LU 3-A Allotment was plowed and seeded to crested wheatgrass in the 1940s. The seeding has since returned to a monoculture of sagebrush with an understory of crested wheatgrass.

The LU 3-A is currently classified as a category M (maintain) allotment, which is defined by the Rangeland Program Summary for the Little Snake Resource Management Plan as 1) an allotment that has high to moderate production potential for livestock forage; 2) no major resource conflicts or controversy exist; 3) opportunities may exist for positive economic return from

public investments; 4) present management is accomplishing desired results; 5) current production is at least 60% of potential production and 6) there are at least 1,000 federal acres in the allotment that provide at least 20% of the total allotment production. The West Great Divide Allotment is classified as a category C (custodial) allotment, which is defined as 1) an allotment that has low production potential for livestock forage; 2) no major resource conflicts or controversy exist; and 3) present management is accomplishing the desired results. The LU 3-A Allotment is comprised of private, BLM, and BLM LU acres. Many of the LU acres were previously cultivated for ranching purposes.

The LU 3-A Allotment is permitted for 35 cattle from 5/01-11/04 at 77% PL for a total of 167 AUMs. Three horses are also permitted in the Homestead Pasture from 5/01-11/04 at 33% PL for a total of 6 AUMs. The season of use authorized on the West Great Divide Allotment is currently 6/01 through 10/31 for 62 cattle at 26% PL for a total of 81 AUMs. A spring deferred grazing rotation system was implemented in both allotments in 1998.

Sheep have historically grazed the West Great Divide Allotment. The records indicate that in the 1950's, the idea of changing the class of livestock to cattle was discussed but the conversion was not officially made until 1993 when Franks Counts acquired the West Great Divide Allotment from Robert Arambel and began running cattle on the allotment. Frank Counts is the base property owner and has been leasing to Cleve Preece since 1994.

**MONITORING DATA:** Both allotments fall into the Powder Wash Watershed; however neither was evaluated during the 2003 Powder Wash Landscape Health Assessment. Ecological Site Inventory data have been collected on both allotments. This data indicates that both allotments have been adjudicated at or near the carrying capacity.

Limited utilization data has been collected for the allotments. Utilization data were collected on the LU 3-A Allotment in 1987, 1992, 1993 and 1994. Average utilization was in the light category at 26%. Utilization data were also collected on the West Great Divide Allotment in 1987, 1993 and 1994. Average utilization was in the moderate category at 42%.

Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) data have been collected on BLM Spring #29-05 in the West Great Divide Allotment on two occasions: 1998 and 2007. The latest data, collected November 6, 2007, indicate that the spring is currently functioning at risk with a downward trend. Also on November 6, an interdisciplinary team conducted an upland health assessment. The team concluded that both allotments were currently meeting all applicable standards.

## **PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Continue to authorize livestock grazing on both the West Great Divide and LU 3-A Allotments by renewing grazing permit #0501003 for a period of nine years, expiring February 28, 2017 (to coincide with the expiration of the base property lease). The new terms would include a change in type of livestock from cattle to cattle *or* sheep. A new season of use would be incorporated if sheep are using the allotment. Three range improvement projects

would be constructed to facilitate improved livestock distribution and enhance wildlife and riparian habitat.

The permit would be renewed as follows:

Allotment name and number	Livestock number and kind	Dates		%PL	AUMs
		Begin	End		
West Great Divide #04526	62 cattle	06/01	10/31	26	81
LU 3-A	35 cattle	05/01	11/04	77	167
#04523 (Homestead Pasture)	3 horse	05/01	11/04	33	<u>6</u>
				Total	173

The following Special Terms and Conditions would apply:

1. The permit for the West Great Divide Allotment and the LU 3-A Allotment is contingent upon a valid base property lease.
2. Spring use will alternate between the two pastures in the West Great Divide Allotment, with early turnout occurring in each pasture every other year.
3. A grazing rotation will be followed in the LU 3-A Allotment with initial spring use (5/1-5/25) in the Homestead pasture for 2 to 3 weeks; summer use will occur in the large pasture and cattle will be returned to the Homestead Pasture in the fall (9/15-11/30).
4. Cattle or sheep may be grazed in the West Great Divide Allotment. If sheep are grazed, the season of use will be from 6/15 through 10/31. Total numbers of sheep are flexible as long as total AUMs are not exceeded. If sheep are grazed in the West Great Divide Allotment, they will be actively herded to avoid exceeding the utilization objective on key species.
5. The BLM will collect monitoring data to determine the proper stocking rate and season of use in the enclosure. The permittee may use the new riparian enclosure after coordinating with the BLM and obtaining yearly authorization. When livestock are not in the south pasture of the West Great Divide Allotment, the gates will be left open to facilitate wildlife movements.
6. The vegetation treatment shall be deferred from livestock use for at least one growing season after implementation.
7. Project construction will not occur until a Form 4120-6, Cooperative Agreement for Range Improvements, is prepared for each project and is signed by the permittee or the

authorized representative and the BLM. The Cooperative Agreements will include all of the above stipulations.

This permit would also be subject to the Standard and Common Terms and Conditions found in Attachment 2.

In addition to the permit renewal, three new projects are proposed (see Attachment 3 for locations):

#### Riparian Exclosure

To protect a spring and small riparian area, a short fence would be constructed beginning at the corner of the existing fence on the section line between sections 24 and 25 in T.10N. R.94W. and proceed to the east along the section line for approximately ½ mile and ending at the existing fence located in the SW¼ of section 19. This fence, when combined with existing fences, would create a small, triangular shaped exclosure, approximately 130 acres in size. The fence would be a three-strand barbed wire, bottom wire smooth. The fence would be built to BLM standards, with wires spaced at 16", 26", and 38" above the ground as shown in Attachment 4. The fence would be constructed with metal posts spaced 12 feet apart with one wood or wire (preferably wood) stay between each post. A 15-foot wide line may be brushbeat to facilitate fence construction. This line of brush removal would also aid wildlife in recognizing the presence of the fence.

