

**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-100-2006-039

**PROJECT (RIPS) NUMBER:** 002628

**PROJECT NAME:** Change in the allotment boundary between the Browns Park #04320, West Boone Draw #04304, and Thompson Basin #04311 Allotments and construction of an allotment boundary fence.

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** see Project Map, Attachment 1

T9N R101W Sec. 36  
T8N R101W Sec. 1  
T8N R100W Secs. 7, 8, 16, 17, 21, 28, and 33

**APPLICANT:** Rancho Greco, aka Raftopoulos Ranches and Sombrero Ranches

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The Proposed Action is 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 has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

**NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:** The Browns Park Allotment #04320, permitted to Raftopoulos Ranches, is a cattle allotment and the neighboring West Boone Draw #04304 and Thompson Basin #04311 Allotments, permitted to Sombrero Ranch, are primarily horse allotments but are used by cattle as well. The common boundary between these allotments has never been fully fenced and, for many years, cattle have drifted onto the horse allotments and horses have drifted onto the cattle allotment. Due to topography and land ownership patterns, the existing allotment boundary has not provided a feasible line for fence construction, so no fence has ever been constructed to control and confine livestock to their proper allotments. In 2005, Raftopoulos Ranches, Sombrero Ranches, and BLM reached an agreement to make adjustments to the boundary common to the three allotments in order to provide a line capable of being fenced. Because of land ownership patterns, to make the new proposed boundary

equitable in terms of available forage to both operators, Raftopoulos Ranches and Sombrero Ranches traded portions of their private lands between each other. In December, 2005, they submitted the proposed fence line/allotment boundary change to BLM.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:**

### **Proposed Action**

Change the common boundary between the Browns Park #04320, West Boone Draw #04304, and Thompson Basin #04311 Allotments from the current boundary to the proposed boundary as shown in Attachment 2. This change would involve a change in class of livestock on approximately 839 BLM acres from cattle to horses and approximately 261 BLM acres from horses to cattle.

Construct a four-wire barbed wire fence, bottom wire smooth along the proposed new allotment boundary. The fence would be built with wires spaced at 16", 22", 28", and 40" from ground level. The fence would be constructed with metal posts, spaced 12 feet apart, and with wooden stays to increase visibility to wildlife. Wire gates would be placed where the fence would cross existing roads. Three and five post corner panels would be placed as necessary at angle points along the fence. Stress panels would be placed at locations determined necessary by the construction contractor. Wire spacing, gates, and stress panels would be built to BLM standards, see Attachments 3a-e.

Where the fence would cross areas of big sagebrush, greasewood, and other large shrubs, brushbeating would be necessary to facilitate construction and allow wildlife to recognize the new fence. Where the fence would cross areas of juniper woodland, only hand-clearing of enough vegetation to allow for construction and maintenance of the fence would be allowed. The fence would be constructed by Sombrero Ranches and Raftopoulos Ranches using BLM supplied materials. Maintenance would be the responsibility of the permittees on either side of the fence on a basis jointly agreed to by both permittees. The share of costs by both permittees and BLM, maintenance responsibilities, and any other agreed to stipulations are documented in a Form 4120-6, Cooperative Agreement for Range Improvements and signed by both permittees and BLM.

Due to the movement of the boundary between these allotments, adjustments of permitted use would be necessary. The lands that are changing hands between the three allotments are generally less productive than much of the land in the rest of these allotments, i.e. greasewood, basin big sagebrush, and juniper plant communities. Therefore, the public lands that would be swapped between the two permittees will be rated at 17 acres/AUM. Changes in public land acreage between the three allotments due to the boundary change would be as follows:

- West Boone Draw Allotment #04304 would increase by 511 BLM acres,
- Thompson Basin Allotment #04311 would decrease by 111 BLM acres,
- Browns Park Allotment #04320 would decrease by 295 BLM acres.

