

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-100-2008-047

CASEFILE/ALLOTMENT NUMBER: 0502039/04620

PROJECT NAME: Change in class of livestock from cattle to sheep and or cattle on the West Monument Allotment #04620.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: see allotment map, Attachment 1

T4N, R92W, Sections 25 and 26
153 acres BLM
240 acres private
393 acres total

APPLICANT: Tom Kourlis for Harry Kourlis Ranch

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 West Monument Allotment #04620 is located within the Eastern Yampa River Management Unit (MU 1). The Proposed Action is compatible with the objectives of this unit which are to provide for the development of coal, oil, and gas resources. In the 1990 Range Program Summary, the West Monument Allotment #04620 was classified as a C (Custodial) allotment.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION: BLM permit #0502039, which authorizes livestock grazing on the West Monument Allotment #04620 was transferred to the Harry Kourlis Ranch in

2006. Per 43 CFR 4110.2-3 (a) (3), the transferred permit retained the existing expiration date of February 28, 2015 and the existing terms and conditions, which included use by cattle only. Harry Kourlis Ranch is primarily a sheep operation and would like to graze sheep on this allotment. The following Environmental Assessment will analyze the impacts of grazing sheep versus cattle on public land within this allotment. The analysis will recommend terms and conditions to the permit which improve or maintain public land health. The Proposed Action will be assessed for meeting land health standards.

PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS: The Little Snake Field Office sent out a Notice of Public Scoping on October 13, 2004, to determine the level of public interest, concern and resource conditions on the grazing permits and leases that were up for renewal in FY 2006. 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 grazing permits/leases for these allotments has been carefully analyzed within the scope of the specific action being taken, resource issues or concerns, and public input received.

Since the proposed change in class of livestock is commensurate with the grazing management of much of the public lands in the vicinity of the allotment, additional public scoping will not be needed.

BACKGROUND: The West Monument Allotment #4620 is located approximately six miles southwesterly of Hamilton, Colorado. It is at the eastern edge of a large valley known as Axial Basin and sits along the southwesterly base of a prominent butte, Monument Butte. The allotment is bisected by Moffat County Road 45, which provides the primary access. This small allotment is predominantly private land with the public land existing in three parcels- the easterly portion along the base of Monument Butte, and two small parcels on the westerly side of the allotment. On public land, the plant community is composed of sagebrush-grass. A small area of riparian development exists on the most westerly parcel where it is crossed by Stinking Gulch. Most of the forage on this allotment is provided by private lands.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action

Change the class of livestock from cattle to sheep and/or cattle on the West Monument Allotment #04620. All other terms and conditions, including total AUMs allocated to livestock would remain the same. The permit would also be reissued with the existing expiration date of February 28, 2015. The permit would be changed from:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates		%PL	AUMs
		Begin	End		
West Monument	3 Cattle	06/01	11/21	100	17

#04620

No Special Terms or Conditions.

To:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates		%PL	AUMs
		Begin	End		
West Monument #04620	15 Sheep	06/01	11/21	100	17

The above permit would be subject to the following Special Term and Condition:

1) Sheep or cattle may be grazed under this permit.

The above permit would be subject to the Standard and Common Terms and Conditions, see Attachment 2.

No Action Alternative

No changes in the terms and conditions, including class of livestock would be made to the permit.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITICAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The allotment does not lay within any EPA nonattainment areas for major pollutants.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Livestock management activities may include actions that would result in dust and very low levels of vehicle exhaust. None of these pollutants would affect nonattainment status.

Mitigative Measures: None

AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Affected Environment: Not present

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Data developed here were 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 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. Other data sets, spring and riparian locations, and new data developed in future studies will be used for the GIS maps developed from the Little Snake Field Office Geographic Information System (GIS).

The GIS maps will be developed using USGS and BLM data that show the springs, creeks and rivers, intermittent drainages, riparian areas, and slopes greater than 30 percent. The BLM data that reflects water features potentially present in the project areas are incomplete at this time. These data represent the “best available data” that the BLM office currently has developed at this time. These maps, as well as the cultural programs current understanding of prehistoric settlement and subsistence patterns, as reflected in the archaeological record, will be used to guide initial survey efforts to locate past human activity areas in each allotment. These areas will be evaluated for potential livestock concentration impacts. The effort to identify and evaluate cultural resources in association with livestock concentration areas will take place during upcoming field seasons.