The construction of this fence would be subject to the following stipulations:

1. To protect wintering big game, no fence construction (including brushbeating) may occur between December 1 and April 30.
2. Wooden stays will be used for construction to increase visibility of the fence.
3. To protect sage-grouse breeding and nesting activities, no fence construction may occur between March 1 and June 30.
4. The permittee will be responsible for fence construction using BLM supplied materials.
5. The permittee will be responsible for maintenance of the fence.
6. Metal or wire gates will be placed at all intersections with existing roads.
7. Gates will be left open when livestock are not present in the South Pasture of the West Great Divide Allotment.
8. Fence construction will not occur until a Form 4120-6, Cooperative Agreement for Range Improvements, is signed by the permittee or the authorized representative and the BLM. The Cooperative Agreement will include all of the above stipulations.

9. Fence construction will not occur until a Class III cultural resources survey is completed. If sensitive cultural resources are identified during the survey, mitigation may include moving the fence to avoid any identified cultural resources.

#### Water Well/Pond Construction

One water well would be drilled at the location shown on Attachment 3. Water from the well would flow into a metal trough and overflow would be allowed to flow into a pond constructed adjacent to the well. The well would be drilled with either a cable tool or rotary drilling rig. The drilling of the well would involve the disturbance of no more than 0.25 acres and no blading or removal of vegetation would be required. Water would be drawn from the well by submersible pump powered by either a diesel generator or solar array.

The well would be drilled by a State of Colorado licensed and bonded contractor. The contractor would be responsible to conform to all applicable State standards for the drilling and completion of the well. Specifically, a 10 inch hole would be drilled with a minimum of 40 feet of 8 inch steel surface casing cement-grouted into the hole. PVC casing would be used below the steel surface casing utilizing a mill slot or Johnson screen design with a 20 foot tailpipe. Surface casing would protrude 18 inches above grade and the well platform would be either earthen or concrete. See Attachment 5 for specifications.

For the drilling and completion of the well, no grading or other earthwork would be necessary. Where drilling rig and vehicular access to the site would be off of existing roads, all access would be along pre-identified routes, but no blading or other road construction would be done. This would necessarily result in the formation of a short “two-track” road that would be used for access for routine maintenance. Upon completion of the well, one to two round or rectangular metal or fiberglass troughs would be placed adjacent to the well (see Attachments 5a and 5b). Well water would flow into one trough with overflow being potentially routed to a second trough to provide additional accessible water. All trough overflow would flow into a small pit pond via a buried pipeline. The buried pipeline would be placed in the ground with a vibratory ripper (see Attachment 6). This method would result in no need for trenching and no surface reclamation of the buried lines would be necessary.

Within approximately 75 yards of the well, a small pit pond would be constructed (see Attachment 7). Construction of the pond would entail mechanical clearing of brush and construction of a water retention pit by dozer. The pit would be lined with bentonite to improve water retention. For construction of the pond, total direct surface disturbance would be 0.1 acre or less.

The construction of this well and pond would be subject to the following stipulations:

1. Access to and from the site will be on existing roads or trails. Where cross-country travel is mandatory, the same tracks will be used in and out. While traveling, the dozer blade will be kept up.
2. Top soil will be stockpiled and used to cover the disturbed area to the greatest extent possible.

3. Noxious weeds will be controlled by the permittee on any area disturbed as a result of these projects. Any spraying of weeds will need to be cleared through BLM prior to spraying.
4. No hazardous materials/hazardous waste or trash shall be disposed of on public lands. If a release does occur, it shall be reported to the Little Snake Field Office immediately at 970-826-5000.
5. All surface disturbances will be reseeded with native species adapted to the area.
6. A bird escape ramp will be installed on each trough.
7. The well will not be drilled, and no construction or surface disturbing activities will occur between December 1<sup>st</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup> to protect wintering big game. Under mild winter conditions, the last 60 days of the seasonal limitation period may be suspended. Severity of the winter will be determined on the basis of snow depth, snow crusting, daily mean temperatures, and whether animals were concentrated on the crucial winter range during the winter months.
8. The water well, its associated trough and pit pond will be added to the Little Snake Field Offices Water Depletion Log and the appropriate mitigative funds will be paid to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service by BLM.

#### Vegetation Treatment

Several small areas in the LU 3-A Allotment would be treated with a brush beating. Brush beating is basically a heavy duty mower pulled behind a rubber tired tractor. It is typically used in flat to gently rolling sagebrush areas. Brush would be mowed to a height of 3 to 4 inches. The area to be treated is located in the E½ section 6, T.10N. R.94W. The entire 320 acres would not be treated; rather, small entries would be made, treating approximately 20 acre patches. Islands of vegetation will be left untreated (20%-50% of the landscape) to mimic a mosaic pattern that a fire might leave under low to moderate conditions. Treated areas would not exceed widths of 60 meters or 197 feet with intact sagebrush widths of at least 60 meters or 197 feet in order to maximize sage-grouse habitat suitability. The objective of the treatment is to create a variation in the age class of the sagebrush, reduce the sagebrush canopy cover, increase the grass and forb cover and to allow the herbaceous community to become more vigorous.

The implementation of the brush beating would be subject to the following stipulations:

1. Operations would not be allowed in muddy conditions where tire tracks would leave a visible rut.
2. The treated areas would be deferred from livestock use for one growing season after implementation. Although the Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision recommends a two year rest from livestock grazing in treated areas, it has been determined that no further benefits to the herbaceous plant community would be realized from additional rest in this case. The proposed treatment area is a 60 year old crested wheatgrass seeding with well

established herbaceous plants. One growing season of deferment would accomplish the desired objective of creating variation in vegetation age and type.