The changes in public lands within each of the three allotments is partially offset by a trade in private lands between Sombrero Ranches and Raftopoulos Ranches that was executed on November 15, 2005. This agreement includes trades in land deeds between the two parties and a promise by Raftopoulos Ranches to purchase an additional 630 acres from Sombrero Ranches by December 31, 2008 with a lease of this land in the interim. This trade, coupled with the boundary change, would result in no changes in %PL for Sombrero Ranches permit and a 1% decrease in %PL for Rancho Greco's permit. At 17 acres/AUM, the two grazing permits that cover these three allotments would be adjusted as follows:

Sombrero Ranches, Inc. #0501087

From:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates		%PL	AUMs
		Begin	End		
West Boone Draw #04304	473 Horses	03/01	05/15	57	674
	60 Cattle	03/01	05/15	57	85
	478 Horses	12/01	02/28	57	806
	60 Cattle	12/01	02/28	57	<u>101</u>
Total					1666
Thompson Basin #04311	320 Horses	03/01	05/15	43	344
	12 Cattle	03/01	05/15	43	13
	324 Horses	12/01	02/28	43	412
	12 Cattle	12/01	02/28	43	<u>15</u>
Total					784

To:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates		%PL	AUMs
		Begin	End		
West Boone Draw #04304	484 Horses	03/01	05/15	57	689
	60 Cattle	03/01	05/15	57	85
	487 Horses	12/01	02/28	57	821
	60 Cattle	12/01	02/28	57	<u>101</u>
Total					1696
Thompson Basin #04311	320 Horses	03/01	05/15	43	344
	9 Cattle	03/01	05/15	43	10
	324 Horses	12/01	02/28	43	412
	9 Cattle	12/01	02/28	43	<u>11</u>
Total					777

Rancho Greco #0501067

From:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates		%PL	AUMs
		Begin	End		
Browns Park	759 Cattle	03/01	06/15	80	2136
#04320	760 Cattle	10/15	02/28	80	<u>2738</u>
				Total	4874
					(2 AUMs unscheduled)

To:

Allotment Name & Number	Livestock Number & Kind	Dates		%PL	AUMs
		Begin	End		
Browns Park	765 Cattle	03/01	06/15	79	2126
#04320	767 Cattle	10/15	02/28	79	<u>2729</u>
				Total	4855
					(4 AUMs unscheduled)

All other existing terms and conditions on both permits would remain the same.

### **No Action Alternative**

The allotment boundary would not change and no fence would be constructed. Both existing permits would remain unchanged.

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

#### **CRITICAL RESOURCES**

#### **AIR QUALITY**

Affected Environment: Air quality in the area currently meets all applicable EPA standards.

Environmental Consequences: Air quality would not be affected by construction of the allotment fence nor the change in the allotment boundaries. Air quality would not be affected by the No Action Alternative.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/8/06

#### **AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Jim McBrayer 1/31/06

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Cultural resources, in this region of Colorado range from late Paleo-Indian to Historic. For a general understanding of the cultural resources in this area of Colorado, see *An Overview of Prehistoric Cultural Resources, Little Snake Resource Area, Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resources Series, Number 20, *An Isolated Empire, A History of Northwestern Colorado*, Bureau of Land Management Colorado, Cultural Resource Series, Number 2 and *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin*, Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists.

The table below is based on the allotment specific analysis developed for the affected allotments in this environmental assessment. Copies of the allotment specific analyses are on file at the Little Snake Field Office. The table shows cultural resources, eligible and need data, and those that are anticipated to be in each allotment.