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis developed for each allotment in this EA. The table shows known cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in each allotment. Fieldwork for the cultural resources on the table will be carried out in FY05 or in subsequent years

Allotment Number	Acres Surveyed at a Class III Level ¹²	Acres <u>NOT</u> Surveyed at a Class III Level	Percent -%- Of Allotment Inventoried at a Class III Level	Eligible or Need Data Sites – Known in Allotment (Site Numbers)	Estimated Sites for the Allotment** (Total Number)	Estimated Eligible or Need Data Sites in the Allotment (Number)
04620	12¹	141	8.5%	None	4.06	1.21

(Note: *Acres are derived from GIS allotment maps. 1. BLM only acres or 2. BLM and other acres in the allotment. See allotment specific analysis form. **Estimates of site densities are based on known inventory data. Estimates represent a minimum figure which may be revised

upwards based on future inventory findings.)

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Monitoring of the previous years range permit renewal environmental documentation for FY1998, FY1999, FY2000, FY2001, FY2002 and FY2003 has been carried out. These reports represent three field seasons of evaluation work on the eligible and need data sites. The fieldwork conducted in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, as expected, identified impacts to some of the cultural resources being evaluated. This information is covered in the following reports:

Keesling, Henry S. and Gary D. Collins, Patrick C. Walker
2000 Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and Need Data Sites within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EA's FY98 and FY99. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D., and Patrick C. Walker, Sam R. Johnson, Henry S. Keesling
2001 Addendum to Cultural Resource Evaluation of Known Eligible and Need Data Sites within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EAs FY98 and FY99, Range Permit Renewal EA's FY2000 and FY2001. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Ryan J. Nordstrom, Henry S. Keesling
2002 The Second Addendum to The Cultural and Need Data Sites Within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewal EA's FY98, FY99, FY00, FY01, and FY02. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office.

Collins, Gary D. and Henry S. Keesling
2003 The Third Addendum to The Cultural and Need Data Sites Within Range Allotments for Range Permit Renewals EA's FY98, FY99. Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado. Copy on file at that office

BLM has committed to a ten year phased evaluation being conducted for cultural resources that takes into account identified livestock concentration areas and the cultural resources that are either eligible and/or need data and to carrying out mitigation on cultural resources that require this action. The phased monitor and mitigation approach will mitigate identified adverse effects, significant impacts and data loss, (NHPA Section 106, 36CFR800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM/Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; NEPA/FLPMA requirements) to an acceptable level.

The GIS mapping and evaluation effort will establish areas that have potential conflicts between livestock and prehistoric cultural resources. The GIS maps will provide a computer generated visual departure point for the proposed cultural fieldwork. GIS maps using USGS and BLM best available data, will be created showing springs, stream course features, riparian areas, and slopes that are greater than 30% slope within the allotment. Current understanding of prehistoric

settlement and subsistence patterns will be applied to the GIS map review and used to establish prehistoric cultural areas. These potential livestock concentration areas will be evaluated in the field.

Livestock impacts may cause cumulative effects, some of which may be significant, and may cause long-term, irreversible, potentially irretrievable adverse impacts and data loss. However, the phased identification and evaluation fieldwork will identify mitigation measures that would reduce these impacts (NHPA Section 106; 36CFR800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM/Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; NEPA/FLPMA requirements), to an acceptable level.

Other project specific Class III surveys initiated by the BLM, industry, or ranching will identify previously unrecorded cultural resources within these allotments. Newly identified cultural resources will need to be mitigated in relationship to the proposed project(s). Further, these cultural resources will be incorporated into current and future grazing review efforts to be evaluated and monitored as necessary.