3. To protect sage-grouse breeding and nesting activities, no brush beating may occur between March 1 and June 30.

**NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE:** No change in kind of livestock would occur under this alternative. No new range improvements would be constructed. Livestock would continue to graze the allotments as permitted in the expiring permit.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED:**

**No Grazing Alternative:** This alternative would cancel the permit on the allotments. As a result, livestock grazing would cease on the allotments. This alternative is eliminated from analysis in this EA because it would not conform to the RMP/ROD. The RMP/ROD identified livestock grazing as a suitable and appropriate uses on the allotments.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **CRITICAL RESOURCES**

#### **AIR QUALITY**

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by either alternative.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Short term, local impacts to air quality resulting from diesel engine exhaust, other combustible engines and dust from surface disturbing operations would result from other activities proposed. Emissions required to drill a water well, construct a pond, brush beat the small areas proposed for vegetation treatments and the fenceline corridor and install a fence would be very minimal. Use of combustible and diesel engines would be required to complete these range improvements. The emissions from these activities consist of both gaseous and particulate fractions. Gaseous constituents from diesel engine exhaust include carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitric oxide, nitric dioxide, oxides of sulfur and hydrocarbons. Fine particulates of soot from diesel exhaust and fugitive dust from soils would be localized to the project area. The health effects of these emissions are largely from long-term and occupational exposure in confined areas. Construction of the proposed range improvements and implementation of the proposed vegetation treatments would not adversely affect the regional air quality.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Vehicular access on existing roads for livestock management activities would result in minimal releases of PM 10 (dust) emissions, but this would be minor and not affect the overall air quality of the area.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/13/07

**AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 12/10/07

**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Affected Environment: Grazing permit renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment (Heritage #10.10.08) was completed for each allotment on December 6, 2007 by Robyn Watkins Morris, Little Snake Field Office Archaeologist. The assessment followed 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, and IM-CO-01-026. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. Copies of the cultural resource assessments are in the Field Office archaeology files.

Data developed here was taken from the cultural program project report files, site report files, and base maps kept at the Little Snake Field Office as well as from GLO maps, BLM land patent records, An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, and An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and Appendix 21 of the Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Draft February 1986, Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado District, Little Snake Resource Area.

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis developed for the allotment in this EA. The table shows known cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in each allotment.

Allotment Number	Acres Inven toried at a Class III level*	Acres NOT inven toried at a Class III Level	Percen t-%-of Allotm ent inven toried at a Class	Number of Cultural Resourc es known in allotmen	High Potential of Historic Propertie s	Eligible or Need Data Sites – Known in Allotme	Management Recommendations (Add'l inventory required and historic properties to be visited
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			<b>III level</b>	<b>t</b>		<b>nt (Site Number s)</b>	
04523	12	1985	.6%	0	Medium	None	Survey treatments, old ponds, and roads
04526	95	3101	3%	0	Medium	None	Survey proposed riparian pasture and roads

(Note: \*Acres are derived from GIS allotment maps with BLM and other acres in the allotment.)

Two cultural resource inventories have been previously conducted within the Allotment #04523 resulting in the complete coverage inventory of 12 acres and the recording of no cultural resources. This allotment was filed on in 1932 by Ernest Elstun and 1926 by James Brenner and then transferred to the USA under the Bankhead-Jones act of 1937. Historical equipment or homestead materials may be encountered in this allotment.

Seven cultural resource inventories have been previously conducted within the Allotment #04526 resulting in the complete coverage inventory of 95 acres and the recording of no cultural resources. This allotment was filed on by Melvin Stiner in 1922 and then transferred to the USA under the Bankhead-Jones act of 1937. The Thornburg Wagon Road went through section 23 of T10N R94W according the 1906 GLO survey plat. Historical equipment or homestead materials may be encountered in this allotment as well as trash related to early travel.

Based on available data, a medium potential for historic properties occurs in both allotments. Subsequent cultural resource inventory will be conducted in areas where livestock concentrate. Subsequent field inventory is to be completed within the ten year period of the permit.

If historic properties are located during the subsequent field inventory, and BLM determines that grazing activities will adversely impact the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate, during normal livestock grazing activity, 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, gullyng, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued livestock use may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties. As the number of AUMs and timing for livestock use remains the same the potential for impacts due to livestock grazing remains constant. Ponds, fencing, and brushbeating projects would potentially impact historic properties. Placing saltblocks along roads or anywhere in the allotment would potentially impact historic properties. Additional monitoring of the historic properties currently known and in the future should continue to determine if livestock impacts are occurring to these properties.

Mitigative Measures: Range improvements associated with the allotments (e.g., vegetation treatments, water developments, fences) are subject to compliance requirements under Section 106 and will undergo standard cultural resources inventory and evaluation procedures.

Standard Stipulations for cultural resources are included in the Standard Terms and Conditions (Attachment 2).

*Allotment Specific Stipulations for this EA.*

1. In allotment #04526, the proposed riparian pasture must be surveyed along with the proposed fence. Also, if possible, the Thornburg Wagon Road (5MF1707) segment should be identified and recorded. Roads used by permittee must be surveyed to ensure salt blocks are being placed away from eligible sites.
2. In allotment #04523, ponds 6293 and 6294 were surveyed in 1995 by Hal Keesling and therefore do not need further survey. Previously built ponds 1716 and 1229 require survey. Roads used by permittee must be surveyed to ensure salt blocks are being placed away from eligible sites. The proposed well/pond must be surveyed before ground disturbance. For the vegetation treatment, there is no need to conduct Class III cultural resource inventory to determine the presence and effect to National Register Eligible properties when the undertaking is limited to open sage parks, the expected cultural resource type is open lithic scatters, the cutting deck height is set to six inches or more, and the equipment will be operated in dry soil conditions and with balloon tires creating soil surface depressions less than four inches. If conditions other than these exist (i.e. knowledge of historical sites) then Class II cultural resource survey is required.
3. GIS maps showing slope potential, 30% or greater, where rock art and rock shelters are predicted to occur, will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for Class III survey. These areas will be evaluated for livestock concentrations.
4. Site monitoring plans, other mitigation plans, will be developed and provided to the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer in accordance with the Protocol (1998) and subsequent programmatic agreements regarding grazing permit renewals.

Conducting Class II and III survey(s), monitoring, and developing site specific mitigation measures will mitigate the adverse effects to an acceptable level (Cultural Matrix Team Meeting 26 January 1999, NHPA Section 106, 36CFR800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM Colorado and Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; and NEPA/FLPMA requirements).

