U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2006-039-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): Authorization number 0500240

PROJECT NAME: Grazing Lease Renewal for Dry Creek Allotment #06829

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T1S, R92W, Sec 29, 30, 31, and 32

APPLICANT: DC Ranch LLC (DBA Seven Lakes Lodge), Judy Byrd, Authorized Representative

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional): Noxious weed infestations including houndstongue, yellow toadflax, and black henbane occur on private land surrounding BLM lands. The National Register of Historic Places lists a branch of the Ute Trail as traversing the area of the Dry Creek Allotment.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The Dry Creek Allotment, one pasture, contains approximately 334 acres of BLM administered land surrounded by 1193 acres of private lands owned by Seven Lakes Lodge. During the summer of 2006 the ranch built a new fence approximately ½ mile south of the BLM lands in section 31. This fence connects with existing fences to create a new, more accurate allotment boundary. The allotment is completely fenced and will be used by the ranch as a pasture in conjunction with other private lands adjoining the allotment. This allotment was previously part of the Miller Creek Ranch and was historically a sheep allotment. Base properties previously associated with the Miller Creek Ranch have been divided and sold to several different owners. In 2005 a grazing preference transfer was completed and the allotment (Dry Creek, Allotment #06829) established for the part of the base property associated with the Dry Creek Ranch.

Dry Creek Allotment (06829) of Dry Creek Ranch LLC			
Pasture	**BLM Acres**	**Private Acres**	**Total Acres**
Dry Creek	**334**	**1193**	**1527**

Proposed Action: The class of livestock would be permanently changed from sheep to cattle and the grazing lease (0500240) would be renewed for a period of 10 years. The proposed action

would consist of a livestock operation as outlined below and applied for by Dry Creek Ranch, LLC.

Dry Creek Allotment		Livestock		Date		Total AUMs	% PL	BLM AUMs
Name	No.	Number	Kind	On	Off			
Dry Creek	06829	50	C	07/01	09/30	151	21	**32**
					Totals:	**163**		**32**

Grazing Lease Terms and Conditions: The following terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 4130.3 will be included in the grazing lease issued under this alternative:

1. Grazing use will occur as per the Grazing Schedule outlined in EA #CO-110-06-039EA.

2. This grazing lease is subject to cancellation, in whole or in part, at any time because of:

    a. Noncompliance by the lessee with rules and regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
    b. Loss of control by the lessee of all or a part of the property upon which it is based.
    c. A transfer of grazing preference by the lessee to another party.
    d. A decrease in the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within the allotment(s) described herein.
    e. Repeated willful unauthorized grazing use

3. A grazing utilization limit averaging 50 percent of annual growth in key forage areas will be applied to public lands in the Dry Creek Allotment.

4. In order to improve livestock distribution on the public lands, no salt blocks and/or mineral supplements will be placed within a 1/4 mile of any riparian area, wet meadow, or watering facility (either permanent or temporary) unless stipulated though a written agreement or decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2(c).

5. In accordance with 43 CFR 4130.8-1(F): Failure to pay grazing bills within 15 days of the due date specified in the bill shall result in a late fee assessment. Payment made later than 15 days after the due date, shall include the appropriate late fee assessment. Failure to make payment within 30 days may be a violation of 43 CFR Sec. 4140.1(b) (1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR Secs. 4150.1 and 4160.1-2 (Trespass).

6. No grazing use can be authorized under this grazing lease during any period of delinquency in the payment of amounts due in settlement for unauthorized grazing use.

7. The lessee must provide reasonable administrative access across private and leased lands to the BLM for the orderly management and protection of the public lands, as outlined 43 CFR 4130.3-2(h).

8. It is unlawful for the lessee, agents or employees to knowingly disturb or collect cultural, historical or paleontological materials on public lands. If cultural, historical or paleontological materials are found, including human remains, funerary items or objects of cultural patrimony, the lessee is to stop activities that might disturb such materials, and notify the authorized officer immediately.

9. This grazing lease is subject to the provisions of executive Order NO. 11246 of September 24, 1965, as amended, which sets forth nondiscrimination clauses. A copy of this order may be obtained from the authorized officer.

10. The lessee's grazing case file is available for public inspection as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

The percent public land (% PL), which is the percentage of BLM AUMs in relation to total AUMs produced (BLM and private AUMs) was recalculated for the grazing lease based on the new allotment boundary. The allotment carrying capacity calculation is based on ecological site production, rangeland health assessments, and topography as related to cattle use. In the Dry Creek allotment cattle tend to make most grazing use in the valley bottoms and gentler slopes which are entirely privately owned. Public land in this allotment primarily consists of steeper, brushy terrain with limited availability for cattle use. The proposed livestock grazing schedule reflects the tendencies of cattle.

