

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
for the Chevron North America Grazing Permit for Coon
Hollow, S.E. Spear and IAE of Ranch Allotments**

Grand Junction Field Office
2815 H Road
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506

DOI-BLM-CO-130-2013-0031-EA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION	3
1.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION	4
1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED	6
1.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	8
1.5 DECISION TO BE MADE	8
CHAPTER 2 – Habitat Management	9
2.1 INTRODUCTION	9
2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL	9
2.2.2 Proposed Action	9
2.2.2 No Action Alternative	9
2.4 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW	15
CHAPTER 3 – Population Management	16
3.1 INTRODUCTION	16
3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES	19
3.2.1 Air Quality and Climate Change	19
3.2.4 Soils (includes a finding on Standard 1)	20
3.2.5 Water (surface and groundwater, floodplains) (includes a finding on Standard 5)	20
3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES	26
3.3.1 Invasive, Non-native Species	26
3.3.2 Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species (includes a finding on Standard 4) ...	27
3.3.3 Vegetation (grasslands, forest management) (includes a finding on Standard 3)	29
3.3.4 Wetlands & Riparian Zones (includes a finding on Standard 2)	33
3.3.5 Wildlife (includes fish, aquatic and terrestrial) (includes a finding on Standard 3) ...	36
3.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT	38
3.4.1 Cultural Resources	38
3.4.3 Tribal and Native American Religious Concerns	39
3.4.4 Visual Resources	42
3.4.5 Social, Economic, Environmental Justice	45
3.4.6 Transportation/Access	45
3.4.7 Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	46
3.5 LAND RESOURCES	47
3.5.2 Recreation	47
3.5.3 Special Designations (ACECs, SMAs etc.)	48
3.5.4 Wild and Scenic Rivers	48
3.5.5 Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas	49
3.5.6 Land with Wilderness Characteristics	49
3.5.7 Range Management	50

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND: This EA has been prepared by the BLM to analyze livestock grazing effects on the Coon Hollow (06712), South East Spear (06739) and IAE of Ranch (06727) allotments. Grazing preference of all three allotments is currently allocated to Chevron North America, permit #050713, which the base property lease was recently relinquished from Jason and Susan Lynch by Chevron. Chevron now has sole base property control and grazing preference and would like to lease their property and transfer grazing privilege on the allocated allotments. Chevron would also like to transfer grazing preference of Coon Hollow allotment over to Tom Latham (#0503188), who already has a permit to graze Coon Hollow and will provide proof of base property. This would change Coon Hollow from being a common allotment to having only one permittee (Tom Latham). There would also be some minor management changes to S.E. Spear and I.A.E of Ranch allotments.

The Coon Hollow Common Allotment is located two miles west of De Beque Colorado in Mesa County. The allotment is classified as an ‘I’ allotment and consists of approximately 19,216 acres of public land associated with 220 AUMs (animal unit months). Intensely “I” managed allotments are handled with more attention from the BLM due to resource conditions. The current grazing dates of Chevron’s permit are from 4/15 – 6/10. Precipitation ranges from eight to twelve inches and elevation ranges from 5,000 feet at the lower end of the allotment to 7,000 feet at the upper end of the allotment. The vegetation is primarily pinon-juniper foothills and sagebrush with shadscale and grassland on the benches and bottoms. The most common perennial grasses are galleta and western wheatgrass.

The SE Spears Allotment is located two miles north of De Beque Colorado in Mesa County. The allotment consists of approximately 6,204 acres of public land associated with 320 AUMs. The current grazing dates are from 04/16 to 05/31 and 11/01 to 12/15. Precipitation ranges from eight to ten inches. Elevation ranges from 5,400 feet at the lower end of the allotment to 7,000 feet at the upper end of the allotment. The vegetation is primarily pinon-juniper foothills and sagebrush with shadscale and grassland on the benches. The most common perennial grasses are galleta and western wheatgrass. The allotment has been categorized as an I allotment because of critical deer winter range and recent rangeland monitoring conditions.

The IAE of Ranch Allotment is located six miles north of De Beque, Colorado in Garfield County. The west side of the allotment is located along the Roan Creek Road and then goes up Bowdish Gulch. The allotment consists of approximately 2,538 acres of public land associated with 147 AUMs. The grazing dates are from 05/01 to 05/31 and 11/01 to 12/15. Precipitation ranges from ten to twelve inches. Elevation ranges from 5,400 feet at the lower end of the allotment to 6,400 feet at the upper end of the allotment. The vegetation is primarily pinon-juniper on the side hills with sagebrush on the bottoms and benches. The most common perennial grass is Poa that primarily grows under the sagebrush. The allotment has been categorized as an I allotment because of critical deer winter range and recent rangeland monitoring conditions.

Table 1. Current Grazing Schedule for Chevron North America (0507123):

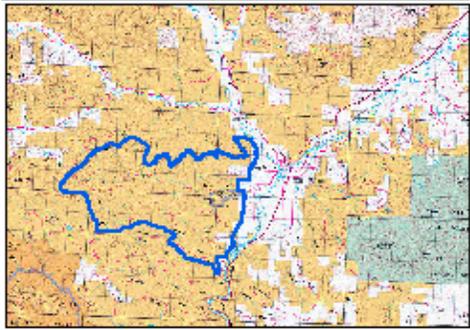
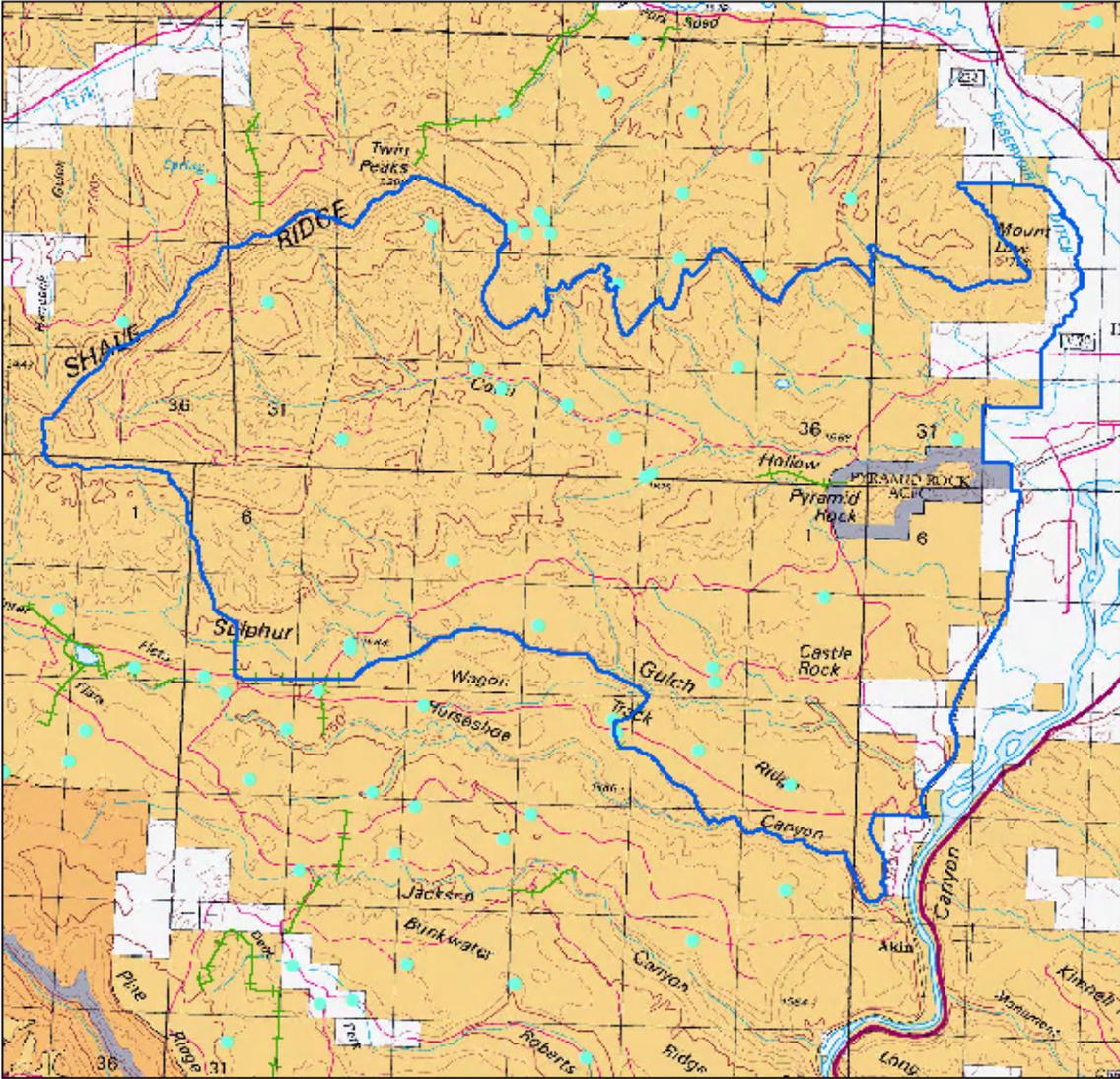
Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%PL	Type Use	AUMS
Coon Hollow (06712)	Improve	50 C	04/15 – 06/10	100	A	94
S.E. Spears (06739)	Improve	100 C	04/16 – 04/30	100	A	49
		64 C	05/1 – 05/31	100	A	65
		111 C	11/01 – 11/30	100	A	109
		36 C	12/1 – 12/15	100	A	18
I.A.E of Ranch (06727)	Improve	64	05/01 – 05/30	100	A	63
		96	11/01 – 12/15	100	A	142

PROJECT NAME: Chevron North America Grazing Permit for Coon Hollow, S.E. Spear and IAE of Ranch Allotments (DOI-BLM-CO-130-2013-0031-EA)

PLANNING UNIT: De Beque, CO

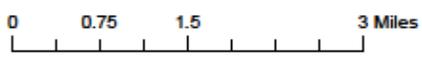
1.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION

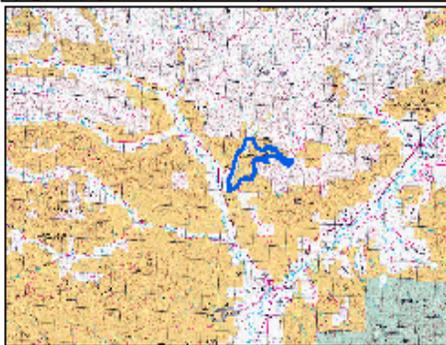
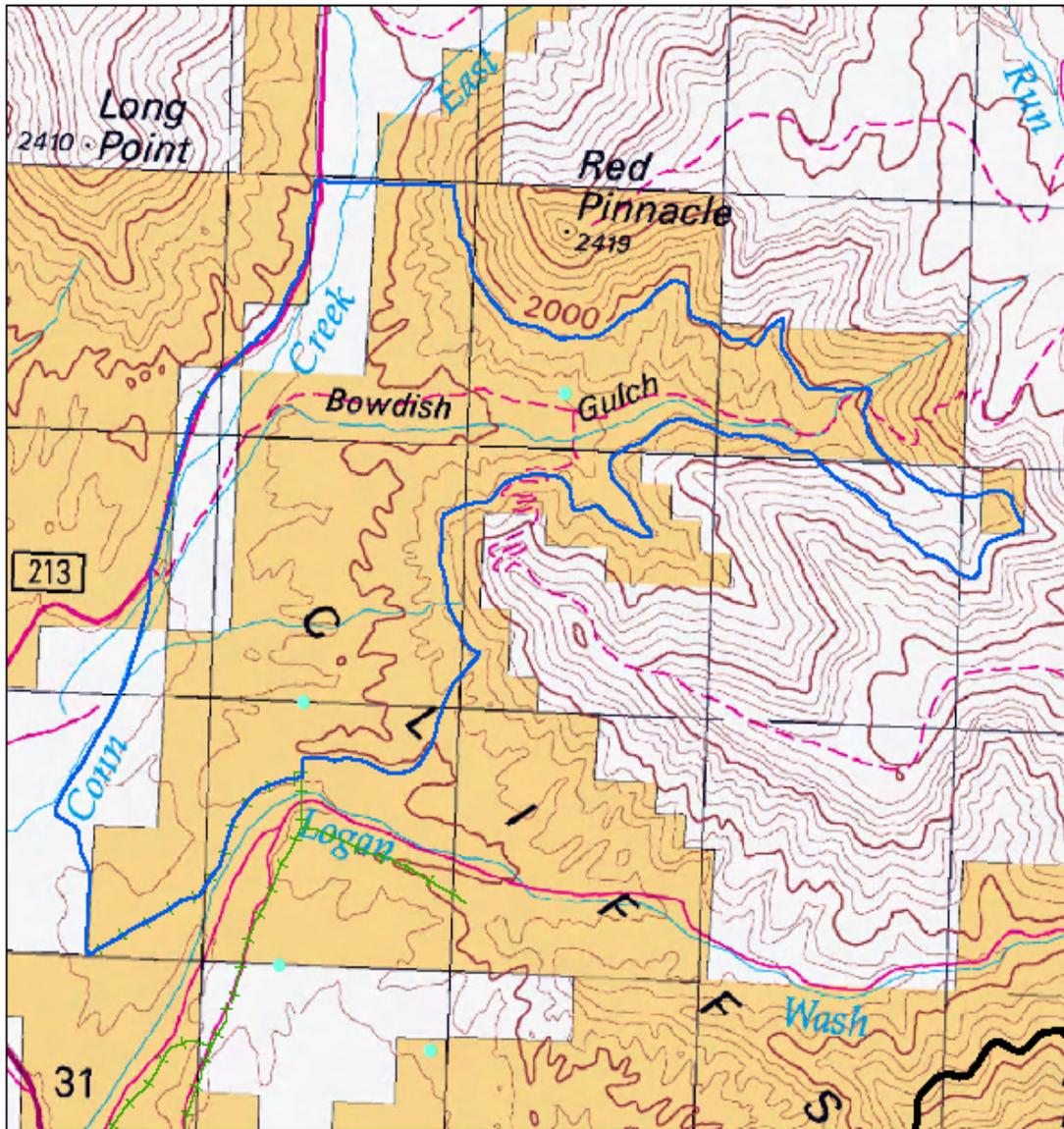
See Maps Below:



**Coon Hollow Allotment
Permit Renewal Map**

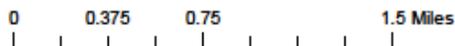
- Allotment Boundary
- Water Sources
- +—+— Fences

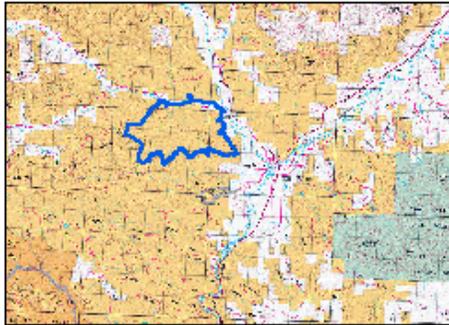




**IAE of Ranch Allotment
Permit Renewal Map**

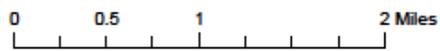
- Allotment Boundary
- Water Sources
- - - Fences





**South East Spear Allotment
Permit Renewal Map**

-  Allotment Boundary
-  Water Sources
-  Fences



1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this action is to renew a qualified applicant's grazing permit and transfer grazing preference for the above mentioned allotments in order to allow grazing on public lands in a responsible manner that is compatible with other resource uses and objectives.

The need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibility under the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) and the Taylor Grazing Act, to respond to an applicant's request for a grazing authorization on public land. The proposed action would provide the opportunity for the continuation of livestock grazing through the issuance of a ten year grazing permit for the permittee on the Coon Hollow (06712), S.E. Spear (06739) and IAE of Ranch (06727) allotments. In order to graze livestock on public land, the livestock permittee must hold a valid grazing permit. The need for this action is to ensure that grazing is authorized by a valid grazing permit and is compatible with Standards for Public Land Health, other resource uses and objectives, and in compliance with grazing regulations under 43 CFR §4110.1(a)(1).