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 12/07/07

## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in an area of isolated dwellings. Ranching, farming and oil/gas development are the primary economic activities.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The project area is relatively isolated from population centers, so no populations would be affected by physical or socioeconomic impacts of either alternative. Neither alternative would directly affect the social, cultural or economic well-being and health of Native American, minority or low-income populations.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Mike Andrews, 12/05/07

## **FLOOD PLAINS**

Affected Environment: Within the West Great Divide and LU 3-A Allotments most drainage areas are small ephemeral headwater drainages with no floodplain development. A small wetland draw is present within the West Great Divide Allotment that is well vegetated with wetland plants. The floodplain area that is present is equal to the area of the wetland. A spring development with buried pipeline to a livestock trough is present within the wetland draw. The trough sits above the bottom of the draw and outside of the active floodplain.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The floodplain area in the wetland draw would remain fully functional provided that the riparian system remains in functional condition. The floodplain area within the West Great Divide Allotment does not have developments associated with it, except for the allotment fencing and the developed spring. No threat to human safety, life, welfare and property would result from renewing the grazing lease under either of the alternatives.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/10/07

## **INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES**

Affected Environment: Invasive and noxious weeds are present in the affected area. Invasive annuals such as downy brome (cheatgrass), halogeton, blue mustard and yellow alyssum commonly occur in the affected area and are occupying disturbed areas caused by oil and gas development and recently disturbed pipeline corridors. Invasive annual weeds are typically established in disturbed and high traffic areas, whereas, biennial and perennial noxious weeds are less common in occurrence. Downy brome and halogeton are on the Colorado List C of noxious weeds. Colorado List B noxious weeds that are present within the West Great Divide Allotment include Canada thistle and bull thistle. Other Colorado List B noxious weeds that are present in the vicinity and could potentially become established within these allotments include Russian knapweed, hoary cress (whitetop), houndstongue, dalmation toadflax and other biennial thistles. The BLM is in cooperation with the Moffat County Cooperative Weed Management program to employ the principals of Integrated Pest Management to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: The adverse impact of increased invasive and/or noxious weed establishment is very similar under either of the alternatives. Vehicular access to public lands for dispersed recreation and grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, as well as wind and water, can cause weeds to spread into new areas. Surface disturbance due to livestock concentration and human activities associated with grazing operations can also increase weed presence. The perennial noxious weeds in the area are less frequently established on the uplands but some potential exists for their establishment in draws and swales with moister soils. The largest concern in the project area would be for biennial and perennial noxious weed species to become established and not be detected; once they are detected they can be controlled with various integrated pest management techniques. Land practices and land uses by the livestock operator and their weed control efforts would largely determine the identification and potential occurrence of weeds within the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Drilling the water well and constructing the pit pond would cause concentrated use by livestock in the area around the new water development, but it is unlikely the area would harbor vigorous populations of these species due to the physical trampling that would occur. Some increase in annual invasive plants could occur for a short distance radiating from the water development due to the diminished character of the native plant community. Proposed brush beating in the LU 3-A Allotment and along the proposed fenceline corridor in the West Great Divide Allotment would likely increase the perennial grass component which would decrease the potential for invasive plants and increase the detection of any noxious weeds that could become established. Proper grazing use by cattle or sheep is necessary to maintain a resilient native plant community that can occupy bare soils and resist invasive and noxious weed establishment.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/13/07

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

Affected Environment: Brewers sparrow and sage sparrow are both likely to use the LU 3-A and West Great Divide Allotments for nesting activities during the spring and summer. Both of these species are listed on the USFWS's 2002 Birds of Conservation Concern List.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The grazing systems associated with this alternative are not likely to have a negative impact on either Brewers sparrow or sage sparrow. Construction and drilling of the well could result in nest destruction or abandonment if conducted during the nesting season (June and July). If conducted outside of this time period, these species are not likely to be impacted. Entrapment of these birds in water troughs could occur; this would likely result in drowning. Installation of escape ramps would minimize the potential for this to occur. The proposed brush beating would remove potential nesting habitat for both species. Overlapping timing restrictions in place to protect greater sage-grouse will reduce potential impact to these species from project construction. The construction of a new

fence and the creation of a riparian pasture should not impact either species. Chance of take is low.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The No Action Alternative is not likely to impact nesting activities of either species. This alternative does not allow for any new range improvements. There would be no impact to these species from the brush beating as there would under the Proposed Action.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 12/06/07

### **NATIVE AMERICAN CONCERNS**

A letter was sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council, and the Eastern Shoshone on July 11, 2007. The letter listed the grazing allotments up for renewal in FY07 and included a map of the areas. A follow up phone call was performed on August 14, 2007. No comments were received (Letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office). It has been determined that this modification to the permit on the West Douglas Mountain requires no additional notification.

Name of specialist and date: Robyn Watkins Morris, 12/07/07

### **PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS**

Affected Environment: There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands present within the West Great Divide and LU 3-A Allotments.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/13/07

### **T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS**

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered species or habitat for such species present within these two grazing allotments. Both of these allotments contain breeding and nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM special status species. The LU 3-A Allotment has two inactive leks located on private lands. The West Great Divide Allotment has one active lek within its boundaries. There are an additional 4 leks located within two miles of this allotment. Two of these leks are inactive.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The Proposed Action would not impact any lek sites within these two allotments. Greater sage-grouse within the LU 3-A Allotment would

not be impacted by livestock grazing. The proposed brush beating for this allotment would affect available nesting habitat within this allotment by removing mature sagebrush that are capable of supporting sage-grouse nests. This brush beating may displace individual sage-grouse from traditional nesting areas. The brush beating would likely increase forb production within the treated areas. This would benefit nesting grouse and newly hatched chicks in the area.

The Proposed Action would allow for a change in the class of livestock utilizing the West Great Divide Allotment. This alternative allows sheep to be use the allotment from June 15 through October 31. Sheep are more likely to disturb actively nesting sage-grouse than cattle would because they are more likely to utilize sagebrush than cattle. This problem is compounded by the density with which sheep graze and the early spring use by sheep when sage-grouse are on their nests. The sage-grouse nesting season in Moffat County, Colorado is typically completed by the end of June. The Proposed Action would allow sheep to use the allotment for approximately two weeks at the end of the nesting season. There is potential for nests to be abandoned or destroyed as a result during those two weeks, however the majority of the birds would have completed their nesting by this time.