The critical growing season for this area is generally from May 1 through June 30, with some yearly variations. As outlined in the grazing schedule above the Dry Creek allotment will be grazed after the critical growing season. Under this grazing regime key forage plants will have a high probability for growth and seed production. Plant communities should maintain a high level of vigor for continued diversity and overall health.

Limits of Flexibility: The lessee will be allowed flexibility from the submitted plan of operation during the grazing year that does not require prior approval from BLM. This flexibility will be limited to on or off dates and number of animals to adjust to changing climatic conditions, forage variability, and operational needs. Flexibility of the on or off dates will be limited to 10 days either way provided total days of use do not exceed 10 days from the schedule. The lessee will also be able to adjust the number of animals by (+/-) 10% provided the total AUMs of use do not exceed the AUMs scheduled. Flexibilities that require approval by the BLM are adjustments made beyond the above criteria. BLM approved flexibilities and/or changes to this plan may be required due to such factors as forage influences from grazing, drought, fire, and/or water availability.

Rangeland Improvements Necessary to Implement the Grazing System: Currently there are no rangeland improvements (RI) being proposed. Future evaluations of allotment conditions may identify improvements that would aid in achieving objectives. In which case, if impacts of future proposed improvements are sufficiently addressed in this EA, Documentation of NEPA

Adequacy (DNA) will be prepared. If potential impacts of future proposed improvements are not sufficiently addressed, a separate Environmental Assessment (EA) would be compiled to approve any such new RI on a site specific basis.

Monitoring and Evaluation: There are no long term trend sites currently established in the Dry Creek allotment. Landscape health assessments were conducted in the summer of 2006 on the primary ecological sites occurring on public lands. Given the limited extent of public lands on this allotment and the limited grazing use occurring on these lands due to steepness of the terrain, this level of monitoring has been determined to be appropriate and adequate to monitor overall condition and health of the landscape. Future landscape health assessments will be repeated approximately every five years in the primary ecological sites in order to monitor conditions as related to livestock grazing.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative the grazing lease would not be renewed and no grazing would be authorized within the Dry Creek allotment where it is currently permitted. This alternative would not be in compliance with the RMP decision to provide for livestock grazing as one of the acceptable multiple uses.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: none

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The current grazing lease (0500240) for the Dry Creek Ranch allotment (06829), which authorizes livestock grazing on the allotment, will expire February 28, 2007. Additionally, the applicant has applied for a permanent change in the class of livestock from sheep to cattle. This lease is subject to renewal at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior for a period of up to ten years. The BLM has the authority to renew the livestock grazing lease consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act*, *Public Rangelands Improvement Act*, *Federal Land Policy and Management Act* and the *White River Resource Area's Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS). This Plan/EIS has been amended by the Standards for Public Land Health in the State of Colorado. The Public Land Health Standards will be addressed in this Environmental Assessment (EA).

This environmental assessment will analyze the impacts of livestock grazing on public land managed by the BLM. The analysis will recommend terms and conditions to the lease which improve or maintain public land health standards. The public will benefit from lands which are maintained in a healthy condition and provide sustainable resources for a variety of uses. The terms and conditions, as outlined on the grazing lease, will also meet the publics need to prevent injury to public grazing lands through managed livestock use, thus averting soil deterioration and negative vegetative transformations. In doing so, the grazing lease will provide for orderly use to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon public rangelands, and for other purposes as stated under the *Taylor Grazing Act*.

In order to graze livestock on public lands administered by the BLM, the livestock producer (permittee/lessee) must hold a valid grazing permit or lease. When permitted livestock are on public lands, the permittee/lessee can conserve forage on other lands to meet future livestock requirements. Livestock producers are dependent on this leased grazing use on public lands to ensure the economic viability of their ranching operation.

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: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: 2-10, 2-22 through 2-26

Decision Language: The Proposed Action implements the White River ROD/RMP Livestock Grazing Management objective on page 2-22 to 2-26:

"To maintain or enhance a healthy rangeland vegetation composition and species diversity, capable of supplying forage at a sustained yield to meet the demand for livestock grazing. Provide for adequate forage plant growth and/or re-growth opportunity necessary to: 1) replenish the plants food reserves; and 2) produce sufficient seed to meet the reproduction needs necessary to maintain an ecological presence in the plant community."