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

Allotment Specific Stipulations for this permit

1. GIS maps based upon stream course features and springs from the 7.5 minute USGS maps and BLM best available riparian/spring data in this office will be used to initially establish evaluation areas for livestock concentrations. Current archaeological understanding of settlement and subsistence patterns for prehistoric cultural resources will be applied to these maps. Identified livestock concentration areas will be field evaluated. Those areas with no livestock impacts but with potential for cultural resources will under go the same Class III survey discussed below. This survey will be conducted documenting archaeological resources which may be impacted if grazing practices change in the future. Identified concentration areas that exhibit livestock impacts will have the following cultural surveys:

Springs, riparian areas, streams or creeks, and intermittent drainage will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration that includes an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.

Springs will have a Class III survey in the area of concentration and include an additional 50 feet around the impacted area. Identified cultural resources will be recorded to include the total site area and mitigation developed.

2. 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. Identified concentration areas will have the

following cultural surveys performed:

Potential rock shelters, rock art areas will be evaluated to see if cultural materials are present. When cultural resources are identified the site will be recorded and appropriate mitigation will be developed.

3. Previously identified sites, table above, and new sites recorded and evaluated as eligible and/or need data during other project specific Class III survey will need to be evaluated as well. Initial recording of new sites and re-evaluation of the known sites will establish current condition of the resource and help in developing a monitoring plan for all sites. Some sites will have to be monitored more often than others. Sites that are impacted by grazing activities will need further monitoring, physical protection or other mitigative measures developed.

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 III survey(s), monitoring, and developing site specific mitigation measures will mitigate the adverse effects, data loss, and significant impacts (NHPA Section 106, 36 CFR 800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM Colorado and Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; and NEPA/FLPMA requirements) to an acceptable level.

The Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) agreed with the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado, (BLM) that the BLM could issue its Range Renewal Permits with the proposed Cultural Resource Management actions, monitoring known eligible and need data sites and conducting Class III and/or modified Class III surveys on selected areas of BLM lands within a ten year time frame (Cultural Matrix Team Meeting 26 January 1999, Colorado BLM State Office).

The Little Snake Field Office will initiate the monitoring of known eligible and need data sites the first field season following the issuing of the permit if possible. This survey will be based upon an accepted, BLM and SHPO, research design that will establish criteria for evaluation of the sites for livestock impacts and any needed mitigation and future monitoring needs.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: This allotment is in an area of low human population. No minority and or low income populations live in this vicinity.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

FLOOD PLAINS

Affected Environment: Floodplains exist along Stinking Gulch which meanders along the northwest corner of the allotment. Excessive sediment from irrigation runoff from private lands is hampering the growth of riparian vegetation.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Sheep use would result in fewer impacts to flood plain resources along Stinking Gulch. Sheep would be present under herder control and, even in the dryer parts of the grazing season, would not be allowed to congregate in any one area. Adverse impacts caused by sedimentation due to irrigation runoff are not under the control of the grazing permit and could continue. If cattle are grazed under this permit, impacts would be similar to the No Action Alternative.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Cattle using the allotment after the spring/early summer growing season would be more likely to linger on floodplain areas along Stinking Gulch, resulting in disproportionately higher use on green floodplain vegetation. This would further hamper floodplain stability in light of problems being caused by irrigation runoff. However, the potential of this is alleviated by the presence of water sources, fencing, and irrigated pasture on private land within the allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Whitetop is the most common problem in the Axial Basin area. Other weeds such as houndstongue, musk thistle, bull thistle, Canada thistle, and black henbane occur. Cheatgrass and Japanese brome are present on the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Grazing can cause invasive species to spread into new areas. Sheep are an affective weed management tool on grazing lands. The species present on this allotment could be grazed by sheep throughout the growing season. Cattle are not considered a great invasive species grazer, but would utilize cheatgrass and Japanese brome very early in the growing season.

Vehicular access to public land for grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, as well as wind and water can cause invasive species to spread into new areas. Surface disturbing activities associated with livestock concentration can increase weed presence. The rotation of livestock would help to increase native plant vigor and their ability to compete with species such as cheatgrass and Japanese brome. The use of best management practices and mitigation of livestock disturbance would facilitate control of invasive species and reduce the potential of long term infestation of annual and noxious weed species. All principles of Integrated Pest Management would be employed to control noxious weeds on public lands.