1.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1.4.1 Public Scoping: Scoping, by posting this project on the Grand Junction Field Office NEPA website, was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to invite public involvement. The authorized grazing representative had sit down meetings about proposed action changes. No issues or concerns were brought up at that point. According to 43 CFR §4130.2 (b), "The authorized officer shall consult, cooperate and coordinate with affected permittees or lessees, the state having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public prior to the issuance or renewal of grazing permits or leases."

1.4.2 Internal Scoping: Maps of the parcel and description of the proposed action and purpose and need were distributed to the GJFO Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and discussed at IDT meetings. Issues identified within internal scoping efforts include grazing activities that occur in or near known occupied habitat for the threatened species: Colorado hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*), De Beque phacelia (*Phacelia submutica*), and designated critical habitat for the De Beque phacelia.

1.5 DECISION TO BE MADE

The BLM will decide whether to approve the proposed Chevron North America Grazing Permit for Coon Hollow, S.E. Spear and IAE of Ranch Allotments grazing permit renewal based on the analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA will analyze impacts to resources from cattle grazing on the allotments mentioned above. The BLM may choose to accept the Proposed Action, modify the proposed action, accept an alternative to the proposed action or reject the application in whole. The finding associated with this EA may not constitute the final approval for the proposed action.

The BLM will determine if the applicant has a satisfactory record of performance in accordance with 43 CFR §4110.1(b)(1).

CHAPTER 2

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on the Proposed Action and Alternatives. Alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail are also discussed. The BLM and grazing permittee, Chevron North America has requested changes to the grazing use in the Coon Hollow, S.E. Spear, and IAE of Ranch Allotments and transfer grazing preference to other permittees. These changes are included in the proposed action.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

2.2.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would be continuation of the current grazing permit. Under this alternative, no AUM reduction and/or timing changing would take place. The allotments would be grazed in the same manner as in past years and Coon Hollow would continue to be a common allotment.

2.2.2 Proposed Action

The proposed action is to make necessary changes within the allotments mentioned in order to graze on public land in a responsible and sustainable manner. Any AUM management changes have been discussed with the permittees prior to the beginning of this EA. The term of this grazing permit would be for 10 years at which time it would be analyzed again under the NEPA process to determine the impacts of livestock grazing within the affected area. Thus 10 years is considered the reasonable time frame into the Reasonably Foreseeable Future.

Coon Hollow (06712) allotment has undergone immense management changes from past permit modifications in 2009 (DOI-BLM-CO-130-2009-0070-EA). There would be no further grazing management alterations on this allotment. Chevron North America (c/o Craig Tysse) has agreed to transfer the grazing preference on Coon Hollow grazing allotment to Tom Latham's current grazing permit #0503188 (See Table 3). No timing management change are needed because scheduled timing of the Chevron permit matches the transferee's (Mr. Latham) permitted grazing schedule for Coon Hollow allotment. Mr. Latham will simply use Coon Hollow allotment to move his cattle to other authorized grazing allotments. He has never used full AUMs. The decision to transfer Coon Hollow allotment from Chevron to Mr. Latham would remove the allotment from being a common allotment with multiple permittees to only having one grazing operator.

S.E. Spears (06739) allotment is located south of Dry Fork creek near the confluence of Dry Fork and Roan Creek and has not been grazed in at least three years. Prior to completing an Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) in 2007, the current authorized use was 320 AUMs for 1 ½ months in the spring and fall (see Table 1 above). The proposed action is to reduce timing by 15 days and reduce AUMs from 320 to 100 on the allotment (see Table 2 for full reduction details). During 2013-2014 grazing seasons, grazing would be rested and the permittee would be required to work on maintaining existing water sources and fences in order to be able to graze in the future. The grazing schedule illustrated in Table 2 includes both spring and fall dates, however the grazing permit would have terms and conditions which stipulate allowing only one scheduled

use, either spring or fall seasons but not both in the same year. Terms and conditions would also stipulate that the permittee must not graze more than two consecutive spring seasons to allow for a periodic rest from grazing livestock during the critical growth period.

I.A.E of Ranch (06727): Table 1 illustrates current use at 147 AUMs, however an ESI study in 2005 illustrated AUM reductions may be necessary in order to develop proper grazing levels. The BLM plans to reduce AUMs from 147 to 50. No time changes are expected. The grazing schedule illustrated in Table 2 would have both spring and fall dates, however the grazing permit would have terms and conditions which stipulate allowing only one scheduled use, either spring or fall seasons, not both. Terms and conditions would also stipulate that the permittee must not graze more than two consecutive spring seasons to allow for a periodic rest from grazing livestock during the critical growth period. Along with the grazing schedule and AUM changes the BLM proposes to recommend a mandatory two year rest while the permittee maintains existing water sources and fences as with S.E. Spear allotment.

Table 2.2.2-1. Current Grazing Schedule for Chevron North America (0507123):

Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%PL	Type Use	AUMS
Coon Hollow (06712)	Improve	50 C	04/15 – 06/10	100	A	94
S.E. Spears (06739)	Improve	100 C	04/16 – 04/30	100	A	49
		64 C	05/1 – 05/31	100	A	65
		111 C	11/01 – 11/30	100	A	109
		36 C	12/1 – 12/15	100	A	18
I.A.E of Ranch (06727)	Improve	64	05/01 – 05/30	100	A	63
		96	11/01 – 12/15	100	A	142

Allotment Summary:

Allotment	Federal Acres	AUMs		
		Active	Suspended	Total
Coon Hollow/06712	19,216	94	0	94
S.E. Spear/06739	6,204	320	0	320
I.A.E. of Ranch/06727	2,538	147	0	147

Table 2.2.2-2. New Proposed 10 Year Grazing Permit Schedule for Chevron (0507123):

Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%P L	Type Use	AUMS
S.E. Spears (06739)	Improve	100 C	05/01 – 05/31	100	A	* 100
		100 C	11/01 – 11/30	100	A	
I.A.E of Ranch (06727)	Improve	50 C	05/01 – 05/31	100	A	* 50
		50 C	11/01 – 11/30	100	A	

* Indicates permittees must only use one season of grazing either spring or fall, not both. Terms and conditions would also stipulate that the permittee must not graze more than two consecutive spring seasons to allow for a rest period during the critical growth period.

Table 2.2.2-3. Proposed Transfer of Coon Hollow (06712) Allotment from Chevron North America (0507123) to Tom Latham’s Grazing Permit (0503188):

Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%P L	Type Use	AUMS
Coon Hollow (06712)	Improve	60 C	04/15 – 5/31	100	A	94

Terms and Conditions of the Proposed Action would be:

1. Permittee(s) are only allowed to graze one grazing season within the permitted grazing dates each year. Either spring or fall scheduled grazing dates may occur, not both. Permittee(s) must NOT graze more than two consecutive spring seasons to allow rest from grazing during the critical growth period.
2. Temporary Non-renewable (TNR) or Adaptive Use may be approved by the authorized BLM officer within existing grazing permit schedule if additional forage, such as annuals are deemed available within the authorized grazing period and the vast majority of the grazing area is meeting Land Health Standards.
3. To allow for variation in climate, plant growth conditions, and flexibility in permittee livestock operations, the BLM may adjust the authorized grazing period by up to two weeks at the end of the permitted grazing period if rangeland conditions are determined by the Authorized officer to be satisfactory for livestock use and AUMs are not exceeded.
4. Livestock grazing utilization levels on key forage species (Indian ricegrass, blue grasses, squirreltail grass, perennial wheat grasses, ryegrasses, sand dropseed grass, needle and thread grass, galleta grass) shall not exceed 50%. If utilization levels are approaching allowable use, livestock will be required to be moved to areas within the allotment that are not approaching allowable use levels. When such areas are not available, livestock will be removed from the allotment when allowable use rates are met. Management adjustments will be made the following year to avoid recurring instances of over utilization.
5. Livestock use shall not exceed an average of 30% on native woody vegetation (willows, cottonwoods and aspen) in riparian areas.
6. Use supervision checks by BLM staff will be conducted to assure grazing compliance. The Grand Junction Field Office will use utilization checks, collect trend data, and evaluate allotments whenever necessary. Evaluation of monitoring will be used to make appropriate changes to grazing management in order to protect land health. This permit is subject to change if results from monitoring land health conclude that the Standards for Rangeland Health are not being met and livestock grazing is determined to be the cause.

7. Salting and mineral blocks will be placed at least one quarter (1/4) mile or further from water sources and riparian areas. Less than one quarter mile may be allowed if terrain does not allow for one quarter mile distance and approved by the BLM AO.
8. Water source areas will be monitored by the permittee and BLM for infestation of noxious weeds. The permittee and BLM will coordinate to treat and eradicate any weed infestations should they occur.
9. Upon approval by the Authorized Officer (AO), the permittee will have the option to apply for more cattle over a shorter time period as long as AUMs are not exceeded in a grazing season and use is within the season of use.
10. All new range improvement projects will be in accordance with BLM standards.
 - Example - wildlife escape ramps are required in water troughs under BLM standards.
11. Maintenance of all structural rangeland improvements (RI) and other projects are the responsibility of the permittee to which they have been assigned. Maintenance would be in accordance with cooperative agreements and/or range improvement permits (43 CFR §4120.3-1). Failure to maintain assigned projects in a satisfactory/functional condition may result in withholding authorization to graze livestock until maintenance is completed. Construction of new RI on BLM administered lands is prohibited without approval from the authorized officer.
 - a. The BLM authorized officer will be contacted prior to any range project maintenance activity involving soil surface disturbance. An example includes but not limited to cleaning of ponds with heavy equipment, which would involve soil surface disturbance. All heavy equipment will be washed and free of debris before entering BLM lands.
12. Permittees or lessees shall provide reasonable access across private and leased lands to the Bureau of Land Management for the orderly management and protection of the public lands related to grazing administration.
13. Grazing will be deferred on new vegetation treatments and rehabilitated burned areas to allow two growing seasons of rest unless otherwise authorized. Coordination and cooperation will occur with the permittee prior to any treatment.
14. The permittee shall submit an Actual Use form within 15 days after completing their annual grazing use as outlined in 43 CFR 4130.3-2(d).
15. It is the responsibility of the Permittee to inform all persons associated with work on federal lands subject to the permit that they would be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts.

16. Surface disturbing range improvements associated with the allotment (e.g., fences, ponds) are subject to compliance requirements under Section 106 and will undergo standard cultural resources inventory and evaluation procedures. Any future range improvements will also undergo a full NEPA analysis for all resources.
17. If newly discovered cultural resources are identified during project implementation, work in that area should stop and the BLM Authorized Officer should be notified immediately (36 CFR 800.13).
18. Notify the Authorized Officer (AO) by telephone and with written confirmation, immediately upon discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Activities would stop in the immediate area of the find, and the discovery would be protected for 30 days or until notified to proceed in writing by the AO.
19. During dry and drought conditions adjustments will be made that involve reduction of AUMs or non-use as stated under Code of Federal Regulations 4110.3-2 “Decreasing permitted use” (a) Permitted use may be suspended in whole or in part on a temporary basis due to drought, fire, And 4110.3-3 “Implementing reductions in permitted use” (a) After consultation, cooperation, and coordination with the affected permittee or lessee,...., reductions of permitted use shall be implemented through a documented agreement or by decision of the authorized officer. (b) When the authorized officer determines that the soil, vegetation, or other resources on the public lands require immediate protection because of conditions such as drought, fire,, the authorized officer shall close allotments or portions of allotments to grazing by any kind of livestock or modify authorized grazing use notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (a) of this section.

Additional Terms and Conditions specific to livestock grazing within the known range of Colorado Hookless Cactus, De Beque phacelia, and its designated critical habitat (adapted from conservation measures in “Biological Opinion for Livestock Grazing Program Effects on Three Listed Plants in the Bureau of Land Management Grand Junction, Colorado River Valley, and Uncompahgre Field Offices):

Conservation Measure 1: In areas where there is a concern that Colorado hookless cactus, and DeBeque phacelia may be present, a survey will be conducted prior to any livestock management actions such as range improvements or maintenance, or weed management.

Conservation Measure 2: Maps will be provided to permittees that identify sensitive areas where restrictions may apply to particular grazing-related activities for the Colorado hookless cactus, and DeBeque phacelia (individual occurrences or populations plus a 200-meter [656 feet] buffer). As new information becomes available, and as necessary, maps will be updated by the BLM and provided to permittees each year if new occurrences are found. (Note: Maps provided to permittees will include sufficient buffers and randomized perimeters to avoid disclosing exact species locations.)

Conservation Measure 3: The permittee is required to notify the BLM Rangeland Management Specialist prior to any surface disturbing range project maintenance activity (fences, stock ponds, spring developments, etc.) in any allotment (standard condition for all BLM allotments). Surveys and avoidance measures will be required where effects to listed plants may occur.

- Construction of new range developments (e.g., fences, ponds, water troughs) would be designed to avoid impacts to listed species whenever feasible. New range developments that may affect listed species would not be permitted until completion of an additional tiered consultation.

Conservation Measure 4: If a permittee wishes to apply an herbicide treatment, they must obtain prior approval from the BLM. Appropriate applicator licenses must be obtained, copies of the appropriate Pesticide Use Proposal must be obtained from the BLM, and a Pesticide Application Record must be completed and returned to BLM no later than 10 days after herbicide application (standard condition for all BLM allotments).

- The permittee must consult with the BLM Rangeland Management Specialist and Biologist/Ecologist prior to applying herbicides or pesticides within 200 meters (656 feet) of individual plants or populations. Such treatments may be restricted or modified to avoid effects to the three listed species. Depending on the Field Office and weed program restrictions (see following point), additional section 7 consultation may be required prior to applying herbicides.
- All treatments will comply with the approved GJFO Integrated Weed Management Plan (IWMP) and section 7 consultation.

Conservation Measure 5: Within 200 meters (656 feet) of listed plants, motorized access for livestock grazing operations will be limited to existing designated roads and routes. Any additional access proposed for grazing operations would require additional surveys and section 7 consultation.

Conservation Measure 6: As a standard permit term and condition within occupied habitat for listed plants, seasonal utilization levels on palatable perennial forage will be limited to 40 percent to the extent possible, and average utilization will not exceed 50 percent (currently the approximate level of forage utilization in most areas on public lands).

Conservation Measure 8: No concentrations of livestock activities including but not limited to herding, routine trailing, bedding, salt or supplement, portable watering, and new stock ponds will be allowed within 200 meters (656 feet) of individual listed plants or populations, except as provided below:

- Concentration may be allowed where separated by a fence or topographic feature (cliff) that will render the impacts to listed plants insignificant, discountable, or if impacts are wholly beneficial (distribute livestock away from listed plants).
- The BLM Rangeland Management Specialist will collaborate with the permittee to develop and employ appropriate grazing strategies for the allotment pastures and use areas to meet Colorado Public Land Health Standards, specifically standard 3 for upland plant communities and standard 4 for Threatened, Endangered Species (TES) species.

Where possible, grazing should be limited to 15 days or less in each pasture or use area during the germination, flowering, and fruiting period for the three focus species to ensure reproduction and recruitment.

Conservation Measure 9: If monitoring/LHAs conclude that an allotment with occupied habitat is not meeting the standards for special status plants, vegetation, or soils, and livestock grazing is identified as a significant causal factor in not meeting those standards, grazing permit modifications, mitigation, or other prescriptive measures will be required by BLM, such as:

- The BLM Rangeland Management Specialist will work with the permittee to pursue opportunities to allow portions of the allotment(s) to receive yearlong rest or deferment in order to increase plant vigor.
- Exclosures or drift fences may be considered in certain areas where individual plants or populations require special protections from livestock grazing or associated activities, as determined by the BLM.
- Permit terms and conditions may be modified to minimize impacts to listed plants (e.g., improved distribution, changes in season of use/class of livestock).