The proposed fence and creation of a riparian pasture would likely benefit greater sage-grouse by improving brood rearing habitat within the West Great Divide Allotment. Newly constructed fences are known to pose a problem for greater sage-grouse. Collisions with newly constructed fences have been documented on numerous occasions. Using wooden stays would greatly increase visibility of the fence and would decrease the potential for sage-grouse mortality resulting from collisions with the fence.

The proposed water well and associated troughs and pond would not likely have an impact on greater sage-grouse. Water availability is not a limiting factor for sage grouse in this area. The installation of bird ramps within troughs would help ensure that greater sage-grouse are not drowned while attempting to use the new water source.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The No Action Alternative would not impact any greater sage-grouse lek sites. This alternative would not affect nesting habitat within the LU 3-A Allotment because there would be no treatment of sagebrush. The increased forb production would not occur as well. This would remove a potential benefit newly born chicks.

There would be no change in class of livestock permitted for the West Great Divide Allotment; there would be no negative impacts to nesting sage-grouse from early spring sheep grazing.

The No Action Alternative would not allow for the construction of a fence to create a riparian pasture. Without this protection, it is likely that riparian vegetation would continue to be degraded and likely would result in a loss of brood rearing habitat for greater sage-grouse at some point in the future.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 12/06/07

## **T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS**

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present on either the LU 3-A or the West Great Divide Allotments.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 12/06/07

## **WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous materials present on either the LU 3-A or West Great Divide Allotments.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Potential releases of hazardous materials could occur due to vehicular access for livestock management operations and during the construction of the fence and pit reservoir/well. Coolant, oil, and fuel are materials that could potentially be released. Due to the limited amount of vehicular activity that would be required, the potential for releases of any of these materials is low and if a release were to occur, it would be minimal and highly localized and not result in an adverse impact to the allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 12/17/07

## **WATER QUALITY - GROUND**

Affected Environment: Quaternary alluvium covering the Wasatch Formation.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Marilyn D. Wegweiser, 12/17/07

## **WATER QUALITY - SURFACE**

Affected Environment: Runoff water drainage from the public lands flows to ephemeral draws that are tributaries of Bighole Gulch and Greasewood Gulch. Each of these drainages is an ephemeral tributary of the Little Snake River. The water quality within all of these affected streams is currently supporting the classified uses they need to support.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Slight benefits to water quality may result from the establishment of a riparian pasture within the West Great Divide Allotment, which would protect the wetland draw and improve livestock management. Upland soils in this pasture would also benefit from this additional management by allowing greater diversity to develop in the herbaceous component of the plant community and promoting increased surface soil stability.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The benefits to water quality and upland soils that may result under the Proposed Alternative would not occur. No further impacts would be anticipated by renewing the grazing permits under the No Action alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/10/07

## **WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES**

Affected Environment: A small wetland draw is present within the West Great Divide Allotment that is well vegetated with Nebraska sedge and with minor amounts of Baltic rush, meadow barley, Canada and bull thistles. The draw was rated at PFC in 1998. In 2007, the draw was reassessed for functionality. Two small fairly stable headcuts, livestock trailing and hummocks along the edge of the wetland draw pose some threat to the quality and extent of the wetland system and, for these factors, the lentic riparian draw was rated as functioning at risk. Heavy grazing of wetland plants was apparent in early November 2007. The most striking difference in the conditions within the draw between the two assessment years was the presence of the hummocks along the edge of the riparian system indicating a downward trend.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The Proposed Action includes establishing a small riparian pasture by building a short fence. This small pasture would help to control livestock use within the wetland draw and help return the proper functioning condition of the wetland system.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The potential to exceed the 50% utilization objective of wetland plants would remain under the No Action Alternative. Forage quality of the adjacent uplands has been partially compromised due to the lack of perennial grass diversity and dominance of Sandberg bluegrass. The water and succulent vegetation that is present within the draw would continue to attract cattle could potentially cause excessive trailing and trampling within the draw and overgrazing of wetland plants. No mitigation to this potential livestock use would be provided under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/13/07

## **WILD & SCENIC RIVERS**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 12/10/07

## **WILDERNESS, WSAs**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: Not applicable.

Mitigative Measures: Not applicable.

Name of specialist and date: Rob Schmitzer, 12/10/07

## **NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS**

### **RANGE MANAGEMENT**

Affected Environment: The season of use authorized on the West Great Divide Allotment is currently 6/01 through 10/31 for 62 cattle at 26% PL for a total of 81AUMs. The LU 3-A Allotment is permitted for 35 cattle from 5/01-11/04 at 77% PL for a total of 167 AUMs and 3 horses within the Homestead Pasture from 5/01-11/04 at 33% PL for a total of 6 AUMs. A spring deferred grazing rotation system was implemented on both allotments in 1998. This rotation has been followed by the permittee for the past ten years and has been satisfactory. An additional term and condition would be added to the grazing permit which would allow either cattle or sheep grazing on the West Great Divide Allotment.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The grazing system implemented in 1998 would continue to be followed. If sheep are grazed in the West Great Divide Allotment, the season of use would be restricted to 6/15-10/31 due to sage grouse nesting concerns. The proposed riparian enclosure would restrict cattle from using the spring in T.10N. R.94W., section 24. The drilling of a well and/or the construction of a pit reservoir in T.10N. R.94W., section 6 in the LU 3-A Allotment, would allow for better cattle distribution. The proposed vegetation treatment, also in LU 3-A would be deferred from livestock use for one growing season after implementation; therefore cattle could not graze the E½ of section 6 from 5/01 through 7/01. This deferment could be accomplished by either resting the entire allotment until 7/01 or the Homestead Pasture could be utilized until 7/01, with no additional fall use occurring that year in the Homestead Pasture.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The livestock operator could continue to rotate his livestock between the pastures of the allotments. Only cattle would be permitted on the West Great Divide Allotment. A new water source would not be developed in the northwestern portion of the LU 3-A Allotment; livestock distribution would not be improved. No vegetation treatment would be implemented. Livestock forage and wildlife habitat would not be improved.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 12/19/07

## **SOILS**

Affected Environment: The primary soil mapped within each of these allotments is the Maysprings coarse sandy loam, 3 to 12 percent slopes which occurs in large contiguously mapped areas. Smaller areas of the following soils are also present: Maysprings-Gretdivid complex, 10 to 20 percent slopes; Pinelli loam, 3 to 12 percent slopes; Rock River sandy loam, 3 to 12 percent slopes; Gretdivid-Taffom-Abor complex, 10 to 30 percent slopes; and Ironsprings loamy sand, 1 to 15 percent slopes. These soils are largely derived from sandstone, except the Pinelli and Abor which are derived from shale.