Mitigative Measures: None

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: This allotment provides excellent habitat for golden eagle (rim rocks and open rangeland), mountain bluebird, western meadowlark, robin, chickadee, vesper sparrow, sage thrasher, and American kestrel.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Grazing by either cattle or sheep would not negatively affect migratory bird habitat on this allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

A letter was sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Tribal Council, and the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs on November 17, 2004. The letter discussed the range permits that the BLM would be working on in FY05 and FY06. Comments received from the southern Ute Tribal Council did not foresee any impacts. No other comments were received (Letters on file at the Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado). Under the Proposed Action, no further notification is necessary.

PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: No prime or unique farmlands are found on the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

T&E AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS

Affected Environment: No threatened or endangered animal species or threatened habitat for endangered species is found on the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

T&E AND SENSITIVE PLANTS

Affected Environment: No federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plants are present on the allotment.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no hazardous or solid wastes present on the allotment.

Environmental Consequences: Access to the allotment for livestock management could result in releases of motor vehicle fluids such as oil and coolant. This type of release is unlikely and would be extremely limited in nature.

Mitigative Measures: None

WATER QUALITY - GROUND

Affected Environment: The allotment has some ground water aquifers containing meteoric water. The ground water quality in these areas ranges from potable to useable in aquifers within porous and fractured zones (mostly sandstone and conglomerates).

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Due to the limited number of livestock grazing, there would be no adverse impacts to ground water quality within the allotment. Livestock management would be conducted in accordance with existing Colorado laws for water quality. Specifically, all permitted activities would comply with the applicable water quality regulations in the Colorado Water Quality Control Act and they would be in conformance with the classifications and numeric standards for water quality established by the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission.

Mitigative Measures: None

WATER QUALITY - SURFACE

Affected Environment: Drainage from the public lands is dispersed overland flow that flows into Stinking Gulch. Stinking Gulch is an intermittent tributary to Milk Creek which is a perennial tributary of the Yampa River. The water quality of the Yampa River segment and of Milk Creek fully supports classified beneficial uses designated for these streams.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: The water quality in Stinking Gulch and downstream has continued to support classified uses under cattle grazing. The impacts to water quality from sheep grazing would not be appreciably different than cattle grazing, therefore neither alternative would negatively affect water quality.

Mitigative Measures: None

WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES

Affected Environment: Stinking Gulch, an ephemeral drainage which crosses the northwest

corner of the allotment, supports some riparian development. Currently this riparian area is not at proper functioning condition due to high sediment loads from irrigation runoff from adjacent private lands. Some fencing has been installed on private lands to control livestock access to the portion of Stinking Gulch on the allotment to help alleviate these ongoing impacts.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Sheep use would result in fewer impacts to riparian resources along Stinking Gulch. Sheep would be present under herder control and, even in the dryer parts of the grazing season, would not be allowed to congregate in any one area. Adverse impacts caused by sedimentation due to irrigation runoff are not under the control of the grazing permit and could continue. If cattle are grazed under this permit, impacts would be similar to the No Action Alternative.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Cattle using the allotment after the spring/early summer growing season would be more likely to linger along Stinking Gulch, resulting in disproportionately higher use on green floodplain vegetation. This would further hamper floodplain stability in light of problems being caused by irrigation runoff. However, the potential of this is alleviated by the presence of water sources, fencing, and irrigated pasture on private land within the allotment.

Mitigative Measures: None

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

WSAs, WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

SOILS

Affected Environment: The public lands on this allotment contain three predominant soils. The Kemmerer-Yamo Complex, 5-30% slopes, occupies the toe slopes of Monument Butte.