2.2.3 No Livestock Grazing Alternative

This alternative would mean that a Term Grazing Permit would not be issued and no grazing would be allowed on the allotment. Permittees would be forced to find other alternative feed sources and/or sell cattle which negatively impacts livestock operations.

2.3 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

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

Name of Plan: GRAND JUNCTION Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: JANUARY, 1987

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-17

Decision Language: Manage livestock grazing as described in the *Grand Junction Grazing Management Environmental Statement*. Reevaluate existing allotment management plans to ensure consistency with objectives for riparian and critical erosion goals.

PAST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS (Permit Renewals):

Coon Hollow (06712) – DOI-BLM-CO-130-2009-0070-EA Date Signed – 09/30/2009
Grazing Permit Renewal For Latham Cattle Co. on Burdick East of Ranch, Tater Hills, Conn Mountain, Sunny Side, and Coon Hollow allotments

South East Spears (06739) – CO-GJFO-03-29-EA Date Signed – 07/24/2003
South East Spears Allotment #06739

I.A.E of Ranch (06727) – CO-GJFO-03-33-EA Date Signed – 07/24/2003
IAE of Ranch (Bowdish) Allotment #06727

In January 1997, the Colorado State Office of the BLM approved the Standards for Public Land Health and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands.

Standard 1: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes.

Standard 2: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods.

Standard 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential.

Standard 4: Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Standard 5: The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado.

Because standards exist for each of these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in Chapter 3 of this document.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and presents comparative analyses of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the actions under the Proposed Action and other alternatives analyzed.

This EA draws upon information compiled in the Grand Junction Resource Area RMP (BLM 1987).

3.1.1 Elements Not Affected

The following elements, identified as not being present or not affected and are not be brought forward for additional analysis:

Air and Climate – The authorized grazing use on the allotments would not affect the air and climate.

Prime or Unique Farmlands – there are not prime or unique farmlands located on the allotment.
Geological - livestock grazing would not affect the geology.

Mineral Resources - livestock grazing would not affect mineral resources.

Paleontological - livestock grazing would not affect paleontology.

Transportation and Access - livestock grazing would not affect transportation and access.

Land Tenure, ROW and Other Uses - livestock grazing would not affect land tenure, ROWs and other uses.

Fire and Fuels – Livestock grazing within the proposed allotment would not affect the fire and fuels program.

3.1.2 Past, Present, Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the cumulative effects of proposals under their review. Cumulative effects are defined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations 40 CFR §1508.7 as “...the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency...or person undertakes such other actions.” The CEQ states that the “cumulative effects analyses should be conducted on the scale of human communities, landscapes, watersheds, or airsheds” using the concept of “project impact zone” or more simply put, the area that might be affected by the proposed action. The area that may be affected by this project includes the Coon Hollow, S.E. Spear and IAE of Ranch Allotments. To assess past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions that may occur within the affected area a review of GJFO NEPA log and our field office GIS data was completed. The following list includes all past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions known to the BLM that may occur within the affected area:

Past Actions:

Past actions in the affected area include:

- Oil and Gas development
- Vegetation Treatments – I.A.E or Ranch allotment has had a small mechanical vegetation treatment
- Noxious Weed Treatments
- Wild Fires and Prescribed Fires have occurred in the area since at least 1980.
- Recreation - bicycling, OHV use, hiking and hunting.
- Livestock Grazing – livestock grazing has occurred in the area for more than 50 years.
- Road Construction and Maintenance and Right-of-Ways (ROWs) – all of the above activities have required construction and maintenance of roads and ROWs have been involved with Oil and Gas, Livestock Grazing and Recreation.

Present Actions:

Oil and gas and livestock grazing are the current actions within all three permitted allotments. Coon Hollow allotment has a potential for recreation in the future.

Reasonably Foreseeable Actions: Livestock grazing, oil and gas, and recreation are expected to continue for the next 10 years.

Reasonably Foreseeable Actions:

Recreation, Livestock Grazing and Oil and Gas are expected to continue for at least the next 10 years.

Table 1– Potentially Impacted Resources (double click on boxes to check)

Resources	Not Present On Location	No Impact	Potentially Impacted	Mitigation Necessary?	BLM Evaluator Initial & Date	Comments
PHYSICAL RESOURCES						
Air and Climate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	ND 6/20/13	
Water (surface & subsurface, floodplains)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	ND 6/20/13	
Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	ND 6/20/13	
Geological/Mineral Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	DSG 6/6/13	
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES						
Special Status Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JT/ARL 6/28/13	
Special Status Wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HLP 6/21/13	
Migratory Birds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HLP 6/21/13	
Other Important Wildlife Habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HLP 6/21/13	
Vegetation, Forestry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	JAM 6/26/13	
Invasive, Non-native Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	MT 6/10/13	
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CS 6/17/13	
HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENV.						
Cultural or Historical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NFC 6/19/13	
Paleontological	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	DSG 6/6/13	
Tribal& American Indian Religious Concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NFC 6/19/13	
Visual Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 6/14/13	
Social/Economic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JAM 6/26/13	
Transportation and Access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 6/14/13	
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AK 6/20/21	Standard terms and conditions
LAND RESOURCES						
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 6/14/13	
Special Designations (ACEC, SMAs, WSR)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 6/14/13	
Wilderness & Wilderness Characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP 6/14/13	
Range Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JAM 6/26/13	
Wild Horse and Burros	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	JAM 6/26/13	
Land Tenure, ROW, Other Uses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	RBL 7/2/13	
Fire/Fuels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	n	

3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

3.2.1 Air Quality and Climate Change

Current Conditions: Air quality in the project area is typical of undeveloped regions in the western United States. The closest Class I Airshed is the Maroon Bells Snowmass Wilderness Area located approximately 55 air miles to the southeast.

The primary sources of air pollutants in the region are fugitive dust from the desert to the west of the planning area, unpaved roads and streets, seasonal sanding for winter travel, motor vehicles, and wood-burning stove emissions. Seasonal wildfires throughout the western U. S. may also contribute to air pollutants and regional haze. The ambient pollutant levels are usually near or below measurable limits, except for high short-term increases in PM₁₀ levels (primarily wind-blown dust), ozone, and carbon monoxide. Within the Rocky Mountain region, occasional peak ozone levels are relatively high, but are of unknown origin. Elevated concentrations may be the result of long-range transport from urban areas, subsidence of stratospheric ozone or photochemical reactions with natural hydrocarbons. Occasional peak concentrations of CO and SO₂ may be found in the immediate vicinity of combustion equipment. Locations vulnerable to decreasing air quality include the immediate areas around mining and farm tilling, local population centers, and distant areas affected by long-range transportation of pollutants. Representative monitoring of air quality in the general area indicates that the existing air quality is well within acceptable standards.

The EPA General Conformity regulations require that an analysis (as well as a possible formal conformity determination) be performed for federally sponsored or funded actions in non-attainment areas and in designated maintenance areas when the total direct and indirect net air pollutant emissions (or their precursors) exceed specified levels. Since the GJFO is not within a non-attainment or a maintenance area, the Clean Air Act conformity regulations do not apply.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the no action alternative, continuation of the current grazing system would persist for the term of permit renewal (10 years). Under this alternative grazing would not be managed in a sustainable manner and continued declines in rangeland health could contribute to elevated production of fugitive dust during high wind events. Under this scenario, air quality could be degraded locally.

Cumulative Effects: Under the No-Action alternative, potential for continued degradation of land health conditions could leave soils exposed and more vulnerable to erosional processes which influence production of fugitive dust. Impacts resulting from implementation of unsustainable grazing practices combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable land uses such as motorized recreation, mineral development and natural phenomena such as wild fire and persistent drought, could contribute towards air quality degradation both locally and regionally as a result of increased dust production.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Successful implementation of the proposed action should promote sustainable use of the rangeland by livestock within the context of other uses in the area (e.g.

wildlife). Sustainable rangeland conditions would promote healthy vegetation communities which are essential to stabilize soils from aeolian processes that generate fugitive dust. As a result, it is anticipated that air quality could be improved from current conditions under the proposed action. However, the degree of improvement may be difficult to quantify.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative impacts to air quality associated with the proposed action are anticipated to be beneficial to air quality as livestock grazing would be managed to maintain rangeland health conditions and sustainability of livestock production. These management objectives would operate within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable uses in these allotments.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: No livestock grazing would occur. Potential to defoliate desirable plant species during the critical growing seasons would be reduced to those impacts associated with wildlife use which has not been identified as a significant factor per Land Health Assessments. Increased vigor and health of vegetative communities would better protect soils from aeolian processes reducing potential production of fugitive dust and preserving local air quality.

Cumulative Effects: The no grazing alternative would benefit vegetation and soils which are key factors in limiting production of fugitive dust. Improved range conditions within the allotment would contribute incrementally towards air quality improvements throughout the region.

3.2.2 Soils (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Current Conditions: Soils in this area are developing in sandstone and shale residuum, colluvium, or alluvial deposits of the Green River, Mesa Verde, and Wasatch Formations.

Soils at the higher elevations are primarily developing in residuum and colluvial deposits of the Green River Formation. Many landslides and soil slumps are in this area, and new ones occur, especially during wet years. All uses including grazing should be designed to take into account the highly erodible nature of these soils.

Soils on the lower side slopes of the incised valleys and in the De Beque and Sunnyside areas are developing in colluvium and alluvial sediments of the Wasatch Shale Formation. These soils are clayey, shallow to deep over shale/sandstone, and are alkaline (Foothill Juniper and Semi-desert Clay Loam range sites). Soil erosion and sediment production is greater than desired (much of the erosion is geologic in nature). Lower-lying portions of the side slopes and benches and southerly aspects, support a Pinyon-Juniper vegetation and sparse understory of grasses and shrubs; scattered sagebrush parks occur on the deeper soils. The erosion hazard is very high in these areas.

To the west, and primarily to the south of Dry Fork, shale and sandstone of the Mesa Verde Formation are the principal parent materials in which soils are developing. Exposures of sandstone bedrock are common. Soils are shallow to deep, with generally sandy loam surface textures overlying sandy loam, sandy clay loam, and clay loam or clay substratum. Aeolian influence is also present. Soils have a moderate to high erosion hazard. Erosion from roads and

the increasing number of other uses (e.g. recreation and fluid mineral development), has accelerated erosion in this area to levels that will have long-term impacts on water quality and soils health. Management of the soils resource must reflect these impacts and implement practices and requirements that minimize soil loss.

A comprehensive description of all affected soils can be obtained online through the NRCS website: <http://soils.usda.gov/technical/classification/osd/index.html>

Soil related problems within the allotment areas are related to lack of perennial plant diversity and excessive amounts of cheatgrass. Causative factors include concentrated grazing (in sage parks), drought, and other surface disturbing actions (recreation and fluid mineral development). Table one outlines the overall findings for Public Land Health Standards from the 2006 BLM Land Health Assessment in the De Beque/Roan Creek Area. It is important to note that while Public Land Health Standard 1 (soils) was meeting for all allotments, vegetative health standards were not. Because vegetative health and soil health are intricately related, declines in vegetative health are anticipated to result in reduced soil health as well.

Overall Assessment of Rangeland Health				
Allotment	Meeting	Meeting with Problems	Not Meeting	Unclassified
Coon Hollow	8,811 acres	5,563 acres	4,059 acres	3,822 acres
SE Spears	5,642 acres	0 acres	0 acres	584 acres
IA East of Ranch	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,538 acres

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the No-Action alternative, current management practices would continue for the life of the permit. The current season of use may result in multiple plant defoliations during the critical spring/summer growing period which can reduce plant vigor or lead to mortality of desirable plant species over the entirety of all allotments (31,019 acres). These effects could be amplified by continued drought conditions resulting in greater potential for invasion of seasonal non-native species which characteristically lack effective root structures capable of stabilizing soils. Invasion of non-native plant species may also alter natural fire regimes which can further destroy native plant communities leaving soils increasingly vulnerable to natural erosional processes. As a result, erosion rates could be elevated over the landscape when compared to conditions under a desired plant community. Areas most likely to experience these impacts first would be soils within vegetative communities already identified through the 2006 Land Health Assessment as “not meeting” (4,059 acres) or “meeting with problems” (5,563 acres) due to lack of perennial plant diversity and cheat grass invasion. These areas account for roughly 9,622 acres or roughly 31 percent of the allotment areas.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 1: Based on the 2006 finding, Public Land Health Standard 1 is being met. However, as mentioned above, soil health and vegetative health are closely related. Because, current season of use combined with drought conditions may result in

deterioration of desirable vegetative communities, reduced soil health is also anticipated to follow. Under these conditions, soil health standard may be reduced to “meeting with problems” or “not meeting”. Changes to the current finding would most likely occur first in areas where Land Health Assessments have documented vegetation communities to be “not meeting” or “meeting with problems”.

Cumulative Effects: Continued grazing under current conditions combined with other uses such as recreational and fluid mineral development could result in degradation to soil health as outlined above. The cumulative result of spring grazing coupled with increasing recreation demand, increased surface disturbance associated with fluid mineral development, prolonged drought and expansion of non-native invasive species throughout the landscape could leave naturally erosive soils even more vulnerable to erosional processes. Collectively, these factors could result in degradation of functional vegetative communities compromising soil health over time.

Finding for Public Land Health Standard 1: Areas currently mapped as “meeting with problems” (5,563 acres) could expand as vegetative communities are degraded. Areas currently mapped as “not meeting” (4,059 acres) could continue to be degraded reducing soil health as well. These areas could ultimately be degraded to the point they no longer meet public land health standard 1. Under this scenario, the number of acres “meeting with problems” would be expected increase above 5,563 acres. Likewise, the number of acres “not meeting” would be expected to increase above 4,059 acres.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the proposed action, the timing of livestock grazing on all allotments would be modified to allow for rest and avoid use during the critical spring/summer growing periods every two years. Likewise, on Coon Hollow and S.E. Spears allotments, grazing would occur in the spring or fall, but never during both seasons in the same year. These management strategies would decrease potential for reduced vigor and/or mortality that could result from multiple defoliations of desirable plant species during critical plant growth periods. By maintaining healthy plant communities, soil stabilization is maintained closer to natural rates. This would provide an incremental benefit to soil health over all allotments (31,019 acres).

Finding for Public Land Health Standard 1: Under the proposed grazing management strategy, areas within the allotment identified as “not meeting” (4,059 acres) or “meeting with problems” (5,563 acres) for biotic concerns would be expected to improve. Soil health in these areas would also be anticipated to improve from current conditions. Public Land Health Standard 1 would continue to be met.

Cumulative Effects: Based on the 2006 finding, Public Land Health Standard 1 is being met. However, rangeland health standards for vegetation are currently not meeting standards in all areas. Because vegetation health is intricately tied to soil health, any improvements to vegetation would also benefit soil health over time. Standard 1 would continue to be met under the proposed action.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: Potential to defoliate desirable plant species during the critical growing season would be reduced to those impacts associated with wildlife use which has not been identified as a significant factor per Land Health Assessments. Increased vigor and health of vegetative communities would better protect soils.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 1: Based on the 2002 finding, Public Land Health Standard 1 is being met. The no-grazing alternative would benefit vegetation and rangeland health. Standard 1 would continue to be met under the proposed action.

Cumulative Effects: The no-grazing alternative would benefit vegetation and therefore also provide benefits to soil resources over time. Other existing and/or foreseeable land use actions such as recreation would continue to have similar impacts as currently being experienced.

3.2.3 Water (surface and groundwater, floodplains) (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Current conditions: The Coon Hollow Allotment is situated within water quality stream segment 13a of the Lower Colorado River Basin. Primary drainages within the allotment are Sulphur Gulch and Coon Hollow which are ephemeral tributaries to the Colorado River south of De Beque, Colorado (CDPHE 2013). Stream segment 13a is not identified in Colorado's list of impaired streams or monitoring and evaluation list (CDPHE. 2012) meaning water quality standards are being met.