These soils have deep soil profiles except for the Abor which has a depth of 20 to 40 inches over shale bedrock. Most have a low water holding capacity due to the sandy textures or depth of soil, except the Rock River and Taffom soils which have a moderate capacity and Pinelli soil which has a high water holding capacity.

On the slopes flanking the wetland draw in the West Great Divide Allotment evidence of slight soil erosion is present with moderate amounts of plant pedestalling and slight movement of soil particles evident on the soil surface. Other indicators of soil erosion are stable. Although density of Sandberg bluegrass is high, overall grass diversity and density of other grass species is low. Much of this area burned in 1992 and some residual effects of this fire are still be present.

All indicators of erosion of upland soils are more stable and plant diversity and cover is better on the area in the northern portion of the large pasture in the LU 3-A Allotment.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: Soil compaction and depleted soil cover are the most obvious impacts incurred as a result of livestock grazing. These effects would occur on the areas of concentrated use with either alternative, but the majority of the affected lands within the allotments would have adequate plant and litter cover based on the proper utilization of forage resources.

No loss or gain of biological soil crusts would occur as a result of implementing either of the alternatives.

The utilization objective for perennial herbaceous forage is 50%. At this level, vegetative canopy cover would remain adequate to protect soil stability. Utilization levels that exceed the objective could lead to accelerated soil erosion due to increased loss of canopy cover and litter.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The proposed range improvements and brush beating in the LU 3-A Allotment would promote better livestock distribution and alleviate areas of concentrated use near water sources in the southern portion of the allotment. The Maysprings coarse sandy loam has moderate permeability and medium runoff rates and would be suited to the brush beating treatment. Brush beating should promote more herbaceous plant production and cover and better grass density to increase upland soil health.

The proposed riparian pasture in the West Great Divide Allotment would enhance soil health on the upland areas that would be divided from the rest of the South Pasture. Livestock use within this pasture would be controlled and short duration. Livestock use during the growing season would likely be fairly even across the smaller pasture created and the short period of use would allow a re-growth period prior to summer dormancy. Upland soils on the remaining public lands within the South Pasture of the West Great Divide Allotment are included with private and State lands with good dispersed livestock water and good forage production. Most of the livestock use currently occurs on the private and State lands and this level of grazing would continue.

A change from cattle use to sheep use should not present additional problems with grazing distribution as the sheep are herded. Provided that proper grazing use on the forage and browse continues with sheep use in the West Great Divide Allotment, diversity and density of the grass component of the plant community would likely improve. Some opportunity for plant regrowth would occur following the proposed sheep use.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Grazing distribution problems would not be alleviated in the LU 3-A Allotment without the additional water source provided in the northern portion of the large pasture. The area in the southern portion of the large pasture where water is developed would continue to receive most livestock use. The upland soils in the southern portion of this pasture would not receive the benefit that could be provided with more even grazing distribution.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of Specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/12/07

## **UPLAND VEGETATION**

Affected Environment: The dominant range sites within the West Great Divide and the LU 3-A Allotments are rolling loam and sandy land. These range sites typically support mixed sagebrush-antelope bitterbrush and grass communities. Shrubs within the West Great Divide and the LU 3-A Allotments consist of Wyoming big sagebrush, bitterbrush, low rabbitbrush, and green rabbitbrush. Forbs include arrowleaf balsamroot, wild onion, sego lily, lupine, and yarrow. Perennial grasses consist of prairie junegrass, Sandberg bluegrass, streambank wheatgrass,

western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, galleta grass, dryland sedge, and bottlebrush squirreltail. The E½ of section 6 within the LU 3-A Allotment was plowed and seeded to crested wheatgrass in the 1940s. The seeding has since returned to a monoculture of sagebrush with an understory of crested wheatgrass. The sagebrush is a single-aged stand, with little recruitment of young seedlings and plants.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The continued implementation of the grazing system developed in 1998 would have the same impacts as those analyzed in EA #CO-016-LS-98-013. Alternating early spring use by cattle in each pasture within the allotments would allow growing season rest in each pasture every other year. This grazing system has allowed the native vegetation to regain vigor and reproduce. Continued spring deferment every other year along with the creation of a new water source as proposed would allow better distribution of livestock and allow perennial grasses time to recover vigor and replenish root reserves before grazing begins after a year of early use.

If sheep are grazed on the West Great Divide Allotment, utilization could be higher on shrubs and forbs due to the dietary preferences of sheep. Over the long term, this may favor perennial grasses over shrubs. Adherence to the 40% utilization objective on key browse species would ensure continued vegetative health.

Direct impacts of fence construction would be localized disturbance to vegetation. The shrub cover is not particularly dense in the area of the proposed fence relocation, therefore, brush beating is not anticipated. However, the vegetation would be crushed due to vehicular traffic along the new fence route during construction. This disturbance would be highly localized and minimal within the larger plant communities and the vegetation would recover over time. The disturbance of vegetation associated with fence construction could increase the presence of non-native species. There is the potential for construction activities to increase and/or introduce non-native species into new areas, but it is unlikely that motorized vehicle use along the fence line would increase non-native species to a level greater than what is already present.

The construction of a water well and new pit reservoir would result in the removal of less than one acre of vegetation. Livestock would congregate around the new water source and vegetation would be trampled in the immediate vicinity of the new pond. Surrounding vegetation, up to a ¼ mile around the pond, would experience an increase in utilization. Under proper stocking levels, however, utilization throughout the pasture would be 50% or less.

The brush beating would create a mosaic of vegetation consisting of a variety of species and various ages of sagebrush. Reducing the sagebrush canopy cover would allow a greater expression of perennial grasses and forbs, enhancing the depleted understory. Deferring livestock grazing for one growing season would allow the herbaceous understory to set seed and improve recruitment of young plants. This would improve the overall species diversity and vigor within the treated areas. Additional deferment would not be necessary to achieve these objectives.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The impacts of the No Action alternative would be the same as those analyzed for the Proposed Action in EA#CO-016-LS-98-013. The permit

would continue to authorize cattle only and the range improvement projects would not be constructed.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry, 01/07/08

## **WILDLIFE, AQUATIC**

Affected Environment: These allotments do not provide habitat for aquatic wildlife species.