This complex of soils is composed of clay, silty clay loam, and loamy soils with medium to high runoff and is well drained. The Yamo Loam, 3-15% slopes, occupies the flatter areas below Monument Butte. This loamy soil is well drained with medium runoff and moderate permeability. Much of the public lands in the westerly portion of the allotment contain the Pinelli Loam, 3-12% slopes. This loamy soil is made up of alluvium and is well drained with slow permeability and exhibits very high runoff.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: Past grazing use on this allotment has not resulted in detrimental impacts to soils on this allotment. Even though the permitted use is growing-season long, actual use has typically not been for that long of a period. Since the vast majority of forage within this allotment is from cultivated pasture on private land, grazing use on public lands is mostly incidental. This has resulted in a plant community that likely receives far more impacts from wildlife than livestock. Under sheep grazing, there could be more use on the public lands as sheep are herded from area to area, but this use would not result in declines in plant cover to the degree that the soil would no longer be protected. The Proposed Action to graze sheep on this allotment would not adversely impact the soil resource any more than past grazing use.

Mitigative Measures: None

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The plant communities present on the allotment are associated with Loamy, Shallow Breaks, and Rock Outcrop ecological sites. Dominant plant community types are: Loamy Ecological Site – Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, green rabbitbrush, western wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, needleandthread grass, bluebunch wheatgrass, prairie junegrass, lupine, western yarrow, arrowleaf balsamroot, and hood phlox. Shallow breaks Ecological Site – Utah juniper, Utah serviceberry, western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, prairie junegrass, slender wheatgrass, lupine, arrowleaf balsamroot, sego lily, western yarrow, and astragalus. Rock Outcrop – Utah juniper, Utah serviceberry, black sagebrush, slender wheatgrass, galleta, penstemon, sego lily, and astragalus.

Key forage species for sheep that are present on the allotment include: Loamy Ecological Site – western wheatgrass, big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, Indian ricegrass, and Sandberg bluegrass. Shallow Breaks Ecological Site – western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, prairie junegrass, Utah serviceberry, big sagebrush, and all forbs. Rock Outcrop – all forbs, black sagebrush and slender wheatgrass.

All plant species are in high vigor with younger plants occupying the space between shrub species.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Sheep grazing would provide another means of managing less desirable species such as cheatgrass, Japanese brome. However, sheep could compete more with mule deer in browsing/grazing certain shrubs, primarily sagebrush and

rabbitbrush. Better distribution on the allotment and less use on riparian areas would result. Sheep in migration to other permits (3 or 4 days) would cause minimal impact on the resources. Use by cattle would be similar to the No Action Alternative.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: The vast majority of cattle use on the allotment would be on cultivated pasture and other portions of private lands within the allotment. Historically, cattle use on public lands within the allotment has been light and incidental, resulting in plant communities that are far more impacted by wildlife grazing than by livestock. This would continue under this alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: The allotment is suited habitat for wildlife game and non-game species, migratory, song birds, raptors, and reptiles. Habitat for aquatic wildlife is not present.

Environmental Consequences, all alternatives: None

Mitigative Measures: None

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

Affected Environment: The allotment provides habitat for big game species as well as small mammals, reptiles, and birds. Mule deer and elk utilize this habitat year round. However, there is no severe winter range or critical habitat for any big game species within this allotment. Some of the public land within the allotment is located on steeper slopes and is unavailable to cattle, though not sheep.

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Sheep would compete with wildlife for browse especially sagebrush and rabbitbrush and for grass in spring and summer. However the appropriate stocking rate and the availability of forage from cultivated pasture would greatly alleviate any potential problems this competition would have. Sheep grazing of invasives would be a benefit to wildlife habitat by suppressing these species. The impacts of cattle grazing under this alternative would be similar to the No Action Alternative.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: Cattle would compete with large ungulates primarily for grass forage species. The low stocking rate, coupled with the preponderance of forage available from cultivated pasture would minimize this competition, however. Cattle grazing under this alternative would not negatively affect the ability of this allotment to provide suitable wildlife habitat.

Mitigative Measures: None

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		X	
Forest Management	X		
Hydrology/Ground		X	
Hydrology/Surface		X	
Paleontology		X	
Range Management		X	
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Solid Minerals		X	
Visual Resources		X	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	X		

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This allotment and areas surrounding have historically been grazed by both sheep and cattle. Numerous maintained and unmaintained roads exist throughout the area, including on the allotment. These roads are used regularly by local residents and ranchers as well as by the primary recreation users in the area, hunters. Wildlife populations in the area are high, especially for deer and elk that compete with livestock for available forage throughout the area. The primary impacts from all of these activities are most immediately seen in the presence of roads, cultivation on private lands, noise, increased particulates in the air, and weed presence. The proposed action to graze sheep instead of cattle 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: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat potential. Plants and animals at both the community and population levels are productive, resilient, diverse, vigorous, and able to reproduce and sustain natural fluctuations and ecological processes.