The S. E. Spears Allotment is situated within water quality stream segment 14c of the Lower Colorado River Basin (CDPHE 2013). The primary drainage in this allotment is Dry Fork which is an interrupted perennial tributary to Roan Creek. Stream flows in Dry Fork are highly variable due upstream irrigation water use. Roan Creek is a perennial tributary to the Colorado River at De Beque, Colorado. Sampling efforts conducted by BLM on Dry Fork indicate that the water is of poorer quality, tending to be greatly elevated in total dissolved solids, hardness, and alkalinity. Based on visual observations, high sediment loads are common of the flashy, high intensity, and localized storm events in this area. The Dry Fork portion of stream segment 14c is identified on the State's list of impaired streams (CDPHE 2012) for selenium impairments. Impairments are likely attributable to irrigation practices on private lands and/or natural occurrences associated with local geology, leaching and erosion.

The I.A. East of Ranch Allotment is also situated in stream segment 14c of the Lower Colorado River Basin. However, Conn Creek is the primary drainage in this allotment. Conn Creek is also an interrupted perennial stream which is tributary to Roan Creek. Flows in Conn Creek are highly influenced by irrigation practices on private lands. Past sampling events at the mouth of Conn Creek indicate that the water is of poorer quality, tending to be greatly elevated in total dissolved solids, hardness, and alkalinity. Based on visual observations, high sediment loads are common of the flashy, high intensity, and localized storm events in this area. It is anticipated that streams within the assessment area are of similar quality. Water quality in these intermittent and/or ephemeral systems is primarily attributable to the natural environment and geologic setting. However, anthropogenic influences can elevate sedimentation rates increasing dissolved solids, hardness, alkalinity, and degrade water quality in general.

Of additional concern throughout all allotments are contributions of sediment and salinity to the Colorado River system resulting from accelerated soil erosion in upland watersheds. The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act (Public Law 93-320) was enacted in June 1974. The Act was amended in 1984 by Public Law 98-569. Public Law 98-569 includes directing the BLM to develop a comprehensive program for minimizing salt contributions from lands under its management.

Finding for Public Land Health Standard 5: Currently stream segments within the Coon Hollow and I.A. East of Ranch allotments meet State water quality standards. As noted above, the Dry Fork portion of segment 14c is impaired for selenium and therefore does not meet State water quality standards or public land health standard 5 (CDPHE. 2012). However, watershed health and water quality is intricately tied to soil health. Therefore, where soil health standard 1 is compromised due to lack of perennial plant diversity and cheat grass invasion, water quality may also begin to deteriorate.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the No-Action alternative, current management practices would continue for the life of the permit. The current season of use may result in multiple plant defoliations during the critical spring/summer growing period which can reduce plant vigor or lead to mortality of desirable plant species over the entirety of all allotments (31,019 acres). These effects could be amplified by continued drought conditions resulting in greater potential for invasion of seasonal non-native species which characteristically lack effective root structures capable of stabilizing soils and maintaining natural rates of erosion. Invasion of non-native plant species may also alter natural fire regimes which can further destroy native plant communities leaving soils increasingly vulnerable to natural erosional processes. As a result, erosion and sedimentation rates to area streams could be elevated over time resulting in reduced water quality. Areas most likely to experience these impacts first would be drainages adjacent to and/or downstream from vegetative communities already identified through the 2006 Land Health Assessment as “not meeting” (4059 acres) or “meeting with problems” (5,563 acres) due to lack of perennial plant diversity and cheat grass invasion. These areas account for roughly 9,622 acres or roughly 31 percent of the allotment areas.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 5: Currently stream segments within the Coon Hollow and I.A. East of Ranch allotments meet State water quality standards. As noted above, the Dry Fork portion of segment 14c is impaired for selenium and therefore does not meet State water quality standards or public land health standard 5 (CDPHE. 2012). Selenium impairments are thought to be related to upstream irrigation on Mancos Shale soils (private land) and are outside of the control of the BLM. Selenium impairments may in part also be a function of natural erosivity of area soils combined with land alteration (surface disturbance) on both private and public lands within the watershed boundary. Current season of use combined with drought conditions may result in further deterioration of desirable vegetative communities and therefore negatively affect soil health which could then alter watershed function and condition potentially reducing water quality in all affected stream segments. A tri-annual review of water quality in each stream segment would be conducted by the State and any modifications to current findings would be made at that time.

Cumulative Effects: Continued grazing under current conditions combined with other uses such as recreational and fluid mineral development could result in degradation to soil and watershed health as outlined above. The cumulative result of spring grazing (spring and fall grazing in some allotments) coupled with increasing recreation demand, increased surface disturbance associated with fluid mineral development, prolonged drought and expansion of non-native invasive species throughout the landscape could leave naturally erosive soils even more vulnerable to erosional processes. Collectively, these factors could result in degradation of function and condition of the watersheds within the allotment boundaries. As a result, water quality would be expected to deteriorate with time over all 31,019 acres.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the proposed action, the timing of livestock grazing would be modified to avoid use during the critical spring/summer growing period. Likewise, on Coon Hollow and S.E. Spears allotments, grazing would occur in the spring or fall, but never during both seasons in the same year. These management strategies would decrease potential for reduced vigor and/or mortality that could result from multiple defoliations of desirable plant species during critical plant growth periods. By maintaining healthy plant communities, soil stabilization is maintained closer to natural rates and watershed function is preserved. By preserving watershed function, sediment supply is in balance with available stream flow and excessive erosion and deposition is avoided. This would provide an incremental benefit to water quality in all affected stream segments when compared to current conditions.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 5: Currently stream segments within the Coon Hollow and I.A. East of Ranch allotments meet State water quality standards. As noted above, the Dry Fork portion of segment 14c within the S.E. Spears allotment is impaired for selenium and therefore does not meet State water quality standards or public land health standard 5 (CDPHE. 2012). Selenium impairments are thought to be related to upstream irrigation on Mancos Shale soils (private land) and are outside of the control of the BLM. Selenium impairments may in part also be a function of natural erosivity of area soils combined with land alteration (surface disturbance) on both private and public lands within the watershed boundary. The proposed management strategy is anticipated to benefit vegetation, soils, watershed function and condition, as well as water quality. However, no changes to current findings are anticipated with implementation of the proposed action given the primary causative factor for selenium impairments is outside of the land manager's control. A tri-annual review of water quality in each stream segment would be conducted by the State and any modifications to current findings would be made at that time.

Cumulative Effects: The proposed action would benefit vegetation and soils which are key factors in preserving watershed function and water quality. Improved range conditions within the allotment would contribute incrementally towards water quality improvements. However, the cumulative benefits from improved grazing practices in this allotment alone are not likely to be significant enough to alter current designations for stream segment 14c.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: No livestock grazing would occur. Potential to defoliate desirable plant species during the critical growing seasons would be reduced to those impacts associated

with wildlife use which has not been identified as a significant factor per Land Health Assessments. Increased vigor and health of vegetative communities would better protect soils and preserve water quality.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 5: While the no-grazing alternative would provide some level of benefit to water quality, this benefit would not be substantial enough to alter the current designation for stream segment 14c.

Cumulative Effects: The no grazing alternative would benefit vegetation and soils which are key factors in preserving watershed function and water quality. Improved range conditions within the allotment would contribute incrementally towards water quality improvements. However, the cumulative benefits from this alternative in this allotment alone would not be sufficient to alter current designations for stream segment 14c.

3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.3.1 Invasive, Non-native Species#

Current Conditions: These allotments were part of an extensive survey for noxious weeds conducted by the BLM weed staff during the 2004 field season. Aside from the seasonally abundant annuals (cheatgrass primarily), there were few listed noxious weeds found on these allotments. The most abundant noxious weed was Russian knapweed which was found in isolated infestations along roads and at pond sites. All of the known infestations have been treated by BLM or contract crews since 2004.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The current grazing strategy is not expected to change conditions past any critical thresholds from a weed perspective. This alternative would rank lower than the proposed system, which would help the range from a weed perspective (see below).

Cumulative Effects: The range program has made a concerted effort to analyze and alter desert grazing systems over the past several years in an effort to improve the condition and sustainability of these systems. By not doing this analysis and implementing the change, there is a greater risk from a weed perspective to the health of the landscape.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The proposal to reduce the AUMs and decrease the spring-time grazing period should result in a healthy plant community which is more resilient (than current management) to invasion by weedy species. By grazing these sites in either the spring or fall (but not both) would help plants recover. Competition by desirable plants is often the best preventative tool against weeds. Additionally, monitoring by the permittee is often the most valuable tool the BLM has for detecting new infestations of weeds. Permittees often visit their allotments more frequently than the BLM.

Cumulative Effects: Well managed grazing, which is correlated to climatic conditions, is a land use which helps sustain healthy ecosystems; and as stated above, the ranching community is often one of the most active in weed management.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: If no grazing were to occur on the allotment, there could be a benefit in both the short and long term from a weed perspective, mainly because one of the vectors for weed spread (cattle) would be absent. However, quantifying a change would be very difficult because cattle are not the only (or the primary) vector for seed spread. Vehicles, wind, wildlife, and people all contribute to the spread of weeds.

Cumulative Effects: If grazing were removed from the rangeland, the system would lose one of our most valuable tools (the rancher) for finding and reporting new infestations of weeds.

3.3.2 Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Current conditions:

Coon Hollow Common: The Coon Hollow Common Allotment contains an unusually high number and density of rare plants. These plants include but are not limited to: the Federally Threatened Colorado hookless cactus, and De Beque phacelia; the BLM listed Naturita milkvetch, and De Beque milkvetch. Approximately 30% of the grazing allotment is within designated De Beque phacelia critical habitat. Numerous long term rare plant studies are situated within this allotment.

Special Status wildlife that occur on the Coon Hollow allotment or in the immediate area include Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, and Midget faded rattlesnake. The allotment contains historic habitat for the greater sage-grouse though there are no recent records of sage-grouse, and the allotment is not within priority or general habitat for the greater sage-grouse. Historic evidence of greater sage-grouse wintering activity has been recorded at castle rock, and there are historic records of sage grouse in Corcoran wash. The razorback sucker, Colorado pikeminnow, and roundtail chub have been recorded in the Colorado River adjacent to the allotment. Critical habitat for the razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow is designated in the 100 year floodplain of the Colorado River directly adjacent to the Coon hollow allotment.

S.E. Spears: This allotment contains many of the same rare plant species as the Coon Hollow Common allotment: Colorado hookless cactus, De Beque phacelia, and Naturita mikvetch. The majority of the grazing allotment is within designated De Beque phacelia critical habitat. Numerous long-term Colorado hookless cactus studies are located in this allotment.

The BLM sensitive Northern Leopard Frog has been recorded on Dry Fork Creek in the allotment, other special status wildlife likely to occur on the Southeast spears allotment includes midget faded rattlesnakes and golden eagles. The allotment contains historic habitat for the greater sage-grouse though there are no recent records of sage-grouse and the allotment is not within priority or general habitat for the greater sage-grouse.

I.A.E. of Ranch: The I.A.E. of Ranch Allotment contains two rare plants: Colorado hookless cactus, and De Beque milkvetch.

Special Status likely to occur on to the I.A.E. of Ranch allotment includes golden eagles and midget faded rattlesnakes. The allotment contains historic habitat for the greater sage-grouse though there are no recent records of sage-grouse and the allotment is not within priority or general habitat for the greater sage-grouse.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 4: Land Health Assessments have been completed for the Coon Hollow Common, and S.E. Spears Allotments. However, the I.A.E. of Ranch Allotment has not been fully assessed. According to the 2008 De Beque-Roan Creek Area Land Health Assessment Report both Coon Hollow and S.E Spears allotments are meeting Standard 4, however the report noted that habitat fragmentation due to oil and gas development, and habitat degradation associated with past and present grazing jeopardized the healthy native plant community that rare plants are dependent upon to survive. While no direct grazing related mortality of any listed plant was noted in the assessment field work, habitat degradation resulting in monocultures of cheatgrass could affect the ability of Coon Hollow to meet this standard in the future.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: While the No Action Alternative includes recent (2009) grazing management changes made to the Coon Hollow Common Allotment, and implements corrective measures identified in De Beque-Roan Creek LHA Report this alternative would allow two seasons of use during the same year on the S.E Spear and I.A.E of Ranch Allotments, and spring grazing would occur for longer on the Coon Hollow Common Allotment.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 4: An incremental improvement in the condition of the habitat and the ability of the allotment to meet Public Land Health Standard for T&ES for special status plants and fish and wildlife would be expected under this alternative; however the anticipated improvement would be less than that of the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Effects: Under the No Action Alternative two seasons of use would continue on the S.E Spears and I.A.E of Ranch allotments, and monitoring data would not be utilized to inform grazing management. Cumulatively, grazing coupled with ongoing energy development could result in failed reclamation projects, as livestock would be drawn to the newly seeded areas, and plants would not be given the opportunity to establish. This in turn could contribute to an increase in weeds, and a downward vegetative trend, negatively impacting sensitive wildlife and fish and the native plant community that rare plants are dependent upon for survival.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action includes AUM reductions and a reduction in grazing pressure during the growing season. These changes would benefit the overall vegetation and would be expected to result in a more rapid improvement of habitat conditions than the No Action Alternative. This is generally expected to increase the ability of the area to meet the Public Land Health Standard for Sensitive species. However, the increase in number of livestock head during the flowering season for both Colorado hookless cactus and De Beque phacelia could negatively impact the listed species by increasing the chances of trampling depending on where livestock congregate.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 4: The proposed action is expected to increase the ability of the area to meet Public Land Health Standard for Sensitive Species; however the increase in number of livestock during the flowering season for both Colorado hookless cactus and De Beque phacelia could negatively impact the listed species.

Cumulative Effects: Over time the potential increase in livestock numbers during the flowering season for Colorado hookless cactus and De Beque phacelia, coupled with ongoing natural gas development could negatively impact the rare plants. While an overall improvement of the plant community is expected to improve habitat conditions for special status wildlife and fish. If the permittee frequently selects spring grazing then the risk of habitat loss and fragmentation would increase, particularly for special status plants.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: If it is determined during the course of the ten-year permit that grazing is negatively impacting listed plants then mitigation to reduce or eliminate impacts would be addressed through discussion between the ecologist and range staff, and consultation with FWS may also be required.

3.3.3 Vegetation (grasslands, forest management) (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Current conditions:

Coon Hollow allotment has eight (8) Ecological (Range) Sites. These are Steep Colluvial Slopes, Alkaline Slopes, Foothill Juniper, Brushy Loam, Rolling Loam, Salt Flats, Mountain Pinyon, and Badlands. In addition, there are over 3,500 acres unspecified for an Ecological Site. Couple this with almost 3,000 acres of the Badland type, and there are over 6,500 acres not classified for a Range Site. There are approximately 8,500 acres of the Foothill Juniper type. Outside of a few forbs and shrubs, this type is practically devoid of an understory. Also, there are numerous sage parks within the allotment. Similar to the juniper sites, the presence of perennial grasses in the sagebrush parks is very limited. The sagebrush parks are aging and have a cheatgrass understory. Coon Hollow proper and a small area to its northeast, as well as a block to the northwest at the higher elevations are the only portions of the allotment that appears to have any available forage, and are possibly in a suitable condition to graze (see Land Health). However, this later area has not been grazed for many years. Grazing has been limited in this area because there is no water available, and the area is difficult for livestock to access. This area was assessed for Land Health but was ESI was not completed due to inaccessibility.