"Sustain a landscape composed of plant community mosaics that represent successional stages and distribution patterns that are consistent with natural and regeneration regimes, and compatible with the goals identified in Standard Three of the Standards for Public Land Health (pages 2-10), also as stated, the goal of the livestock management program is to improve the rangeland forage resource by managing toward a desired plant community (potential natural plant community)."

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 302 OF FLPMA RELATIVE TO THE COMB WASH GRAZING DECISION: A review of applicable planning documents and a thoughtful consideration of the new issues and new demands for the use of the public lands involved with this allotment have been made. This analysis concludes that the current multiple use allocation of resources is appropriate.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH							
	Current Situation			With Proposed Action		With No Grazing	
Standard	**Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving**	**Not Achieving**	**Causative Factors**	**Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving**	**Not Achieving**	**Achieving or Moving Towards Achieving**	**Not Achieving**
#1-Upland Soils							
Dry Creek	334 acres	none		334 acres	none	334 acres	none
	100 % of Total			100 % of Total		100 % of Total	
#2-Riparian Systems							
Dry Creek	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	% of Total			% of Total		% of Total	
#3-Plant Communities							
Dry Creek	334 acres	none		334 acres	none	334 acres	none
	100 % of Total			100 % of Total		100 % of Total	
#4-Animal Communities							
Dry Creek	334	none		334	none	334	none
	100% of Total			100% of Total		100% of Total	
#4-Special Status, T&E Species							
Dry Creek	334	none		334	none	334	none
	100% of Total			100% of Total		100% of Total	
#5-Water Quality							
Dry Creek	2.18 miles	none		2.18 miles	none	2.18 miles	none
	100% of Total			100% of Total		100% of Total	

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The entire White River Resource area has been classified as either attainment or unclassified for all pollutants, and most of the area has been designated prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) class II. The proposed action is not located within a ten mile radius of any special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas. The air quality criteria pollutant likely to be most affected by the proposed actions is the level of inhalable particulate matter, specifically particles ten microns or less in diameter (PM_{10}) associated with fugitive dust. Unfortunately, no air quality monitoring data is available for the survey area. However, it is

apparent that current air quality near the proposed location is good because only one location on the western slope (Grand Junction, CO) is monitoring for criteria pollutants other than PM_{10}. Furthermore, the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) estimates the maximum PM_{10} levels (24-hour average) in rural portions of western Colorado to be near 50 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu g/m^3$). This estimate is well below the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for PM_{10} (24-hour average) of 150 $\mu g/m^3$ (CDPHE 2005).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Under the proposed action, the class of livestock would be permanently changed from sheep to cattle. Implementation of the proposed grazing plan combined with recent drought conditions may result in decreased ground cover. Reductions in effective ground cover would leave soils exposed to eolian processes and potentially elevate fugitive dust production. However, local climatic conditions will have the strongest hand in determining vegetative health and effective ground cover within the allotment. The proposed grazing management plan should have minimal impacts to air quality.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The 1998 BLM/Colorado SHPO Protocol agreement requires the BLM to identify all historic properties and sacred sites on all lands within Colorado that are within the APE of a BLM undertaking (1998 Protocol VII (A) p. 4), which is defined as the geographic area(s) within which an undertaking may cause changes in the character or use of historic properties (36 CFR 800.2). During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment was completed for this allotment following the procedures outlined in IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-99-007 and IM-CO-99-019. Copies of the cultural resource assessment are available in the White River Field Office archaeology files and the summary report is attached to the range allotment lease file.

No cultural resource inventories have been conducted within the allotment and no National Register or otherwise eligible cultural properties are known to be situated in this allotment. A portion of an old Ute Trail is alleged to be present on the allotment according to local knowledge but its presence was unverifiable. The Dry Creek Ute Trail is now located on private property. There are no known historic properties considered to be potentially 'at risk' from damage due to grazing allotment operations. Based on available data, a low potential exists for cultural data in the Allotment. Subsequent cultural resource inventories may be conducted in areas where livestock concentrations coincide with potential for discovering vulnerable cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Direct impacts that may occur where livestock concentrate include trampling, chiseling and churning of site soils, cultural features and artifacts, artifact breakage and impacts from standing, leaning and rubbing against above ground features and rock art. Indirect impacts may include soil erosion, gullying and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. In areas where cultural site presence

coincides with areas of livestock concentration, continued grazing may contribute to substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic and cultural properties. Alteration of grazing patterns by rotating pastures should have the effect of decreasing any potential damage to existing cultural resources by decreasing the time frame for impacts on any given site. No increased impacts are anticipated and no impacts to any known historic or cultural properties are anticipated.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Under this alternative, the grazing lease would not be renewed. This alternative would result in no continuing impacts to historic and cultural resources.