The West Monument Allotment provides quality wildlife habitat for a variety of wildlife species. This allotment provides severe winter range for mule deer and elk. It also provides high quality nesting habitat for golden eagles and other cliff nesting bird species. Since the Proposed Action would not increase the existing forage allocation or change the season of use, it, like the No Action Alternative, would ensure that this standard continues to be met in the future.

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal)

STANDARD: There are no threatened or endangered species or habitat for such species in or near the West Monument Allotment. This allotment does provide nesting habitat for greater sage-grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The Proposed Action to allow sheep use would ensure that nesting habitat for these species is maintained. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met in the future under either alternative.

PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD: The West Monument Allotment contains healthy, vigorous, and diverse plant communities. Reproduction and age class diversity are apparent throughout all components of the plant communities. Recovery from a burn ten years ago is progressing well, and there are a minimum of weed problems. The Proposed Action would maintain current levels, and seasons of livestock use, but allow for sheep instead of cattle. Since forage allocation and season of use appear to be appropriate, either alternative would meet this standard for plants.

SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant)

STANDARD: There are no BLM sensitive or federally threatened or endangered plant species within this allotment. For plants, this standard does not apply.

RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD: The riparian standard is not met on this allotment due to excessive sediment that is entering Stinking Gulch upstream of the public lands. Stinking Gulch meanders along the edge and northeast corner of the 40-acre tract of public lands. The excessive sediment that is hampering the persistence of riparian plants is caused from irrigation practices and the return flow of sediment laden irrigation water. Some fencing is present on private lands to control access to these riparian areas by livestock. If the permittee follows the practices of controlling livestock use in the riparian areas, then both alternatives would meet the intent of the riparian standard for healthy public lands.

WATER QUALITY STANDARD: The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands achieves or exceeds the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado. Water Quality Standards for surface and ground waters include designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria, and anti-degradation requirements set forth under State law as found in 5 CCR 1002-8, as required by Section 303 of the Clean Water Act.

The water quality standard would met for the West Monument Allotment under either alternative. Drainage from the public lands within the allotment is primarily dispersed overland flow that flows into Stinking Gulch. The two separate public land tracts within the allotment are comprised of moderate east and west facing slopes; the larger eastern tract contains steeper westerly facing slopes near the top of Monument Butte. Stinking Gulch is an intermittent tributary to Milk Creek, which is a perennial tributary of the Yampa River. The water quality of this Yampa River segment and of Milk Creek fully supports the classified beneficial uses designated for these streams.

UPLAND SOILS STANDARD: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes. Adequate soil infiltration and permeability allows for the accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor and minimizes surface runoff. The Proposed Action to allow sheep grazing would not affect the ability of this standard to continue to be met due to reliance on private lands and the need to keep sheep moving. No increase in AUMs or changes in season of use are proposed; both alternatives would meet this standard.

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED/REFERENCES: Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office; Bureau of Land Management Field Office, Craig, Colorado; Moffat County Weed Control District, Craig, Colorado.

This EA was prepared by Dennis Philippi of Natural Resources Options, Inc. in cooperation with the Little Snake Field Office. This document has been reviewed by Hunter Seim, Rangeland Management Specialist.

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment 1, Allotment map
Attachment 2, Standard and Common Terms and Conditions

SIGNATURE OF LEAD REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWER:

DATE SIGNED:

Finding of No Significant Impact

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. With the implementation of the attached mitigation measures there is 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.

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 Resource Area 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
CO-100-2008-047 EA
TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Standard Terms and Conditions

- 1) Grazing permit or lease terms and conditions and the fees charged for grazing use are established in accordance with the 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. Noncompliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations;
 - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or a 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 allotment(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 or 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 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 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 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 lease may be modified if additional information indicates that revision is necessary to conform with 43 CFR 4180.