There are six (6) permanent study plots on the allotment. Plots 1, 4 and 5 are photo and apparent trend plots. Plots 2, 3 and 6 all include a frequency transect. Plot 1 was found to have a downward trend in 2002. Plot 1 is a typical sagebrush park where conditions appear poor with little or no forage. Plot 2 was found to have static conditions through the 1990's, but the trend has been downward or decreasing since 2002. Monitoring in the Frequency Transect for Plot 2 indicated the presence of very few species. Cheatgrass and globemallow were found to be dominating throughout the scattered sagebrush in this plot. Galleta grass decreased from 80% to 0% from 1994 through 2008 in Plot 2. The conditions at Plot 3 have fluctuated between static and a downward trend since 1994. The most recent trend, in 2008, was downward. This plot is also located in a sagebrush park that contains cheatgrass and limited plant diversity. The presence of squirreltail decreased from 15% to 1% between 1986 and 2008. From the period 1994 to 2008, bluegrass was also found to decrease from 15% to 1%, and galleta grass decreased

from 13% to 1%. Plots 4 and 5 are in sagebrush dominated areas with little else other than cheatgrass. Plot 4 showed a downward trend in 2008 and 2002. The most recent monitoring at Plot 5 was completed in 2002 and a static trend was determined. Plot 6 is in one of the areas where some available forage occurs or has occurred in recent history. However, the most recent trend in this plot is downward. This is also the only plot in the allotment that has ever indicated an upward trend. An upward trend in this plot was found in 1994. The frequency transect shows a decrease in galleta grass from 34% to 14% (frame 1) and from 63% to 43% (frame 4) since 1986.

ESI was completed on Coon Hollow during the summer of 2008. The ESI found that 53% of the allotment is considered unclassified for a Range Site. All Range Sites, with the exception of the Foothill Juniper were found to be in Early Seral stage. ESI shows that there was 189 AUMs on the allotment out of the 1209 AUMs allowed prior to the 2008 study. The range staff agreed that the with two permittees at that time, the rangeland could sustain 220 AUM for spring grazing. This gave Tom Latham around 120 and Chevron around 100 AUMs during the Coon Hollow permit renewal process.

Table 3.3.3-1

RANGE SITE	Assessment	Acres
Alkaline Slopes	Meeting with Problems	1,600
Badlands	Meeting	2,984
Steep Colluvial Slopes	Meeting	668
Salt Flats	Not Meeting	566
Brushy Loam	Meeting with Problems	160
Foothill Juniper	Meeting	8,544
Mountain Pinyon	Meeting	966
Pinyon/Juniper/Unspecified	Meeting	3,583
Rolling Loam	Meeting with Problems	137
		19,208

Table 3.3.3-2

ACRES OF VEGETATION ACHIEVING OR NOT ACHIEVING THE STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:

Current Situation		
Standard Vegetation Communities by Allotment	Acres Achieving or moving toward Achieving Standards	Acres Not Achieving Standards
Coon Hollow	14,001	2,446
S.E. Spear	6,204	0

I.A.E of Ranch allotment has no land health data at this point.

South East Spears allotment is mainly dominated by a Foothill Juniper/ Foothill swale vegetation types with some intermingled deep loams and semi-desert clay loams. Below represents a table with the vegetation types and associated species. Land Health Assessments have been completed on the S.E. Spear allotment and found vegetation was meeting land health standards. Frequency

site # 1-1 studies in 2008 indicated a downward trend from the 2004 studies and have shown little understory grasses and forbs with sagebrush dominating and becoming decadent. Some Pinyon-Juniper is starting to encroach into the sagebrush parks.

PLANT COMMUNITIES AND DOMINANT PLANT SPECIES FOR ECOLOGICAL SITES OR WOODLAND TYPES FOR THE S.E. SPEAR ALOTTMENT:

Table 3.3.3-3

ECOLOGICAL SITE / WOODLAND TYPE	PLANT COMMUNITY APPEARANCE	PREDOMINANT PLANT SPECIES IN THE PLANT COMMUNITY
Foothill Juniper	Juniper Woodland	Utah juniper with sparse understory of ricegrass, galleta, squirreltail
Foothill Swale	Juniper Woodland	Utah juniper, pinyon, with sparse and rocky understory of ricegrass, galleta, squirreltail
Semi-Desert ClayLoam	Desert Shrub	Needle and thread, bottlebrush cheatgrass, wheatgrasses, bluegrasses
Deep Loam	Desert Shrub	big sage, galleta, needlegrass, ricegrass, squirreltail. poa

I.A.E. of Ranch allotment is mostly dominated by Foothill Juniper and Rolling Loam ecological sites with unclassified side hills. Table 3.3.3-4 below presents the vegetation types and associated species in this allotment. Land Health Assessments have not been completed on the I.A.E of Ranch allotment; however the BLM plans to complete the assessments by 2014. Frequency Site # 2 studies in 2011 indicated an upper static trend from the 2007 studies which illustrated a downward trend. The site was found to have a good diversity of understory vegetation with limited cheatgrass.

PLANT COMMUNITIES AND DOMINANT PLANT SPECIES FOR ECOLOGICAL SITES OR WOODLAND TYPES FOR THE I.A.E OF RANCH ALOTTMENT:

Table 3.3.3-4

ECOLOGICAL SITE / WOODLAND TYPE	PLANT COMMUNITY APPEARANCE	PREDOMINANT PLANT SPECIES IN THE PLANT COMMUNITY
Rolling Loam	Desert Shrub	Big sagebrush, cheatgrass, wheatgrasses, galleta, blue grama
Foothill Juniper	Juniper Woodland	Utah juniper with sparse understory of ricegrass, galleta, squirreltail

No Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the No Action Alternative, grazing schedules would remain the same and vegetation conditions would be expected to remain static, however conditions may improve depending on the timing and levels of precipitation received. Under this alternative the

transfers would not occur and Coon Hollow allotment would remain in a common status. There will be chances of further negative issues rising, such as poor water development management for not only cattle, but wildlife as well. AUM levels would remain the same and could impact land health negatively in the long term.

Public Land Health Standard 3 on Coon Hollow allotment for plant and animal communities: Under the No Action Alternative, vegetation communities on the allotment would be expected to remain static or improve depending on precipitation levels. Land Health is expected to continue to meet standards under the No Action alternative.

Cumulative Effects: Livestock grazing has been minimal and vegetation properties are expected to remain stable as the trails are monitored and maintained. Cumulative impacts to vegetation would be minimal over most the allotment and low-moderate in small localized areas (water ponds, crossing trails) where both cattle and recreationists would congregate which would be mainly in the month of May.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Vegetation decisions of the Grand Junction ROD/RMP would continue to apply under this alternative. No AUM reductions are expected in Coon Hollow allotment, however both S.E. Spear and I.A.E of Ranch AUMs would be reduced in collaboration with BLM Land Health Assessments, range monitoring and ESI studies. The transfer would promote good vegetation management by allowing only one permittee to be allowed to graze, eliminating the problem of common allotments. The proposed action would continue to promote grazing at sustainable utilization levels at the estimated livestock carrying capacities.. On those sites that are not meeting standards, little improvement is expected, as these vegetation types have crossed a threshold where grazing management alone is not expected to benefit these communities. Key to management of the rangelands would be the use of monitoring studies to document vegetation use, condition and trend. These studies would be the basis for implementing the vegetation decisions of the Grand Junction ROD/RMP, through development of range improvements, determining carrying capacity, modifying periods of use and numbers of livestock.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 3: With the combining of common allotments, AUM reductions proposed and new strict terms and conditions, there should be increases in the vegetative community and no further impacts to this land health standard. As mentioned above S.E. Spear and I.A.E allotments land health assessments have not been completed.

Cumulative Effects: It is expected that overall vegetative health should increase with the proposed management changes. Reduced AUM numbers would help to decrease grazing pressure on over utilized areas. The reduction in authorized use called for in the proposed action should improve plant vigor and seedling establishment of desired species resulting in an improvement in overall rangeland health conditions. Decreasing grazing pressure on forage plants would help to establish more seed heads, more vigorous plants, increase composition and cover of desirable natives. A primary focus of the grazing strategy is to utilize an area once per growing season year, which would provide periodic rest from grazing. It is fully expected that as rangelands improve the carrying capacity would increase and these increases (AUMs) would be provided to the grazing permittee. The process for determining these increases would be through

the monitoring program. Utilization monitoring including mapping would be used to monitor forage use and livestock distribution. Trend monitoring would be used to assess changes in the plant communities relative to plant cover and composition. ESI would be undertaken if/when the utilization and trend monitoring show changes in the plant communities which would warrant re-assessment of transects. ESI also provides data on plant composition and the seral stage of the plant community.

No Grazing Alternative:

In general terms elimination of livestock grazing is expected to increase cover and composition of vegetation. Under this alternative, forage species would not be grazed and would have optimal opportunity for growth, reproduction and carbohydrate storage. Mid-seral plant communities would advance toward the climax communities. This would not affect those plant communities which are already at climax or late seral. The desert shrub plant communities in low seral stage are not expected to develop into a climax community, if they change at all. The competitive advantage of the annual species is expected to prevent change.

As fine fuels increase the frequency of fire would also increase, relegating the pinyon-juniper woodland type to pre-settlement distribution. On the Desert pasture the fine fuels are expected to be cheatgrass and other annual grasses and forbs. Fires in the desert shrub community would be highly destructive removing the native shrubs and increase the dominance of annual grasses.

With no livestock grazing there would be no cumulative effect of livestock grazing with other actions because it would be removed. Maintenance of water and fence projects would no longer occur. Recreation activities would continue but the trails would be maintained resulting in low impacts to vegetation except in small areas where people congregate. In these small areas impacts would be low to moderate.

Public Land Health Standard 3 for plant and animal communities: Under the No Livestock Grazing Alternative, vegetation communities would be expected to improve but may remain static through continuing drought conditions.

3.3.4 Wetlands & Riparian Zones (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Current conditions:

Riparian habitat is present within the SE Spears Allotment along Dry Fork Creek, and within the IA East of Ranch Allotment along Conn Creek. As described in the hydrology section both of these systems are interrupted perennial creeks with limited year round flows. Dry Fork Creek is located on the far north end of the SE Spears allotment. Conn Creek borders the west side of the IA East Ranch allotment. Both of these creeks are located on primarily on private land and the BLM does not complete proper functioning conditions (PFC) assessments for riparian habitat located on private land. Riparian plants that occur in these systems include: *Juncus balticus* (Baltic rush), *Eleocharis R.* (spikerush), *Phalaris arundinacea* (reed canarygrass), *Populus deltoids var. wislizenii* (Rio-Grand cottonwood), *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow), *Carex spp.* (sedge), *Tamarix ramosissima* (tamarisk). The riparian zone along Dry Fork has been impacted by historic livestock grazing and from the proximity to Dry Fork Road. Dry Fork Road is located immediately to Dry Fork Creek and may limit the potential extent of the riparian zone along the creek in some locations; it may also contribute elevated sediment loads to the riparian

zone. Conn Creek Road is located in close proximity to Conn Creek along the sections of the creek located on land managed by the BLM.

There are no riparian zones located within the Coon Hollow grazing allotment. Roan Creek is located between 0.1 and 0.5 miles to the east of the grazing allotment. The reach on Roan creek on public land is approximately 1,160 feet and was found to be healthy and meeting riparian standards in 2004. The Colorado River is located to the southeast of the Coon Hollow allotment. The section of the Colorado to the SE of the allotment was found to be meeting healthy and meeting standards when last assessed in 2004.

A description of the condition and dimension of the riparian zones located along the two creeks is provided below.

Table 3.3.4: Riparian and Wetland Areas

Riparian Zones	Length* (miles)	PFC Assessment
Dry Fork Creek	0.10	FAR
Conn Creek	0.21	PFC
Coon Hollow Allotment	0	NA

* Riparian lengths are estimates that were made from maps. Exact lengths are likely longer than estimates provided in table.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 2: Proper Functioning condition (PFC) assessments of the creeks were completed in 2004. Assessments were completed on the ground with an interdisciplinary team. Properly functioning riparian systems have the ability to recover from major disturbances such as those associated with fire, grazing, and flooding. During the 2004 assessments Conn Creek was found to be meeting PFC standards, but Dry Fork was found to be Functioning at Risk (FAR). The assessment completed on Dry Fork Creek in 2004 found moderate livestock browsing on willows and cottonwoods and low plant density and vigor. Some of the reasons noted for the riparian zone not meeting PFC included: riparian zone was not achieving its potential extent, beaver ponds were stable, the upland watershed was contributing to riparian degradation, streambank vegetation with strong root masses were missing, inadequate riparian vegetation cover, and floodplain and channel characteristics were not adequate for dissipating energy. Overall, the team concluded that the reach was not meeting its potential condition.

No Action

Under this alternative grazing would continue as currently permitted. The proposed changes of limiting the season of use to either spring or fall, but not both seasons would not be completed. The proposed AUMs would also be decreased for the Coon Hollow and I.A.E of Ranch allotments. Decreasing the AUMs and limiting the season of use to only spring or fall would provide the riparian zones along Conn Creek and Dry Fork Creek more time to recovery following livestock grazing. Plants would be allowed to store energy reserves for the next growth cycle and increased plant vigor and density would lead to increased sediment capture and

bank stability. If the season of use is not limited and AUMs are not reduced as proposed then conditions in the riparian zone would likely remain the same.

Impacts to riparian zones would be elevated under this alternative. Cattle grazing in both the spring and fall would lead to congregate in accessible riparian zones during the hotter seasons, limited time for vegetation to grow and store energy between grazing periods, and limited time for banks to stabilize during grazing periods which would lead to soils compaction, damage and removal of riparian vegetation, and bank sheering. Compaction of soils in riparian areas can collapse the soil structure and lead to decreases in the extent of the riparian zone as water availability or movement to the surface decreases. Rushes, sedges, and other obligate riparian plants with shallow root systems require water transport near or to the soil surface and are more sensitive to soil compaction or lowering of the water table.

Cumulative Effects:

Impacts from cattle grazing on the riparian systems within the grazing allotment along with other demands on these systems from ongoing oil and gas activities and proximity of county roads could further compromise the integrity of these systems. Under this alternative use by cattle grazing would continue in the spring and fall in riparian zones. Heavy grazing in and adjacent to riparian zones can impact the health of downstream and in some cases even in upstream riparian zones due to sediment transport, weed spread, loss of seed source, loss of floodplain and decrease floodplain recharge, bank erosion, and head cutting.

Proposed Action

Impacts on riparian zones under the proposed action would lower than under No Action Alternative due to decreases in AUMs and limitations on the season of use. Decreasing the season of use by 15 days in the I.A.E of Ranch allotment and only allowing for one season of use each year in the grazing allotments would provide the riparian zones with more time to recover following grazing use. Late fall grazing after deciduous plants have dropped their leaves would have the lowest impact on riparian vegetation. Cattle would not be as drawn to riparian zones after woody vegetation has lost its leaves. Cattle also tend to avoid low areas with cold air during the fall and winter and prefer warmer uplands. Riparian vegetation would also be dormant and less desirable to cattle. As previously described cattle tend to prefer riparian areas during the summer due to the accessibility of water and shade. During the late summer palatability of willows increases, due to elevated sugar content in leaves. Later summer grazing in riparian areas with willows can lead to substantial browse or even removal of these species. Alternating summer and fall grazing each grazing season would be allow for uplands and riparian species to have increased rest from cattle grazing.

Grazing techniques identified as stipulations to the grazing permit to influence better distribution of cattle on uplands and away from riparian areas would also increase the health of the riparian zone. Other methods such as salting and providing nutritional supplements away from riparian areas, culling cattle that prefer grazing in riparian areas and use of low stress stockmanship to keep cattle well distributed on uplands away from riparian areas that are included as BLM best management practices would benefit the health of riparian zones. The permittee should be required to use these methods to improve and maintain the health of riparian areas, especially

near Dry Fork Creek where the health of the riparian zone has been impacted by historic livestock grazing.