Allotment Number	Acres Surveyed at a Class III Level <sup>1 2</sup>	Acres NOT 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)
4320	1,613.89 <sup>2</sup>	53,692.03	.029%	5MF686 5MF287 5MF4389	1,468.0	440.67

Allotment Number	Acres Surveyed at a Class III Level <sup>1 2</sup>	Acres NOT 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)
				5MF694 5MF4384 5MF691 5MF685 5MF737 5MF624 5MF353 5MF634 5MF612 5MF2674 5MF4341		
4304	41.59 <sup>2</sup>	37,227.43	.0011%	5MF3488 5MF3450 5MF3449 5MF2806 5MF2789 5MF2779 5MF2807 5MF3446	989.9	296.97
4311	8.39 <sup>2</sup>	16,878.53	.00049%	5MF696	448.4	134.52

(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, Proposed Action:

A project specific Class III survey initiated by the BLM may identify previously unrecorded cultural resources along the proposed fenceline. Conducting a Class III survey, monitoring, and mitigation by avoidance will mitigate the adverse effects, data loss, and significant impacts (NHPA Section 106, 36CFR800.9; Archaeological Resource Protection Act 1979; BLM Colorado and Colorado SHPO Protocol 1998; and NEPA/FLPMA requirements) to an acceptable level.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: There would be no impact to cultural resources under this alternative.

## Mitigative Measures:

1) The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the 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 project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5087. Within five working days the AO 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 project activities again; and

-pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO by telephone at (970) 286-5000, and with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or object 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 AO.

2) If any sites of potential Native American religious concern (e.g. rock art, vision quest structures, human burial sites, prehistoric cairns, stone circles, stone alignments, altars, medicine wheels) are identified by construction personnel or subcontractors within the project boundary but outside the cultural resource inventory corridors, the BLM Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) Archaeologist shall be promptly notified. The BLM LSFO shall determine the need for special measures and/or Native American consultation.

3) The route of the proposed fence, before proceeding with implementation, will go through the Section 106 processes, as described in the current Protocol (1998). Any identified sites along the route of the proposed fence will be avoided. If any sites are identified during the Class III survey that could be impacted by the Proposed Action, the fence will be re-routed so that those sites are not impacted. The proposed fence is described in the Proposed Action shown above and in Attachment 1.

Name of specialist and date: Gary D. Collins 7/12/06

## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

**Affected Environment:** The site of the Proposed Action is remote and, except for scattered settlement around the community of Greystone, mostly uninhabited.

**Environmental Consequences:** Due to remoteness, there would be no impact to minority or low-income populations.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Phillis A. Bowers 2/1/06

## **FLOOD PLAINS**

**Affected Environment:** The proposed fence would traverse upland slopes and drainages along ridge areas in the northern portion. The fence would follow valley terraces near foot slopes along Douglas Draw in the southern portion. The fence would cross Douglas Draw and its floodplains on the southern end.

**Environmental Consequences:** Since no allotment fence is present along this allotment boundary, there is overlapping use by cattle and horses on the floodplains adjacent to Douglas Draw. This use likely would continue under the No Action Alternative and the potential to over graze vegetation on the floodplains would not be corrected.

An installed fence, as proposed, on the readjusted allotment boundaries would help to control livestock use on the floodplains adjacent to Douglas Draw. Opportunities for improved management of the vegetative resources along these floodplains would increase if the Proposed Action is implemented.

No substantial impacts would result from installing the fence across Douglas Draw and its associated floodplains. More frequent maintenance of the fence at this crossing would likely be required. The Proposed Action does not include any other developments that would be installed in the floodplain areas. No threat to human safety, life, welfare and property would result from implementing either of the alternatives.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/8/06

## **INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES**

**Affected Environment:** Cheatgrass and halogeton are known to occur in this area. Both of these species are capable of becoming the dominant cover species if given an opportunity. There is the potential for noxious weeds, such as dalmatian toadflax, knapweeds, leafy spurge and others to exist and spread in these areas.

**Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action:** The construction activities associated with this fence would not increase the spread of cheatgrass or halogeton, as the existing herbaceous community would remain intact and competitive.

Brush beating of areas with heavy sage brush would favor native grass establishment and would not increase cheatgrass or halogeton presence.

Cattle and horses share a dietary preference, but have different mechanism for taking forage. Utilization by horses can be more severe in some cases as they are capable of using two sets of

incisors to utilize the plant closer to the ground. However, these impacts would not increase weed presence, provided that appropriate utilization levels are maintained.