Environmental Consequences, both alternatives: None.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of Specialist and Date: Tim Novotny, 12/06/07

## **WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL**

Affected Environment: The LU 3-A and West Great Divide Allotments provide habitat for pronghorn antelope, mule deer and elk throughout most years. In severe winters, snow depths are likely too deep to support big game on public lands within these allotments. A variety of small reptiles, small mammals and song birds may also be found within this allotment.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: The continued implementation of the grazing system for the LU 3-A Allotment would not have a negative impact on big game habitat. The brush beating could have a negative impact on wintering big game animals by removing potential forage during winter months. The brush beating would remove cover currently available to small mammals and reptiles and would remove nesting habitat for song birds. The proposed water well and associated troughs and pond would not likely impact big game unless conducted during the winter months. Water supply is not a limiting factor for big game species in this area.

The Proposed Action allows for a change in class of livestock from cattle to sheep at the operator's discretion. This change in class of livestock would likely have a negative impact on wintering habitat for big game species because there would be increased competition for sagebrush forage. This could have a negative impact on big game species during severe winters. The proposed fence and creation of a riparian pasture would not impact big game animals. This action should result in improved riparian vegetation that would benefit many species of songbirds and small mammals.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The grazing systems under the No Action Alternative are the same as those analyzed in EA#CO-016-LS-98-013 and are not likely to have a negative impact on most wildlife species. This alternative does not allow for the creation of a

riparian pasture. This would prevent the improvement of the riparian system in the West Great Divide Allotment and would reduce habitat quality within this system.

Mitigative Measures: None.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 12/06/07

**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
Fluid Minerals		MDW, 12/10/07	
Forest Management	KLM 12/05/07		
Hydrology/Ground		MDW, 12/10/07	
Hydrology/Surface		OO, 12/13/07	
Paleontology		MDW, 12/10/07	
Range Management			KLM 12/13/07
Realty Authorizations		MAA 12/05/07	
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		RS 12/10/07	
Socio-Economics		MAA 12/05/07	
Solid Minerals		JAM 12/07/07	
Visual Resources		RS 12/10/07	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	KLM 12/05/07		

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:** The two allotments and the areas surrounding them have historically been grazed by both sheep and cattle. Numerous maintained and un-maintained roads exist throughout the area, including on the allotments. These roads are used regularly by local residents and ranchers as well as by hunters, the primary recreation users in the area. Wildlife populations in the area are high, especially for deer and elk that compete with livestock for available forage throughout the area. Oil and gas development has increased in the allotments and is evidenced by the presence of an interstate energy corridor which traverses the allotments. The primary impacts from all of these activities are most immediately seen in the presence of roads, increased vehicular traffic, cultivation on private lands, and weed presence. The Proposed Action to continue grazing on this allotment is compatible with other uses, both historic and present, and would not add any new or detrimental impacts to those that are already present.

**STANDARDS**

**PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD:** Pronghorn antelope, mule deer and elk can be found within this allotment at various times of the year. The proposed brush beating would remove winter habitat for big game species. This action would also result in a loss

of cover for small mammals, songbirds and reptiles. The development of a water well and its associated troughs and pit pond should not have an impact on any wildlife species. The creation of a riparian pasture would improve habitat for many species of wildlife by protecting and improving riparian conditions. The potential change in class of livestock from cattle to sheep could have a negative impact on winter habitat for big game species. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met under both the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 12/06/07

**SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal)**

**STANDARD:** There are no threatened or endangered species or habitat for such species present with the LU 3-A or West Great Divide Allotments. These allotments do provide valuable breeding and nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse, a BLM Special Status Species. The Proposed Action would not impact any lek location within these allotments. The brush beating proposed for the LU 3-A Allotment would reduce potential nesting habitat within this allotment. This negative impact would be somewhat reduced by the benefits to sage-grouse associated with an expected increase in forb production in treated areas. The potential for a change in class of livestock from cattle to sheep in the West Great Divide Allotment could negatively impact nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse. The development of a riparian pasture by constructing a new fence would benefit greater sage-grouse by improving brood rearing habitats associated with the riparian system. Negative impacts from the construction of the new fence would be offset by the use of wooden stays that will increase the fences visibility to greater sage-grouse. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met under the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives.

Name of specialist and date: Timothy Novotny, 12/06/07

**PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD:** Both allotments are currently meeting this standard. Alternating spring use by cattle or sheep has and would continue to result in well dispersed use throughout the allotments. The stocking rate for the allotments is appropriate and use has not been excessive and would continue to meet utilization objectives. Both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternatives would continue to meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Kathy McKinstry 01/07/08

**SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant)**

**STANDARD:** There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species present on either the LU 3-A #04523 or the West Great Divide #04526 Allotments. For plants, this standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim, 12/06/07

**RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD:** The riparian standard for healthy rangelands would be met with implementation of the Proposed Action. The proposed riparian pasture within the West

Great Divide Allotment would help to control livestock use within the wetland draw. Excluded or short duration use by livestock would ensure that utilization of wetland plants does not exceed the objective level of 50% and trampling and trailing by livestock within the draw would be reduced. Reducing these livestock impacts would make substantial progress towards achieving proper functioning condition of this lentic riparian system.

The riparian standard for healthy rangelands would not be met if the No Action Alternative is selected. Current livestock use within the South Pasture of the West Great Divide Allotment has caused trampling to occur within the wetland draw. Soil hummocks have increased along the edge of draw since 1998 and the wetland plants throughout the draw had greater than 50% use in 2007. Trampling, hummocking, and utilization greater than 50% of wetland plants is causing deterioration and desiccation of the wetland area and is attributable to livestock grazing.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/12/07

**WATER QUALITY STANDARD:** The water quality standard for healthy rangelands would be met with implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. Runoff from snowmelt and summer storms will drain from the West Great Divide and LU 3-A Allotments into stream segments that are presently supporting classified uses. No stream segments are listed as impaired.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/12/07

**UPLAND SOILS STANDARD:** The upland soil standard for healthy rangelands would be met with implementation of either the Proposed Action or No Action Alternatives. Allotment health assessments conducted in early November 2007 found that the upland soil health standard was met.