Monitoring rangeland health as proposed during the grazing season would allow for better management of cattle. Monitoring of riparian health should also be conducted during range land monitoring. Moving cattle to a new pasture if monitoring indicates that upland or riparian species are being browsed past allowable levels would provide these plants with rest and time to recover. If monitoring indicates that riparian browse exceeds 30% on riparian woody then cattle would be moved to another pasture. Monitoring of browse and bank alteration in riparian areas should occur during both spring and winter grazing. Browse on riparian species during winter grazing would be lower than during spring grazing, but heavy browse of grasses adjacent to riparian areas and in riparian areas can reduce their ability to stabilize banks during high spring runoff. These plants would not be able to grow back before high spring flows. Bank shearing or alteration may also be higher in the winter than the summer if soils are saturated and they are not frozen. Proposed changes in the grazing practices along with monitoring of grazing activities should help to improve the condition of riparian zones along Dry Fork Creek and Conn Creek.

Public Land Health Standard 2 for riparian systems:

The condition and health of riparian areas within the SE Spears grazing allotment should improve under the proposed action. Under the proposal Conn Creek would continue to meet PFC standards. Conditions along Dry Fork Creek should continue to improve, especially if winter grazing is used. The proposed changes in the permit should allow Dry Fork Creek to move from FAR to improving towards PFC.

Cumulative Effects: Other past, present, and foreseeable developments and uses in the project area with impacts to riparian areas include grazing fences, access roads, trails, pipelines, and other natural gas related infrastructure. Some of these impacts such as natural gas pipeline have resulted in short-term increases in sedimentation. Other impacts such as those associated with roads and long-term facilities have increased background sediment transport in to riparian areas, and restricted floodplain development and function. Under the proposed action cumulative impacts to riparian areas would be lower than historic levels. These changes are due to impacts discussed above associated with changing the grazing season and reducing the AUMs.

3.3.5 Wildlife (includes fish, aquatic and terrestrial) (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Current conditions:

The Coon Hollow Common allotment includes a mule deer winter concentration area, as well as mule deer severe and critical winter range. The allotment also includes portions of the production area for the Main Canyon Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep population, and the entire allotment is within the overall range of the population. Migratory birds of conservation concern likely to occur on the allotment include brewers sparrow, gray vireo, juniper titmouse, bald eagle, peregrine falcon and pinyon jay. Other wildlife species likely to occur on the allotment include elk, mountain lion, black bear, and turkey.

The S.E. Spears allotment includes a mule deer winter concentration area, as well as mule deer severe and critical winter range. The allotment is within the overall range of the Main Canyon population of Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. Migratory birds of conservation concern likely to

occur on the allotment include brewers sparrow, gray vireo, juniper titmouse, and pinyon jay. Other wildlife species likely to occur on the allotment include elk, mountain lion, black bear, and turkey.

The I.A.E. of ranch allotment includes portions of Conn Creek and Bowdish Gulch, these two drainages are not known to support fish species but are likely to support semi-aquatic species such as the western terrestrial garter snake. The allotment also contains critical and sever winter range for mule deer and a mule deer concentration area. Migratory birds of conservation concern likely to occur on the allotment include brewers sparrow, gray vireo, juniper titmouse, and pinyon jay. Other wildlife species likely to occur on the allotment include elk, mountain lion, black bear, and turkey.

Land Health Assessments have been completed for the Coon Hollow Common, and S.E. Spears Allotments. However, the I.A.E. of Ranch Allotment has not been fully assessed. According to the 2008 De Beque-Roan Creek Area Land Health Assessment Report both Coon Hollow and S.E Spears allotments are meeting Land health standards for plant and animal communities, however the report noted that habitat fragmentation due to Oil & Gas development, coupled with habitat degradation associated with past and present grazing jeopardized the healthy native plant community that constitute the wildlife habitat in the area.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: While the No Action Alternative includes recent (2009) grazing management changes made to the Coon Hollow Common Allotment, and implements corrective measures identified in De Beque-Roan Creek LHA Report this alternative would allow two seasons of use during the same year on the S.E Spear and I.A.E of Ranch Allotments, and spring grazing would occur for longer on the Coon Hollow Common Allotment. An incremental improvement in habitat and the allotments ability to meet Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities would be expected under this alternative; however the anticipated improvement would be less than that of the Proposed Action. Of the Birds of Conservation Concern found on these allotments the Gray Vireo and Brewers sparrow nest in shrubs where their nests could be physically impacted by grazing cattle. Impacts to nesting migratory birds from grazing cattle are expected to be minimal.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 3(Animals): The no action alternative may result in the continued challenges for the area in meeting the land health standard for plant and animal communities.

Cumulative Effects: Under the No Action Alternative two seasons of use would continue on the S.E Spears and I.A.E of Ranch allotments, and monitoring data would not be utilized to inform grazing management. Cumulatively, grazing coupled with ongoing energy development could result in failed reclamation projects, as livestock would be drawn to the newly seeded areas, and plants would not be given the opportunity to establish. This in turn could contribute to an increase in weeds, and a downward vegetative trend, negatively impacting wildlife and fish and their habitat.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action includes AUM reductions and a reduction in grazing pressure during the growing season. These changes would benefit the overall vegetation and would be expected to result in a more rapid improvement of habitat conditions than the No Action Alternative. This is generally expected to increase the area ability to meet the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities. The proposed action also reduces the winter grazing period which is expected to reduce the likelihood of direct competition between grazing domestic animals and wildlife. Of the Birds of Conservation Concern found on these allotments the Gray Vireo and Brewers sparrow nest in shrubs where their nests could be physically impacted by grazing cattle. Impacts to nesting migratory birds from grazing cattle are expected to be minimal.

Finding on Public Land Health Standard 3(Animals): The no action alternative may result in the continued challenges for the area in meeting the land health standard for plant and animal communities.

Cumulative Effects: The proposed action is generally expected to improve the habitat conditions for special status wildlife and fish.

3.4 HERITAGE RESOURCES AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

3.4.1 Cultural Resources

Current Conditions:

Range permit renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. For the purposes of Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment of allotments in the GJFO began in 1999 and was completed in 2009 reviewing existing site and survey information to compare against the results of other known literature reviews conducted for grazing evaluation. A Class I assessment synthesizing ten years of permit renewal evaluations of 240 grazing allotments managed by GJFO was completed for the BLM by Grand River Institute (GJFO-CRIR 1109-09; Conner and Darnell 2009) which updated and upgraded the previous 5 year grazing permit renewal synthesis (McDonald 2003).

The Coon Hollow and SE Spear allotments are in Physiographic Unit F, west of the Colorado River and in the uplands north of the Book Cliffs. At the time of the 2009 synthesis, 13 allotments had been previously evaluated in unit F; approximately 14,437 acres (nine percent) of the allotments have had cultural resource inventory completed on BLM lands. Based on inventories conducted previous to the 2009 Class I, the average site/acre ratio in unit F is 1:94 (Conner and Darnell 2009:50).

Approximately 2,203 acres (11%) of the 20,282-acre **Coon Hollow** allotment has been surveyed by project numbers GJFO CRIR 1574-01, 1077-13, 1078-21, 1079-01, 2080-14, 2080-18, 1482-24, 883-04, 883-05, 1083-21, 1086-17, 1088-18, and 1490-01 (all not to standard) and 8478-13, 1179-08, 780-05, 1980-01, 2080-09, 2081-03, 1182-12, 1082-49, 1482-31, 2083-18, 2085-04, 1187-04, 1090-10, 1490-04, 1191-12, 1191-13, 1191-14, 8391-01, 1092-10, 1194-03, 1194-07, 1194-12, 1194-13, 1194-14, 1195-01, 1195-11, 1196-14, 1196-15, 1197-04, 1098-18, 1198-20, 8398-2b, 1100-18, 8300-03, 1101-03, 1101-04, 1101-15, 5402-06, 1103-09, 1103-14, 5907-05,

1108-08, 1008-02, 17808-02, 16209-01, 16210-01, 17310-03, 17311-03, 1112-05, 1112-06, 15412-04, and 16712-02. 1,836 acres was surveyed to current standards (where the inventory report identifies the methodology as systematic transects at 15-20 meter intervals or less). 367 acres have been surveyed without identifying the transect interval or at an interval of greater than 20 meters (not to standard). “Not to Standard” surveys often recorded cultural resources and their results are brought forward in analysis.

Sixty-one cultural resource sites and 95 isolated finds have been documented and evaluated for eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) within the Coon Hollow allotment. Two sites are prehistoric open architectural sites (5ME6443- OE¹ and 5ME6445- OE), 20 are prehistoric open camps (5ME4106- FND, 5ME4424- ONE, 5ME6538- OND, 5ME6540- ONE, 5ME6541- OND, 5ME693- ONE, 5ME7089- no assessment, 5ME7121- OE, 5ME11639- ONE, 5ME11714- FND, 5ME12357- ONE, 5ME12662- OND, 5ME18284- OND, 5ME18286- OND, 5ME18425- OE, 5ME18690- OE, 5ME18691- OE, 5ME18692- OE, 5ME18703- OE, 5ME18705- ONE), nine are prehistoric open lithic sites (5ME736- no assessment, 5ME863- no assessment, 5ME1339- no assessment, 5ME4303- FNE, 5ME4350- FND, 5ME6543- ONE, 5ME7354- ONE, 5ME16770- ONE, 5ME16771- ONE), two are prehistoric rock art sites (5ME1550- OE and 5ME16710- OE), eight are prehistoric sheltered camps (5ME954- FND, 5ME12280- OE, 5ME17953- OE, 5ME18281- OE, 5ME18288- OE, 5ME18289- OE, 5ME18290- OE, 5ME18291- OE), two are prehistoric burial sites (5ME15276- OE and 5ME17694- OE), seven are historic sites (5ME1374- OND, 5ME1375- FNE, 5ME17717- ONE, 5ME18283- OND, 5ME18294- ONE, 5ME18426- ONE, 5ME18439- ONE), and 11 are multicomponent sites (5ME837- FE, 5ME1385- ONE, 5ME3970- FND, 5ME16772- OE, 5ME17716.1- ONE, 5ME17726- OE, 5ME18282- OE, 5ME18285- OND, 5ME18587- OND, 5ME18292- OE, 5ME18293- OE). All 95 isolated finds are considered not eligible for listing on the NRHP (5ME1351-1354, 5ME4393, 5ME4428, 5ME5133-5144, 5ME5169, 5ME5658-5661, 5ME6437-6438, 5ME6442, 5ME6455-6457, 5ME6539, 5ME6542, 5ME7388, 5ME11123, 5ME11124, 5ME12251, 5ME12430-12434, 5ME13121, 5ME13298-13308, 5ME16774, 5ME16779, 5ME17718-25, 5ME17727-17728, 5ME18295-18316, 5ME18427, 5ME18680-18683, 5ME18731-18742).

The 2006 grazing permit renewal for the Coon Hollow allotment (DOI-BLM-CO-2006-0017-EA) recommended 200 acres of survey and the re-evaluation of six sites (5ME693, 5ME837, 5ME954, 5ME6443, 5ME7089, and 5ME12662). Since 2006, 1,292 acres have been surveyed (CRIRs 5907-05, 1108-08, 1008-02, 17808-02, 16209-01, 16210-01, 17310-03, 17311-03, 1112-05, 1112-06, 15412-04, and 16712-02) and sites 5ME693, 5ME6443, and 5ME7089 have been re-evaluated (CRIRs 17311-03, 17310-03, and 1112-06). Sites 5ME837, 5ME954, and 5ME12662 were reevaluated under CRIR 1013-05.

Approximately 1,204 acres (19%) of the 6500-acre **SE Spear** allotment has been surveyed by project numbers GJFO CRIR 4477-13, 2080-18, 1083-21, 2083-19 (all not to standard), 1481-14, 782-08, 4882-01, 1086-20, 1087-11, 1088-10, 1190-03, 1190-11, 1190-20, 1190-25, 5492-02, 1194-09, 1098-13, 1000-07, 1101-06, 5407-03, 17808-02, 16209-01, 16210-01, and 1112-06. 1,129 acres was surveyed to current standards (where the inventory report identifies the

¹ OE= officially eligible, FE=field eligible, ONE= officially not eligible, FNE= field not eligible, OND= officially needs data, FND= field needs data

methodology as systematic transects at 15-20 meter intervals or less). 75 acres have been surveyed without identifying the transect interval or at an interval of greater than 20 meters (not to standard). “Not to Standard” surveys often recorded cultural resources and their results are brought forward in analysis.

Nine cultural resource sites and 16 isolated finds have been documented and evaluated for eligibility for listing on the NRHP within the SE Spear allotment. Seven sites are prehistoric open camps (5GF4761- ONE, 5GF4762- OE, 5ME6484- OND, 5ME6485- ONE, 5ME12146- OND, 5ME12147- OND, 5ME16480- OND), one is an open lithic site (5ME16481- ONE), and one is an historic road segment (5GF4758.2- OE, non-supporting segment). All 16 isolated finds are considered not eligible for listing on the NRHP (5GF4769-4770, 5ME5175, 5ME6486, 5ME6865, 5ME12145, 5ME12148, 5ME14459, 5ME16483-16485, 5ME16777, 5ME17375-17376, and 5ME18710-18711).

The 2003 grazing permit renewal for the SE Spear allotment (DOI-BLM-CO-2003-0029-EA) recommended no further survey; however, it was recommended that site 5ME6484 be monitored to assess condition and integrity. This site was monitored during project CRIR 1013-05.

The **I.A.E. of Ranch** allotment is in Physiographic Unit G, located west of the Colorado River and adjacent to either side of Roan Creek (the Roan Cliffs area). At the time of the 2009 synthesis, 35 allotments had been previously evaluated and approximately 9,140 acres or 10.5 percent of the allotments have had cultural resource inventory completed on BLM lands. Based on inventories conducted previous to the 2009 Class I, the average site/acre ratio in this area is 1:160 (Conner and Darnell 2009:50). Approximately 38 percent of the I.A.E. of Ranch allotment has had inventory for cultural resources. Of that, 612 acres was surveyed to current standards (where the inventory report identifies the methodology as systematic transects at 15-20 meter intervals or less). 288 acres have been surveyed without identifying the transect interval or at an interval of greater than 20 meters (not to standard). “Not to Standard” surveys often recorded cultural resources and their results are brought forward in analysis.

Approximately 900 acres (38%) of this 2,339-acre allotment has been surveyed by project numbers GJFO CRIR 375-01 (not to standard), 8478-11, 1081-65, 382-01, 782-11, 1082-56, and 584-01 (all not to standard), 8391-01, 1190-1000-07, 14504-13, 16207-02, 16807-01, 5408-02, and 1109-05. Six cultural resource sites and 17 isolated finds have been documented and evaluated for eligibility for listing on the NRHP within the IAE of Ranch allotment. Two sites are prehistoric open camps (5GF4211- FND, 5GF4230- FE), one site is a prehistoric open lithic scatter (5GF1065- FNE), one is a prehistoric open architectural site (F5GF4251- FE), and two are historic (5GF2785- ONE, 5GF3586- ONE). All 17 isolated finds are considered not eligible for listing on the NRHP (5GF1066-1068, 5GF1182, 5GF1227, 5GF1566-1568, 5GF4052, 5GF4212-4214, and 5GF4254-4258).

The 2003 grazing permit renewal (DOI-BLM-CO-2003-0033-EA) recommended no further survey or monitoring within this allotment.

This evaluation follows the procedures and guidance outlined in the 1980 National Programmatic Agreement, the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-

99-007, IM-CO-99-019, and IM-CO-02-029. Copies of the cultural resource assessments are in the Grand Junction Field Office archaeology files.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Same as the Proposed Action

Cumulative Effects: Same as the Proposed Action

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate include trampling, chiseling, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts, artifact breakage, and impacts from standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullyng, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism from possible upgrades to roads and trails.

The change in management from 50 to 60 head of cattle in the **Coon Hollow** allotment may impact cultural resources in areas where cattle concentrate; however, the change in dates could have a positive impact to cultural resources in that shortening the period of use may actually reduce impacts to cultural resources.

The change in dates and reduction of AUMs in the **SE Spear** and **IAE of Ranch** allotments could have a positive impact to cultural resources in that shortening the period of use and the number of cattle may actually reduce impacts to cultural resources.