Vehicular access to public land for grazing operations, livestock and wildlife movement, and wind and water can cause invasive species to spread into new areas. Surface disturbance activities associated with livestock concentration around fence lines can increase weed presence. 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 area. The use of best management practices and mitigation of livestock disturbance can 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.

Environmental Consequences, No Action: This alternative would neither increase nor decrease weed presence in the vicinity. No new disturbances would occur and overlapping livestock use would continue.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Curtis Bryan 2/3/06

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

Affected Environment: The proposed fence would be located in sagebrush-grass, juniper woodland, and greasewood plant communities. These communities provide both nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of migratory birds. Birds that likely nest in the area include Brewer's sparrow, Vesper sparrow, green-tailed towhee, black-throated grey warbler, and blue-gray gnatcatcher. There are two historic golden eagle nests located near the proposed fence.

Environmental Consequences: The Proposed Action has a low potential to result in the 'take' of migratory birds. Nesting attempts may be disrupted and some nests may be accidentally destroyed if vegetation manipulation is conducted during the breeding season (May – July). Once the fence line is cleared there would be no further potential to interfere materially with nest substrate or nesting efforts on-site. This project is intended to contain livestock in their proper allotments. This would improve vegetative conditions on both allotments by decreasing grazing pressures from two different livestock classes.

The proposed fence would not significantly impact golden eagle habitat. Increased human presence and noise associated with construction of the fence may disturb nesting golden eagles, leading to decreased nest attendance or nest abandonment. These activities should not be conducted from February through June to prevent impacts to nesting golden eagles.

Mitigative Measures: No construction activities from February through June to prevent disturbances to nesting golden eagles. The seasonal limitation could be temporarily suspended after May 15 if the nest sites have been determined to be unoccupied.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 2/9/06

## **NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

A letter was sent to the Uinta and Ouray Tribal Council, Southern Ute Tribal Council, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council, and the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs on January 21, 1999. The letter listed the projects that the BLM would notify them on and projects that would not require notification. No comments were received (Letter on file at the Little Snake Field Office). This project requires no additional notification.

Name of specialist and date: Gary D. Collins 7/14/06

## **PRIME & UNIQUE FARMLANDS**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/8/06

## **T&E SPECIES - SENSITIVE PLANTS**

Affected Environment: There are no BLM sensitive plant species within or in the vicinity of the Proposed Action.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 1/30/06

## **T&E SPECIES – ANIMALS**

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered wildlife species or habitat for such species in or near the project area. Sagebrush stands in the project area provide overall habitat for greater sage grouse, a BLM sensitive species. The area does not provide nesting or brooding rearing habitat for sage grouse.

Environmental Consequences: No Federally ESA listed animal species would be affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative. A new fence has potential to result in isolated mortality of individual sage grouse as a result of collisions with wires which have low visibility. Wooden stays would be installed to increase visibility to wildlife species. Mortalities associated with fence collision should be low and would not likely have an impact on sage grouse populations. Once sage grouse become accustomed to the fence, collisions would likely decrease. The fence would also provide new perch sites for a variety of raptor species which use the project area. This project is intended to contain livestock in their proper allotments. This

would improve vegetative conditions on both allotments by decreasing grazing pressures from two different livestock classes. Improving vegetative conditions would be beneficial to sage grouse utilizing habitat in the project area.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 2/9/06

### **T&E SPECIES – PLANTS**

Affected Environment: There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plant species within or in the vicinity of the Proposed Action.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 1/30/06

### **WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

Affected Environment: There are no hazardous or solid wastes present in the vicinity of the project area.