The Proposed Action Alternative would promote better grazing distribution in the LU 3-A Allotment taking pressure off of the forage resources in the southern portion of the Large Pasture, allowing for more soil cover by plants and litter. Establishment of the small riparian pasture within the South Pasture of the West Great Divide Allotment would provide improved management of livestock use on the upland areas contained within the pasture. Slight soil erosion was indicated by rills and plant pedestals observed in this area of the allotment.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen, 12/12/07

**PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:** Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Frank Counts (base property owner), Cleve Preece (base property lessee).

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1- West Great Divide Allotment Map  
Attachment 1a - LU 3-A Allotment Map  
Attachment 2- Standard and Common Terms and Conditions

Attachment 3 - Proposed Range Improvements Map  
Attachment 4 - BLM Fence Standards  
Attachment 5 - Well Construction Details  
Attachment 5a - Steel Water Trough  
Attachment 5b - Round Water Trough Installation  
Attachment 6 - Pipeline Installation Types  
Attachment 7 - Typical Water Retention Pit

**SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:**

**DATE SIGNED:**

**SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:**

**DATE SIGNED:**

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in EA CO-100-2008-014 and all other available information, I have determined that the proposal and the alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Little Snake Field Office jurisdiction and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplain, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other actions that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice Policy.
9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or new analysis would be conducted.
10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:**

**DATE SIGNED:**

**Attachment 2**  
**EA CO-100-2008-014**  
**Standard Terms and Conditions**

- 1) Grazing permit or lease terms and conditions and the fees charged for grazing use are established in accordance with provisions of the grazing regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
- 2) They are subject to cancellation, in whole or in part, at any time because of:
  - a. Non compliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations;
  - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or part of the property upon which it is based;
  - c. A transfer of grazing preference by the permittee/lessee to another party;
  - d. A decrease in the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within the allotments(s) described;
  - e. Repeated willful unauthorized grazing use;
  - f. Loss of qualifications to hold a permit or lease.
- 3) They are subject to the terms and conditions of allotment management plans if such plans have been prepared. Allotment management plans **MUST** be incorporated in permits and leases when completed.
- 4) Those holding permits or leases **MUST** own or control and be responsible for the management of livestock authorized to graze.
- 5) The authorized officer may require counting and/or additional or special marking or tagging of the livestock authorized to graze.
- 6) The permittee's/lessee's grazing case file is available for public inspection as required by the Freedom of Information Act.
- 7) Grazing permits or leases are subject to the nondiscrimination clauses set forth in Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1964, as amended. A copy of this order may be obtained from the authorized officer.
- 8) Livestock grazing use that is different from that authorized by a permit of lease **MUST** be applied for prior to the grazing period and **MUST** be filed with and approved by the authorized officer before grazing use can be made.
- 9) Billing notices are issued which specify fees due. Billing notices, when paid, become a part of the grazing permit or lease. Grazing use cannot be authorized during any period of delinquency in the payment of amounts due, including settlement for unauthorized use.
- 10) Grazing fee payments are due on the due date specified on the billing notice and **MUST** be paid in full within 15 days of the due date, except as otherwise provided in the grazing permit or lease. If payment is not made within that time frame, a late fee (the greater of \$25 or 10 percent of the amount owed but not more than \$250) will be assessed.

- 11) No member of, or Delegate to, Congress or Resident Commissioner, after his/her election of appointment, or either before or after he/she has qualified, and during his/her continuance in office, and no officer, agent, or employee of the Department of the Interior, other than members of Advisory committees appointed in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. 1) and Sections 309 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) shall be admitted to any share or part in a permit or lease, or derive any benefit to arise therefrom; and the provision of Section 3741 Revised Statute (41 U.S.C. 22), 18 U.S.C. Sections 431-433, and 43 CFR Part 7, enter into and form a part of a grazing permit or lease, so far as the same may be applicable.

### **Common Terms and Conditions**

- A) Grazing use will not be authorized in excess of the amount of specified grazing use (AUM number) for each allotment. Numbers of livestock annually authorized in the allotment(s) may be more or less than the number listed on the permit/lease within the grazing use periods as long as the amount of specified grazing use is not exceeded.
- B) Unless there is a specific term and condition addressing utilization, the intensity of grazing use will insure that no more than 50% of the key grass species and 40% of the key browse species current years growth, by weight, is utilized at the end of the grazing season for winter allotments and the end of the growing season for allotments used during the growing season. Application of this term needs to recognize recurring livestock management that includes opportunity for regrowth, opportunity for spring growth prior to grazing, or growing season deferment.
- C) Failure to maintain range improvements to BLM standards in accordance with signed cooperative agreements and/or range improvement permits may result in the suspension of the annual grazing authorization, cancellation of the cooperative agreement or range improvement permit, and/or the eventual cancellation of this permit/lease.
- D) Storing or feeding supplemental forage on public lands other than salt or minerals must have prior approval. Forage to be fed or stored on public lands must be certified noxious weed free. Salt and/or other mineral supplements shall be placed at least one-quarter mile from water sources or in such a manner as to promote even livestock distribution in the allotment or pasture.
- E) Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder of this authorization must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the allotment operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are encountered or uncovered during any allotment activities or grazing

activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity and immediately contact the authorized officer. Within five working days, the authorized officer will inform the operator as to:

-whether the materials appear to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;  
-the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the identified area can be used for grazing activities again.

If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during allotment activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials and contact the authorized officer. The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best options for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

- F) No hazardous materials/hazardous or solid waste/trash shall be disposed of on public lands. If a release does occur, it shall immediately be reported to this office at (970) 826-5000.
- G) The permittee/lessee shall provide reasonable administrative access across private and leased lands to the BLM and its agents for the orderly management and protection of public lands.
- H) Application of a chemical or release of pathogens or insects on public lands must be approved by the authorized officer.
- I) The terms and conditions of this permit may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.