Cumulative Effects: Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: If, during the course of the ten-year permit, it is determined that grazing is negatively impacting a cultural resource, mitigation to reduce or eliminate impacts would be addressed through discussion between cultural resource and range staff, as well consultation with SHPO and the tribes.

To better assess impacts from grazing, an additional 40 acres of survey is recommended for the **Coon Hollow** allotment in the course of the 10-year grazing permit. These surveys should focus on areas where cattle congregate, such as around stock ponds, seeps, trails, and springs. Survey should emphasize the recording in and around historic stock ponds. No sites are recommended for further monitoring.

To better assess impacts from grazing, an additional 20 acres of survey is recommended for the **SE Spear** allotment in the course of the 10-year grazing permit. These surveys should focus on areas where cattle congregate, such as around stock ponds, seeps, trails, and springs (e.g. Spear Reservoir [274142] and SE Spears Pond 1 [271128]). No sites are recommended for further monitoring.

No further work is recommended for the **IAE of Ranch** allotment.

Standard stipulations to protect cultural resources are incorporated as part of the terms and condition of the permit. If newly discovered historic properties are identified on BLM lands as a result of future surveys, the BLM would evaluate the sites. If the BLM determines that grazing activities would adversely impact any of these newly recorded historic properties mitigation would be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO. The livestock impacts to these historic properties would be assessed within the term period of the permit.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: The removal of cattle from the allotment would eliminate the direct impacts described in the proposed action and eliminate those potential or actual impacts from cultural resources in the allotment, thus having a beneficial effect. Access and use on the public land that occurs from oil and gas development, private land in-holdings, hunting, motorized recreation and dispersed camping all are conditions that have the potential to directly or indirectly impact cultural resources. The effects of trampling and concentration of cattle on sensitive sites such as rock shelters would be eliminated.

Cumulative Effects: Removing livestock from the allotment would return only a small portion of the Field Office to land use patterns that predate the historic settlement period.

3.4.3 Tribal and Native American Religious Concerns

Current Conditions:

American Indian religious concerns are legislatively considered under several acts and Executive Orders, namely the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (PL 95-341), the Native American Graves Environmental Assessment Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (PL 101-601), and Executive Order 13007 (1996; Indian Sacred Sites). In summary, these require, in concert with other provisions such as those found in the NHPA and ARPA, that the federal government carefully and proactively take into consideration traditional and religious Native American culture and life and ensure, to the degree possible, that access to sacred sites, the treatment of human remains, the possession of sacred items, the conduct of traditional religious practices, and the preservation of important cultural properties are considered and not unduly infringed upon. In some cases, these concerns are directly related to “historic properties” and “archaeological resources”. In some cases elements of the landscape without archaeological or other human material remains may be involved. Identification of these concerns is normally completed during the land use planning efforts, reference to existing studies, or via direct consultation. The Grand Junction Field Office consults with the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uinta and Ouray Agency, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe for grazing permit renewals annually. Previous consultations for grazing permit renewals have included information on the permit renewal process and maps showing the allotment locations, requesting the tribes to identify issues and areas of concern. In addition general annual project consultation for other projects in the area has been conducted with the same tribes. Concerns identified included eradication of sage, impacts to medicinal plants, and general modern intervention in the natural processes. The Ute have a generalized concept of spiritual significance that is not easily transferred to Western models or definitions. As such the BLM recognizes that they have

identified sites that are of concern because of their association with Ute occupation of the area as part of their traditional lands. Grazing is a practice that is not part of the pre-contact Ute culture although many modern Ute are involved either directly or by occupation in livestock grazing.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Same as the Proposed Action

Cumulative Effects: Same as the Proposed Action

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The direct impacts that occur where livestock concentrate include trampling, chiseling, and churning of site soils, cultural features, and cultural artifacts, artifact breakage, and impacts from standing, leaning, and rubbing against historic structures, above-ground cultural features, and rock art. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullying, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism from possible upgrades to roads and trails.

Cumulative Effects: Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to unrecorded historic properties. Changes in grazing practices or location of new improvements, or temporary installation of improvements such as salt could affect cultural resources that are important to the Ute Tribes.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: If sites are reevaluated by other project survey or identified as new survey is conducted in the allotment further consultation with the Ute Tribes would be conducted.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: Removing grazing from the allotment may have a beneficial effect on cultural resources. Direct impacts from grazing are well documented, especially in areas where cattle congregate, and along with indirect impacts from removal of vegetation and subsequent erosion the impacts to cultural resources would no longer be attributable to grazing if the No Action alternative was selected. It would not affect the impacts to the resource that are occurring from wildlife, specifically elk, using the area for grazing and the similar effect they have on both vegetation and soil.

Cumulative Effects: If this alternative was selected it would increase the acreage where no grazing impacts would be attributed to cattle.

3.4.4 Visual Resources

Current Conditions

The three allotments occupy the rugged topography of the Book Cliffs and the Roan Creek drainage, consisting of largely of pinyon-juniper and sage-covered mountains, ridges, mesas and canyons.

A 2009 Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) classified portions of the three allotments from VRI Class II to VRI Class IV, and Scenic Quality B and C within Scenic Quality Rating Units 6, 7, 8, 18, 19 and 22. (BLM 2009)

The area is primarily used by ranchers, oil and gas operators, and recreationists (hikers, mountain bikers, OHV users and hunters.) These users constitute the typical casual observer.

Man-made modifications to the landscape include oil and gas developments, range management structures (fences, corrals, water tanks), the seasonal presence of livestock, and roads and trails.

Under the current RMP, the Coon Hollow allotment includes areas designated as Visual Resource Management Class III. The rest of the allotments are in areas undesignated for VRM in the 1987 GJFO RMP. Undesignated areas have typically been managed using Class III objectives. VRM Class III objectives are “to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.” (BLM 1987)

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under this alternative the current grazing routine would continue. There would be no direct or indirect effects to visual resources from this alternative.

Cumulative Effects: Under the No Action Alternative the visual landscape would continue to change due to on-going natural gas drilling and gathering activities, maintenance and improvement of roads, and recreation use. These activities would have a relatively long-term effect on the visual quality of the view shed in the allotments.Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The seasonal presence of livestock would continue moderate visual contrast during the grazing period. Trailing from livestock use on steep cross slopes and around water sources would likely result in reduced vegetation and more exposed soil, increasing visual contrast. These visual impacts would be lessened during non-grazing periods. Reducing the number of AUMs, and shortening the grazing periods on the allotments would reduce the visual impacts from those of the No Action Alternative.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects under this alternative would be similar to those described above for the No Action Alternative

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under this alternative grazing would no longer occur on these allotments and the visual effects of grazing operations would be diminished. Over time, the visual effects from concentrated livestock use (devegetation and exposed soil) would diminish.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects to visual resources under this alternative would be similar to those described above for the No Action Alternative, but would be lessened by the absence of grazing operations.

3.4.5 Social, Economic, Environmental Justice

Grazing has been a viable part of the local economy and provides many social and economic inputs into the local community. The issuance of a ten year grazing permit allows for the continuance of livestock grazing on the Coon Hollow, S.E. Spear, and I.A.E of Ranch Allotments which contributes to the operation of the grazing permittee. Permitted grazing use on public lands is a large factor in keeping the local ranching families and industry viable. This in turn has an effect in maintaining the stability of local economies with this economic effect of ranching generally increasing as community size decreases. Small communities in the planning area are much more economically dependent on ranching and agriculture than larger communities with more diverse economic bases. Currently there are two permittees that use these allotments for livestock grazing and rely on this public grazing access as a means of economic income. Issuance of the grazing authorization allows for the continuance of livestock grazing within the areas proposed for trailing routes which contribute to seven local ranchers and their families.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The No Action Alternative would be the same as the Proposed Action for Social, Economics.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The proposed action would provide for maintaining and improving conditions for rangeland health and vegetative and soil conditions and meet the needs of the grazing permittee.

Cumulative Effects: The issuance of a 10 year grazing permit to this permittee as well as other permittees in the area would provide economic stability to the grazing permittees as well as the agricultural industry in the area. The cumulative effects of the proposed action would likely have positive effects on the permittees livestock operations through proper grazing management as well as the local economy.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: Not issuing a grazing permit would cause a major impact to the grazing permittee by eliminating an area for livestock grazing. Removing this grazing area would force the permittee to pursue other options which would have greater economic impacts to their operation. These options include pursuing private lands for grazing, which are limited or feeding hay. Feeding hay can be very expensive and a major impact to livestock producers. Not allowing livestock trailing on this permit could have an impact the ranching industry in this area, and could have a significant short-term, and possibly, long-term impact on the economies of smaller towns in the area.

Cumulative Effects: The additional economic impact to the livestock operator by not issuing a grazing permit could result in the termination of the livestock operation. This termination would have economic impacts to the local and regional economy. In addition, the elimination of a grazing operation could force the permittee to seek other options for his private property such as subdividing for development which can be more of an economic return.

Environmental Justice

The requirements for environmental justice review were established by Executive Order 12898 (February 11, 1994). That order declared that each Federal agency is to identify “disproportionately high and adverse human health or environment effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low income populations.”

According to Census 2010, the only minority population of note in the impact area is the Hispanic community of Mesa County. Persons describing themselves as Hispanic or Latino represented 13.3 percent of the population, considerably less than the Colorado state figure for the same group, 20.7 percent. Blacks, American Indians, Asians and Pacific Islanders each accounted for around 1 percent of the population, below the comparable state figure in all cases. The census counted 11.8 percent of the Mesa County population as living in families with incomes below the poverty line, compared to 12.6 percent for the entire state. Both minority and low income populations are dispersed throughout the county.

Cumulative Effects: Both minority and low income populations are dispersed throughout the county. Therefore, no minority or low-income populations would suffer disproportionately high and adverse effects as a result of any of the alternatives, even when combined with the past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions.

3.4.6 Wastes, Hazardous or Solid

Current Conditions: Hazardous and solid wastes are not a part of the natural environment.

No Action : Continuation of current grazing permit. The impacts would be the same as for the proposed action.

Cumulative Effects: Same as for the proposed action.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: There should be little or no direct indirect impacts from the proposed action. Potential sources of hazardous wastes would be from the use of herbicides/pesticides, and fuels and lubricants used for machinery. Standard lease terms require adherence to applicable state and federal laws, which would include the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA.) Improper disposal of solid wastes is prohibited by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA.) Illegal disposal of hazardous or solid wastes has generally not been an issue with grazing permits, at least in the more recent past. The rare, isolated instance of spilled or abandoned wastes would be handled in accordance with the Grand Junction Field Office Oil and Hazardous Materials Incident Contingency Plan.

Cumulative Effects: Given the rarity of incidents involving spilled and abandoned hazardous wastes, cumulative effects would likely be essentially immeasurable.

Protective/Mitigation Measures: None required. Lease stipulations and hazmat response capabilities adequately provide adequate mitigation.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: None

Cumulative Effects: None

3.5 LAND RESOURCES

3.5.1 Recreation

Current Conditions

The three subject allotments are not part of a designated recreation management area and do not contain any developed recreation facilities. The Coon Hollow Allotment receives moderate OHV and mountain biking use on the informal network of trails south of South Shale Ridge. OHV use and mountain biking, along with hunting, are the primary recreation activities within the allotments. A limited amount of hiking and equestrian use occurs in the area as well. Hunting for elk, deer, bear, and mountain lion occurs in the area during fall and winter hunting seasons. Some dispersed camping also occurs at undeveloped sites throughout the area. No BLM traffic counter data is available for recreation visitor use estimates in this area. The primary recreation use season for the area is spring and fall when temperatures are moderate.

The Project Area is located in CPW GMU 31. This GMU has historically been very popular with big-game hunters and can be expected to remain so into the future. The GJFO manages three Special Recreation Permit (SRP) for big game hunting and five SRPs for mountain lion hunting in the area. The following big game outfitters are authorized to operate in the project area: High Lonesome Lodge, Prather Outfitters, Meadows Vega Outfitters. The following mountain lion outfitters are authorized to operate in the project area: Alameno Outfitters, Backcountry Outfitters, High Lonesome Lodge, Cat Track Outfitters, and Mark Davies Outfitters.

No Action (Current Permit)

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under this alternative current grazing operations would continue. Livestock grazing would continue to be present during the higher use spring and fall seasons but would generally not have a noticeable effect on recreation activities. The presence of livestock would impact the physical setting of recreationists seeking a natural setting for their chosen recreation activity. Fall livestock grazing could impact game distribution and hunter success, impacting hunting opportunities. Indirect effects include trail damage (loosening soil on dry trails, pock-marking wet trails) from livestock use, and impacts to campsites from trampling and fecal material.

Cumulative Effects: Ongoing oil and gas development in the area would continue to have an impact on recreation users for the long-term as new roads are developed and the naturalness of the area's setting is reduced. Big game hunters would be impacted by changes to habitat and potential changes in animal distribution.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The effects would be similar to the No Action alternative for the Coon Hollow allotment. The reduced number of AUMs in the SE Spear and IA East of Ranch allotment would lessen the impacts to recreation in this alternative.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects from the proposed action would be similar to those described in the No Action Alternative

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under this alternative, impacts to trails, campsites, game species and recreation setting characteristics from livestock grazing would be eliminated.

Cumulative Effects: Ongoing oil and gas development in the area would continue to have an impact on recreation users for the long-term as new roads are developed and the naturalness of the area's setting is reduced. Big game hunters would be impacted by changes to habitat and potential changes in animal distribution. Impacts from livestock grazing on these allotments would be eliminated.

3.5.2 Special Designations (ACECs, SMAs etc.)

Current Conditions: The Pyramid Rock ACEC is within the Coon Hollow Common grazing allotment, and the proposed South Shale Ridge ACEC overlaps large portions of both Coon Hollow Common and SE Spears grazing allotments. The GJFO draft RMP (December 2012) recommends closing Pyramid Rock ACEC to livestock grazing, but does not make a similar recommendation for the proposed South Shale Ridge ACEC.

The Pyramid Rock ACEC is within the Coon Hollow Common grazing Allotment, and consists of approximately 514 acres. The ACEC was established in 1987 for the protection of endangered plants. The ACEC is home to several rare plants including: The Federally Threatened Colorado hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*), and De Beque phacelia (*Phacelia submutica*); BLM sensitive species DeBeque milkvetch (*Astragalus debequaeus*), and Naturita milkvetch (*Astragalus naturitensis*). In addition to being a conservation area for the Colorado hookless cactus, the ACEC is also a rare plant monitoring and study site utilized by various federal, state, and county partners.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: No changes in direct or indirect effects would be anticipated under this alternative, as the current grazing management would not change. Grazing would continue within the ACEC boundary and rare plants and habitat would continue to experience infrequent trampling. Trampling can result in the injury or death of individual cactus, and contributes to DeBeque phacelia habitat degradation and seed displacement.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulatively, grazing coupled with ongoing energy development could result in increased weed spread along access roads that border the ACEC. This in turn could contribute to a downward vegetative trend, negatively impacting the condition of the ACEC.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: The Proposed Action includes AUM reductions and a reduction in grazing pressure during the growing season. These changes would benefit the overall vegetation

and would be expected to result in a more rapid improvement of habitat conditions than the No Action Alternative. However, the increase in number of livestock head during the flowering season for both Colorado hookless cactus and De Beque phacelia could result in a higher risk of livestock grazing within the ACEC boundary, which could increase the chances of trampling depending on where livestock congregated.

Cumulative Effects: Over time the potential increase in livestock numbers during the flowering season for Colorado hookless cactus and De Beque phacelia, coupled with ongoing natural gas development could negatively impact the values for which the ACEC was designated. While an overall improvement of the plant community is expected to improve habitat conditions, if the permittee selects spring grazing frequently the risk of trampling increases particularly for special status plants.