Environmental Consequences: There is potential for the release of hazardous wastes in the form of vehicle fluids (oil, fuel, coolant) from equipment used during fence construction or maintenance. The potential for releases of these materials is low and, if they were to occur, would be extremely limited with no adverse impacts to the project area as a whole.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Duane Johnson 2/1/06

### **WATER QUALITY - GROUND**

Affected Environment: The area affected by the Proposed Action may have some recharge zones for groundwater aquifers. The ground water quality in the areas should mostly be fresh in both the Browns Park and Quaternary deposits.

Environmental Consequences: The adjustment of the allotment boundary and the building of a new fence would have no adverse impacts to ground water quality within the project area. The Proposed Action would be conducted in accordance with existing Colorado laws for water quality. Specifically, all permitted activities must 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

Name of specialist and date: Fred Conrath 3/7/06

## **WATER QUALITY - SURFACE**

Affected Environment: The proposed fence would be constructed on terraces within the Douglas Draw valley and on upland ridges above Douglas Draw. Douglas Draw is an intermittent tributary to Vermillion Creek. The water quality of Vermillion Creek and its tributaries must support the classified beneficial uses of Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 2 and Agriculture.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed fence would help control the drift of livestock between the two allotments. The fence would lead to improved forage and soil resource conditions in each of the allotments and would stabilize grazing impacts to rangeland hydrology in this arid environment. Less sediment and improved water quality in runoff waters from rangelands flanking Douglas Draw would result from construction of the fence. No affect to water quality would occur from readjustment of these allotment boundaries.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/8/06

## **WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES**

Affected Environment: No riparian or wetland areas would be affected by construction of the fence or readjustment of the allotment boundaries.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/8/06

## **WILD & SCENIC RIVERS**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Jim McBrayer 1/31/06

## **WILDERNESS, WSAs**

Affected Environment: Not present.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Jim McBrayer 1/31/06

## **NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS**

### **SOILS**

Affected Environment: The proposed fence would mostly be constructed on Grieves loamy fine sand, 1 to 12% slopes in the valley position and Grieves-Crestman complex, 10 to 40% slopes on slopes and ridges.

The Grieves soil supports a plant community representative of a Sandy Foothills Range Site. The Grieves soil typical of the Grieves-Crestman complex is deep (> 60 inch rooting depth), it has a medium water holding capacity, and exhibits moderate runoff. The Crestman soil supports the plant community representative of the Sandy Juniper Range Site found on the ridge tops and slopes. It is a shallow soil (10 to 20 inches to bedrock) which has a very low water holding capacity and exhibits very high runoff. Both soils are non-saline and non-sodic. The Grieves loamy fine sand, 1 to 12% has the same soil properties as the Grieves soil included in the Grieves-Crestman complex, but it has a low runoff rate because of the reduced slope where it occurs.

Environmental Consequences: Minor soil disturbance would result from construction activity along the proposed fenceline and subsequent maintenance. Disturbance would be increased if soils are wet and surface ruts are established. Soil disturbance would be lessened by working with dry or frozen soil conditions.

The minor disturbance caused from construction would be stabilized by existing and colonizing plants as well as with biological soil crusts. Some portions of the new fence may receive additional trailing by livestock, causing soil compaction in the trail area. Typically this is not a problem, except on moderate to steep slopes where channelization of surface runoff could begin to accelerate soil erosion.

Selection of the No Action Alternative would prevent the minor surface disturbance associated with fence construction. Horses and cattle would continue to drift between the allotments and potentially cause heavy utilization of the forage resource and an increase in soil erosion.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/10/06

## VEGETATION

Affected Environment: The proposed fence would be located in sagebrush-grass, juniper woodland, and greasewood plant communities. Dominant plants present include Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*), basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata tridentata*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus utahensis*), four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), shadscale saltbush (*A. confertifolia*), green rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*), Hood's phlox (*Phlox hoodii*), prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.), Indan ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*), needle-and-thread (*Stipa comata*), squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*), and Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa sandbergii*). Non native species present include halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola iberica*).