Mitigation: Appropriate mitigation measures may be identified in consultation with Colorado SHPO within the ten-year period of this lease. It is recommended that a renewal be issued for this lease subject to the allotment specific stipulations contained in the information forms.

If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered by the lessee, the lessee shall immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the BLM.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Public lands in the Dry Creek Allotment are relatively free of noxious weeds though species of concern occurring on private lands surrounding the BLM lands include black henbane *(Hyoscyamus niger)*, houndstongue *(Cynoglossum officinale)*, yellow toadflax *(Linaria vulgaris)*, Canada thistle *(Cirsium arvense)*, bull *Cirsium vulgare)*, and musk thistle *(Carduus nutans)*. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), an invasive non-native species is present in the allotment to a minor extent associated with disturbed areas along roadways. The array of noxious weeds surrounding the parcel of public lands puts it at high risk for invasion by a number of noxious weed species. The allotment is currently vegetated with a generally diverse and vigorous plant community. With livestock grazing the potential exists for spread of houndstongue due to seeds being transported after attaching on the animals' hides. The lessee has recently implemented an aggressive weed control program and plans to continue efforts yearly. With an on-going active weed control program, the lessee should make significant progress in controlling or eradicating noxious weeds in the Dry Creek allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Given the steepness of most public lands within the allotment, livestock utilize these areas less and plant communities in these areas appear well developed, diverse, and vigorous. Potential for establishment of noxious weeds on these areas, while possible, is not high.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Under this alternative grazing would not be permitted. Overall cover and density of native species would be expected increase slightly with no grazing pressure. The competitive advantage of the native communities would reduce the opportunity for noxious weed establishment. It is likely that houndstongue

would persist even under improved vegetation conditions although the density and rate of spread would be significantly decreased. However, with no livestock grazing the lessee would no longer have a commitment to management of noxious weeds on public lands. This stewardship is an important factor in preventing or controlling noxious weed infestations on public land.

Mitigation: Noxious weed infestations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. From the White River Resource Area Record of Decision (ROD)/Resource Management Plan (RMP), Appendix B, #179, a Pesticide Use Proposal will be prepared and approved prior to spraying. All spraying would be under the control of a certified applicator. Herbicides must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The majority of the public lands within this grazing allotment are represented by the brushy loam and mountain loam ecological types (296 acres out of 327 acres public land). Predominant plant species in this ecological type include Gambel oak, serviceberry, snowberry, mountain brome, slender and western wheatgrass and needle grasses. Squawapple was also present on the ridge and slopes of the public land parcel within this allotment. Birds of higher conservation interest (Partners in Flight program) associated with these habitats include the green-tailed towhee and Virginia's warbler. Several green-tailed towhee were documented during a field visit by a BLM biologist on May 30, 2006. Other species documented during this field visit associated with this habitat included gray catbird and broad-tailed hummingbird.

The stoney foothills ecological type is represented on 26 acres with scattered Wyoming big sagebrush, serviceberry, pinyon pine, Utah juniper, wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, and Indian ricegrass. This ecological type offers limited nesting habitat for migratory birds, although birds of higher conservation interest such as the Brewer's sparrow and green-tailed towhee associated with adjacent sagebrush habitats may use shrubs on the periphery opportunistically. Both of these species were documented during a May 30, 2006 field visit.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is not expected to reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions. BLM personnel conducted Land Health Assessments within the public lands on this allotment in May of 2006. All acres included within this assessment were 'achieving or moving towards achieving' the Public Land Health Standard for the ecological types represented (see section on 'Standards for Public Land Health'). The BLM lands within this allotment are confined to steep slopes and a dry ridge with no water available, making them less susceptible to livestock grazing. The grazing season on the public lands within this allotment is July 1 through September 30. Cattle may use these slopes later in the season (August or September), but this late-season use will be outside of the breeding window for migratory birds. Negligible nesting disruption is expected on the public lands within this pasture based on the small amount of public land represented, typically on steep slopes, combined with the tendency for cattle to use the privately owned land for the majority of grazing.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The removal of livestock grazing on the public lands within the allotment could result in a slight increase in the herbaceous understory of the shrub vegetation community. This slight increase would be negligible but could result in a slight increase in ground-nesting avian populations.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animal species that are known to inhabit or derive important benefit from areas within the project site. The bald eagle is found on the White River, ½ to ¾ miles to the north of the public land within this allotment, during winter. Important winter habitats include nightly roost areas, typically cottonwood trees along the river, and foraging areas. Bald eagles primarily feed on fish and waterfowl. The public land within this allotment contains no open water to meet the needs of bald eagles but eagles could forage opportunistically on carrion located on this parcel.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will have no effect on the short or long term utility or suitability of habitat in relation to threatened, endangered or sensitive species, nor would it be a physically disruptive influence to their reproductive activities. Cattle grazing would occur in the summer, July 1 through September 30, well before bald eagles return to the White River for the winter. Livestock grazing would not affect any carrion that may be used by bald eagles during the winter months while opportunistically foraging on the public land within this allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The "no action" alternative will have no effect on the short or long term utility or suitability of habitat in relation to threatened, endangered or sensitive species.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species: There is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action or no action alternative would have an influence on the condition or function of Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive animal species habitat. There would be no effect on achieving the Public Land Health Standard under all alternatives. BLM parcels within this allotment currently meet the Public Land Health Standard for special status species.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any wastes generated by the proposed action.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: Surface Water: The proposed grazing lease renewal is situated stream segments 7, 9a, and 10b of the White River Basin. All affected 6th and 7th watersheds are tributary to the White River which is a tributary to the Green River in Utah. The Green River is a tributary to the Colorado River. The following table (Table1) outlines the affected stream segments and basic water quality information related to the segments.