3.5.3 Land with Wilderness Characteristics

Current Conditions

A 2011 Wilderness Character inventory identified the South Shale Ridge Wilderness Character Inventory Unit that overlaps the northern portion of the Coon Hollow allotment and southern and eastern portion of the SE Spear allotment (BLM 2012). This unit was determined to possess wilderness characteristics. The currently ongoing GJFO Resource Plan revision is analyzing alternatives for management of this unit. Current management guidance from the 1987 GJFO RMP does not prescribe management for preservation of wilderness characteristics within these two allotments.

No Action (Current Permit)

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the current permit grazing occurs in late spring and late fall within a portion of the South Shale Ridge Wilderness Character Inventory Unit. The presence of livestock in the unit reduces the area's naturalness both directly (physical presence of livestock) and indirectly (evidence of livestock use), but is consistent with wilderness management guidance which allows traditional uses such as grazing.

Cumulative Effects: Ongoing oil and gas and recreation development in the area would continue to have an impact on wilderness values for the long-term as new roads, trails and facilities are developed, resulting in a reduction in the area's naturalness, opportunities for solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation.

Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Impacts to wilderness characteristics would be similar to those described in the No Action Alternative, but the physical presence of livestock would occur during slightly different grazing periods.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects from the Proposed Action would be similar to those described for the No Action Alternative.

No Livestock Grazing

Direct and Indirect Effects: The elimination of livestock grazing would enhance the area's wilderness characteristics by decreasing evidence of human activity and increasing naturalness.

Cumulative Effects: Cumulative effects from the Proposed Action would be similar to those described for the No Action Alternative.

3.5.4 Range Management

Current Conditions:

Table 3.5.4 -1. Current Grazing Schedule for Chevron North America (0507123):

Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%PL	Type Use	AUMS
Coon Hollow (06712)	Improve	50 C	04/15 – 06/10	100	A	94
S.E. Spears (06739)	Improve	100 C	04/16 – 04/30	100	A	49
		64 C	05/1 – 05/31	100	A	65
		111 C	11/01 – 11/30	100	A	109
		36 C	12/1 – 12/15	100	A	18
I.A.E of Ranch (06727)	Improve	64	05/01 – 05/30	100	A	63
		96	11/01 – 12/15	100	A	142

Allotment Summary:

Allotment	Federal Acres	AUMs		
		Active	Suspended	Total
Coon Hollow/06712	19,216	94	0	94
S.E. Spear/06739	6,204	320	0	320
I.A.E. of Ranch/06727	2,538	147	0	147

Coon Hollow #06712 allotment is operated as a two pasture switch back with livestock controlled by a short drift fence. The allotment is operated by two permittees as illustrated in Table 2, however is mainly used by Mr. Latham in the early spring to utilize cheatgrass. Mr. Latham uses the allotment as holding pastures before he moves to his early summer county further west from Coon Hollow. As illustrated above, the BLM conducted monitoring studies in 2009 which set off a series of rangeland management changes and decisions. These changes were made in order to follow grazing regulations which stat the BLM must allow grazing only in a responsible manner towards public lands. The transferring and renewing of this grazing permit would allow the operators to continue in their livestock operations. Chevron has not used their portion of the permit for at least three years and has no use for the grazing preference.

Table 3.5.4-2. Current Operators within the Coon Hollow Allotment:

Permit #	Permittee	Current AUMs
0507123	Chevron North America	94
0503188	Latham Cattle Co., LLC	120
	TOTAL	214

Table 3.5.4-3. Tom Latham’s Current grazing permit #0503188 schedule for Coon Hollow allotment:

Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%PL	Type Use	AUMS
Coon Hollow (06712)	Improve	64 C	04/15 – 6/10	100	A	120

South East Spear allotment (06739) has been in none use for at least three years. Prior to that range management on the allotment is a one pasture grazing system that rests the pasture every fourth year. Do to neglect from past permittees, Chevron relinquished private grazing leases and have not been able to follow the system very often because the allotment needs better livestock water and distribution management. After, the 2013-2014 rest, it is the BLMs intention to follow this rest pattern within the allotment while making needed adjustments in the future to manage BLM land in a responsible manner. As illustrated above, the BLM conducted monitoring studies in 2009 which set off a series of rangeland management changes and decisions. These changes were made in order to follow grazing regulations which stat the BLM must allow grazing only in a responsible manner towards public lands.

I.A.E. of Ranch (06727) allotment also has not been grazed for at least three years. This small allotment was used in the spring and the fall in past years. The Permittee was supposed to rest the allotment in the spring every three years. Do to neglect from past permittees, Chevron relinquished private grazing leases and have not grazed on the allotments since because the allotment needs better livestock water and distribution management. After the mandatory rest, it is the BLMs intention to rest I.A.E allotment from spring grazing after two years of consecutive spring grazing while making need adjustments in the future to manage BLM land in a responsible manner. There is a mechanical vegetative project that was designed to help restore the area to a more productive and diverse vegetative community. As illustrated above, the BLM conducted monitoring studies in 2009 which triggered a series of rangeland management changes and decisions.

No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the No Action Alternative, issuance of the new permit would be the same grazing schedule with the same terms and conditions as the current permit. The current permit expires 09/30/2013. The term of the new permit would be from 10/01/2013 to 09/30/2023. Rangeland conditions would be expected to remain the same and possibly increase depending on precipitation levels, timing, permittee participation. However, further neglect of the range improvements could make this allotment worthless in the long term future.

Cumulative Effects: Oil and Gas, recreation, livestock grazing and hunting have occurred in the past and present and are expected to continue for the ten year term of the grazing permit renewal. Under the alternative cumulative effects are not expected as rangeland conditions are expected to stay static.

Proposed Action

Coon Hollow (06712) - Under the proposed action the BLM would transfer grazing preference on Coon Hollow from Chevron North America #0507123 to Tom Latham #0503188. This would have a positive effect on the allotment in that it would reduce the number of permittees to only one, making it easier to manage in a responsible manner. There would be no timing or AUM adjustments because the BLM has already made major changes in 2009 and the timing fits with Mr. Latham’s current grazing schedule of Coon Hollow allotment. Mr. Latham will simply use Coon Hollow allotment to move his cattle to other authorized grazing allotments. He has never used full AUMs. Mr. Latham’s current grazing schedule for Coon Hollow can be seen in Table 3. Below represents what Mr. Latham’s new grazing preference schedule for would look like.

Table 3.5.4-4. Tom Latham’s new proposed grazing permit for Coon Hollow allotment after transfer completion:

Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%PL	Type Use	AUMS
Coon Hollow (06712)	Improve	50 C	04/15 – 05/31	100	A	94
		64 C	04/15 – 06/10	100	A	120

Allotment Summary:

Allotment	Federal Acres	AUMs		
		Active	Suspended	Total
Coon Hollow/06712	19216	214	0	214

S.E. Spear (06739) – Under the proposed action the BLM would reduce AUMs from 320 to 100 to collaborate with ESI studies completed in 2007. Along with ESI, basic monitoring and studies have shown changes are needed in order to graze public BLM land in a responsible manner. Timing would stay the same. These changes in grazing management would have short term impacts the permittee in terms of changes in management style and or technique, however the long term impacts of the AUM reduction should improve the overall health of the rangeland; intern helping the livestock operators situation. During the mandatory 2013-2014 rest from grazing, the permittee must maintain and repair any rangeland management improvements that are still in operating order. This includes cleaning ponds, repairing fences and repairing water catchments. If the BLM deems there has not been enough improvements repaired or maintained to responsibly graze on public BLM land, grazing would not be allowed until said repairs are made. The grazing schedule illustrated in Table 3.5.4-5 includes both spring and fall dates, however the grazing permit would have terms and conditions which stipulate allowing only one scheduled use, either spring or fall seasons but not both in the same year. Terms and conditions would also stipulate that the permittee must NOT graze more than two consecutive spring seasons to allow for a rest period during the critical growth period.

I.A.E of Ranch (06727) – Under the proposed action the BLM would reduce AUMs from 147 to 50 to collaborate with ESI studies completed by the BLM. Along with ESI, basic monitoring and studies have shown changes are needed in order to graze public BLM land in a responsible manner. Timing would stay the same. These changes in grazing management would have short term impacts the permittee in terms of changes in management style and or technique, however

the long term impacts of the AUM reduction should improve the overall health of the rangeland; intern helping the livestock operators situation. During the mandatory 2013- 2014 rest from grazing, the permittee must maintain and repair any rangeland management improvements that are still in operating order. This includes cleaning ponds, repairing fences and repairing water catchments. If the BLM deems there has not been enough improvements repaired or maintained to responsibly graze on public BLM land, grazing would not be allowed until said repairs are made. The grazing schedule illustrated in Table 3.5.4-5 includes both spring and fall dates, however the grazing permit would have terms and conditions which stipulate allowing only one scheduled use, either spring or fall seasons but not both in the same year. Terms and conditions would also stipulate that the permittee must NOT graze more than two consecutive spring seasons to allow for a rest period during the critical growth period.

Table 3.5.4-5. New Proposed 10 Year Grazing Permit Schedule for Chevron (0507123):

Allotment/#	Category	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	%P L	Type Use	AUMS
S.E. Spears (06739)	Improve	100 C	05/01 – 05/31	100	A	* 100
		100 C	11/01 – 11/30	100	A	
I.A.E of Ranch (06727)	Improve	50 C	05/01 – 05/31	100	A	* 50
		50 C	11/01 – 11/30	100	A	

* Indicates permittees must only use one season of grazing either spring or fall, not both. Terms and conditions would also stipulate that the permittee must NOT graze more than two consecutive spring seasons to allow for a rest period during the critical growth period.

Cumulative Effects: Livestock grazing would continue as the main effects over the ten year term of the permit. Due to responsible management of grazing and recreation activities, negative cumulative effects are not expected and rangeland conditions are expected to maintain or improve.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) Common to All Grazing Alternatives

1. Grazing systems and management practices should be directed at increasing perennial, more fire-tolerant grasses.
2. All uses including grazing should be designed to take into account the highly erodible nature of these soils.
3. All open topped water tanks will include a wildlife escape ramp that have a slope no steeper than 45 degrees, in all directions, is securely attached to the tank, and meets the inside wall of the tank, and extend down the inside wall of the tank/trough (in both directions), making contact with the bottom of the tank.
4. Grazing in the winter should be carefully monitored to ensure direct competition with deer and elk for forage is minimized.
5. Grazing techniques to influence better distribution of cattle on uplands and away from riparian areas should be used. Other methods such as salting and providing nutritional supplements away (at least 550 meters) from riparian areas, culling cattle that prefer grazing in riparian areas, and use of low stress stockmanship to keep cattle well distributed on uplands away from riparian areas. The permittee should use these methods to improve and maintain the health of riparian areas.

No Livestock Grazing Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Under the No Livestock Grazing Alternative the grazing permit would not be renewed and livestock grazing on the Coon Hollow, S.E. Spear, and I.A.E. of Ranch allotments would be terminated. This would have both short and long term negative financial impact on the permittee and local agricultural economy. Required maintenance on range improvement projects would no longer occur unless the BLM does the maintenance. This could have a long term negative effects to not only the ranchers but the wildlife and hunters as well by reducing the amount of time and energy we are spending to improve overall public land health.

Cumulative: Not only would the range health suffer, range improvement projects (water sources, fences) would no longer be maintained by the permittee and would become non-functional unless the BLM performed the required maintenance. If the No Livestock Grazing Alternative is chosen, then there would be no action of livestock grazing for cumulative effects.

CHAPTER 4 - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS AND PARTICIPANTS

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW

NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY
Christina Stark	Natural Resource Specialist	Riparian and Wetlands, Realty Authorizations, Land Tenure/Status
Julia Christiansen Cathy Ventling	Natural Resource Specialist	Surface Management and Permitting for Oil & Gas, Realty Authorizations, Land Tenure/Status
Natalie Clark	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns
Michelle Bailey Chris Pipkin Andy Windsor	Outdoor Recreation Supervisor Outdoor Recreation Planner Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access, Transportation, Recreation, VRM, Wilderness, ACECs
Scott Clarke	Range Management Specialist	Vegetation, Range
Jacob Martin	Range Management Specialist	Range, Forestry
Jim Dollerschell	Range Management Specialist	Range, Wild Horse & Burro Act
David Scott Gerwe	Geologist	Geology, Paleontology
Alan Kraus	Hazardous Materials Specialist	Hazardous Materials
Robin Lacy	Realty Specialist	Land Tenure/Status, Realty Authorizations
Heidi Plank	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Species, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Terrestrial & Aquatic Wildlife
Anna Lincoln	Ecologist	Land Health Assessment, Range Ecology, Special Status Plant Species
Collin Ewing	Environmental Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Prime & Unique Farmlands, Environmental Coordinator
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Soils, Air Quality, Water Quality, Hydrology, Water Rights
Mark Taber	Range Management Specialist	Weed Coordinator, Invasive, Non-Native Species
Lathan Johnson	Fire Ecologist Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Ecology, Fuels Management

4.2 TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED

Chevron North America

Tom Latham

CHAPTER 5 - REFERENCES

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
GRAND JUNCTION FIELD OFFICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Chevron North America Grazing Permit for Coon Hollow, S.E.
Spear and IAE of Ranch Allotments**

DOI-BLM-CO-130 2013-0031-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management prepared an Environmental Assessment which analyzed the effects of re-authorization of Grazing Permit #0507013 for Chevron North America on the Coon Hollow (06712), South East Spear (06739) and IAE of Ranch (06727) allotments to determine impacts and mitigation required to continue to allow grazing on public lands in a responsible manner that is compatible with Standards for Public Land Health, other resource uses and objectives, and in compliance with grazing regulations under 43 CFR 4110.1(a)(1). In order to graze livestock on public land, the livestock permittee must hold a valid grazing permit.

This EA analyzed the transfer of the Coon Hollow grazing preference from Chevron North America (050713) to Tom Latham's permit (0503188) with no management changes. This EA would also modify the grazing AUMs on both S.E. Spear and I.A.E. of Ranch permits to better fit carrying capacity numbers; however, timing would not change for these two allotments.

RATIONALE: The analysis demonstrates that the proposed action would have negligible impacts to the natural resources. The proposed grazing program is at carrying capacity with a grazing plan that would have the cattle off the allotment in spring to allow for growth and reproduction of key forage species, and continues a rangeland monitoring program which has the capability of measuring the impacts of grazing. The proposed action is in accordance with 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 4130.2.

Intensity

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Chevron North America Grazing Permit for Coon Hollow, S.E. Spear and IAE of Ranch Allotments (DOI-BLM-CO-130-2013-0031-EA) project decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. This project may have minor short term impacts to soils, vegetation, Special Status Species and wildlife; however these impacts are not

significant. This project would have a long term net benefit the allotments because it better suits proper grazing management of native perennial plants. The grazing program is expected to benefit the soil and vegetation resource and the resources on which health of these resources is based.

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.* The proposed action is not expected to impact public health and safety.

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

There are no significant impacts to riparian vegetation, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers within the project area. The project has been modified to avoid impacts to cultural and historic resources. There are no municipal water supplies in the project area.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The impacts of livestock grazing are generally well known and documented in the academic and practicing communities. Therefore the environmental effects are not likely to be controversial.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

Livestock grazing have a long history in the region and pose no unique or unknown risks.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

This decision is like one of many that have previously been made and will continue to be made by BLM responsible officials regarding livestock grazing on public lands. The decision is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

There are no significant cumulative effects on the environment, either when combined with the effects created by past and concurrent projects, or when combined with the effects from natural changes taking place in the environment or from reasonably foreseeable future projects.

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.* There would be no adverse impacts to the above resources. The project has been modified to avoid impacts to cultural and historic resources.

9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of*

1973. No impacts are expected to endangered or threatened species or their designated critical habitats.

10. *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.* This decision complies with other Federal, State, or local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives would not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the "Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (January, 1987) (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and would not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR '1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

for



Katie Stevens
Field Manager
Grand Junction Field Office

11-7-13
Date