Environmental Consequences, Proposed Action: Direct impacts of fence construction would be localized disturbance to vegetation, particularly shrub species, associated with brush beating along the line. This disturbance would be highly localized and minimal within the larger plant communities. Disturbance associated with fence construction would favor grasses and forbs, but may increase the presence of non-native species. As evidenced by adjacent areas, particularly to the west of the proposed fence, this area is highly susceptible to cheatgrass invasion, even in areas that receive little to no soil disturbance. There is the potential for construction activities to increase and/or introduce cheatgrass and halogeton into new areas, but it is unlikely that brushbeating and motorized vehicle use along the fence line would increase non-native species to a level greater than what is already present.

The proposed fence would effectively change class of livestock on approximately 1,100 acres. At present, without the fence, cattle from the Brown's Park Allotment regularly move down into the West Boone Draw and Thompson Basin Allotments through Douglas Draw and graze in areas permitted for horses. At the same time, horses move up onto the Brown's Park Allotment and use forage permitted for cattle resulting in a situation where there is no true boundary between these allotments and both classes of livestock graze on forage that they are not permitted for. Horses and cattle generally have the same forage preferences, although the mechanics of how they eat forage differs. The change in livestock class would not create impacts different than those already accounted for in each of the permits. The fence would positively impact vegetation and forage resources by ensuring that continual livestock trespass and the overlap of use by horses and cattle on both sides of Douglas Draw is eliminated.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 2/2/06

## WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

Affected Environment: The project area does not provide any habitat for aquatic wildlife.

Environmental Consequences: None

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 2/9/06

**WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL**

Affected Environment: The project area provides habitat for elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and a variety of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Elk, mule deer, and pronghorn utilize this area during moderate winters.

Environmental Consequences: The proposed fence could have an impact on big game movement through the project area. It is likely that a few elk, mule deer or pronghorn would become entrapped in the fence wires while trying to cross. These entrapments usually result in animal death. Due to design, it is likely that mortalities would be low and there should be no impact on big game populations. The proposed fence is not likely to have any adverse impact on small mammal species. This project is intended to contain livestock in their proper allotments. This should improve vegetative conditions on both allotments by decreasing grazing pressures from two different livestock classes. Improved vegetative condition on both allotments would be beneficial to wildlife species utilizing the project area.

Mitigative Measures: None

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 2/9/06

**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		FC 3/7/06	
Forest Management	JHS 2/21/06		
Hydrology/Ground		FC 3/7/06	
Hydrology/Surface		OO 2/8/06	
Paleontology		RE 1/30/06	
Range Management		JHS 1/30/06	
Realty Authorizations		PAB 2/1/06	
Recreation/Travel Mgmt		RS 02/06/06	
Socio-Economics		PAB 2/1/06	
Solid Minerals		RE 1/30/06	
Visual Resources		JDM 1/31/06	
Wild Horse & Burro Mgmt	VD 2/3/06		

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:** The vicinity of the proposed project which includes the Browns Park, Thompson Draw, and West Boone Draw Allotments are a mix of public and

private lands that are managed chiefly for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and watershed protection. The primary recreational activity in the area is big game hunting. Impacting facilities that support these uses are fences, water developments (pit ponds, wells, buried pipelines, and troughs), and a network of maintained and unmaintained unpaved roads. The small community of Greystone is located approximately two miles southwesterly of the project area and includes dispersed housing on small tracts and a limited network of powerlines. Due to the presence of Greystone, human activity is higher than other parts of western Moffat County, but is still low. The proposed fence is similar in character and purpose to other human impacts in the area and would not present an impact that would alter existing uses in the area or appreciably add to the combined impacts that are currently present.

## **STANDARDS**

**PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (animal) STANDARD:** The project area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species. The proposed fence is not expected to significantly impact wildlife species or their habitat. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met with the Proposed Action or with the No Action Alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 2/9/06

**SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (animal) STANDARD:** There are no threatened or endangered animal species or habitat present in the project area. The project area provides habitat for greater sage grouse, a BLM sensitive species. The proposed fence would not significantly impact greater sage grouse or their habitat. This standard is currently being met and would continue to be met with the Proposed Action or with the No Action Alternative.

Name of specialist and date: Desa Ausmus 2/9/06

**PLANT AND ANIMAL COMMUNITY (plant) STANDARD:** The Proposed Action would ensure that the overlap of grazing use by horses and cattle on both sides of Douglas Draw is eliminated. The fence would maintain the integrity of permitted grazing uses in all three affected allotments and ensure that overutilization by trespassing livestock is curtailed. The Proposed Action would meet this standard.

The No Action Alternative would result in the current situation of ongoing trespass by two classes of livestock on the affected allotments. This results in areas of overuse as livestock continually use areas that they are not permitted for. This alternative would not meet this standard.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 2/2/06

**SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (plant) STANDARD:** There are no federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive plant species within or in the vicinity of the Proposed Action. This standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Hunter Seim 1/30/06

**RIPARIAN SYSTEMS STANDARD:** The riparian standard is not affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternatives; therefore, this standard does not apply.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/10/06

**WATER QUALITY STANDARD:** The water quality standard for healthy rangelands is presently being met for the Douglas Draw Watershed and these three allotments. This standard is met for both the Proposed and the No Action Alternatives. Runoff waters from snowmelt and rain drain into Douglas Draw which is presently supporting classified uses. No stream segments or tributaries are currently listed as having impaired water quality. Installation of the allotment fence is considered a best management practice to help reduce the overall sediment load of runoff waters from these grazing allotments.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/10/06

**UPLAND SOILS STANDARD:** The construction of the proposed allotment fence would meet the upland soil standard for healthy rangelands. Minor soil disturbance would occur from construction and maintenance of the fence, but this disturbance would quickly stabilize (within 1 year) by plant colonization and reformation of biological soil crusts. Upland soil health and protective plant cover would be expected to improve where allotment boundaries are presently not fenced. These improved resource conditions would result from controlling livestock use.

Land health assessments were conducted on 16 sites within these three allotments in July 2004 and would represent resource conditions applicable to the No Action Alternative. All sites were meeting the upland soil health standard as indicated by the surface soil characteristics rating on each site. However, some of the surface soils were stabilized by annual weeds near the project area. Annual weeds are not a substitute for desirable perennial grass and forbs which provide suitable soil cover and root biomass for soil stability following dry periods. If the No Action Alternative is selected the upland soil standard would not be met because of the present resource conditions found near the project area.

Name of specialist and date: Ole Olsen 2/10/06

**PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:** Uintah and Ouray Tribal Council, Colorado Native American Commission, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Sombrero Ranches (Dan Lisco), Raftopoulos Ranches (John Raftopoulos).

#### **MITIGATION MEASURES:**

1) The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the 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 project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate

vicinity of the find and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO) at (970) 826-5087. Within five working days the AO 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 project activities again; and
- pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) (Federal Register Notice, Monday, December 4, 1995, Vol. 60, No. 232) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO by telephone at (970) 286-5000, and with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or object 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 AO.

2) If any sites of potential Native American religious concern (e.g. rock art, vision quest structures, human burial sites, prehistoric cairns, stone circles, stone alignments, altars, medicine wheels) are identified by construction personnel or subcontractors within the project boundary but outside the cultural resource inventory corridors, the BLM Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) Archaeologist shall be promptly notified. The BLM LSFO shall determine the need for special measures and/or Native American consultation.

3) The route of the proposed fence, before proceeding with implementation, will go through the Section 106 processes, as described in the current Protocol (1998). Any identified sites along the route of the proposed fence will be avoided. If any sites are identified during the Class III survey that could be impacted by the Proposed Action, the fence will be re-routed so that those sites are not impacted. The proposed fence is described in the Proposed Action shown above and in Attachment 1.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Attachment 1- Project map  
Attachment 2- Map of boundary change  
Attachments 3a-e - BLM Fence Design Standards

**SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:**

**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**