Table1: Drainage Basin: White River

Watershed	Stream segment	Use Protected	Identified Beneficial Uses	303(d) listed	M&E listed	Impairment	Severity
White River	7	N/A	Cold aquatic life 1, Recreation 1b (3/2-11/30), Recreation 1a, Agriculture (12/1-3/1), and Water Supply	No	No	N/A	N/A
Dry Creek	9a	UP	Aquatic life cold 2, Recreation 2, Water supply, Agriculture	No	No	N/A	N/A
Veach Gulch							
Miller Creek	10b	N/A	Cold aquatic life 1, Recreation 1b, Water supply, and Agriculture				
Moog Gulch							
W. Miller Creek							
E. Miller Creek							

(CDPHE 2006b)

The "Status of Water Quality in Colorado –2006" (CDPHE 2006b) and Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin (CDPHE 2005a) were reviewed for information relating to drainages within the project area. Stream segment 7 of the White River basin is defined as the mainstem of White River from a point immediately above the confluence with Miller Creek to a point immediately above the confluence with Piceance Creek. Segment 7 has not been designated use-protected. An intermediate level of water quality

protection applies to waters that have not been designated outstanding waters or use-protected waters. For these waters, no degradation is allowed unless deemed appropriate following an antidegradation review. The state has classified segment 7 as being beneficial for the following uses: Cold aquatic life 1, Recreation 1b (3/2-11/30), Recreation 1a, Agriculture (12/1-3/1), and Water Supply (CDPHE 2005a).

Stream segment 9a of the White River Basin is defined as all tributaries to the White River, including all wetlands, from the confluence of the North and South Forks to a point immediately above the confluence with Piceance Creek, which are not within the boundary of national forest lands, except for specific listings in segments 9b and 10b. The State has classified stream segment 9a of the White River Basin as "Use Protected" and further designated as beneficial for the following uses: Cold Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, water supply, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 6.0 milligrams per liter (mg/l), pH = 6.5 - 9.0, and Fecal Coliform = 2,000/100 milliliters (ml) and 630/100 ml E. coli. Numeric standards for inorganic compounds and metals can be found within Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin (CDPHE 2005a).

Stream segment 10b if the White River Basin includes the mainstem of Big Beaver Creek (excluding Lake Avery), Miller Creek, and North Elk Creek, including their tributaries, from their boundary with national forest lands to their confluences with the White River. Mainstem of Coal Creek, including all tributaries, wetlands, lakes and reservoirs from the source to the confluence with the White River. Segment 10b has not been designated use-protected. An intermediate level of water quality protection applies to waters that have not been designated outstanding waters or use-protected waters. For these waters, no degradation is allowed unless deemed appropriate following an antidegradation review. The state has classified segment 10b as being beneficial for the following uses: Cold aquatic life 1, Recreation 1b, Water supply, and Agriculture (CDPHE 2005a).

Newly promulgated Colorado Regulations Nos. 93 and 94 (CDPHE 2006c and 2006d, respectively) were reviewed for information related to the proposed project area drainages. Regulation No. 93 is the State's Section 303(d) list of water-quality-limited segments requiring Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). The 2006 303(d) list of segments needing development of TMDLs includes two segments within the White River - segment 9b, White River tributaries North and South Forks to Piceance Creek, specifically the Flag Creek portion (for impairment from selenium with a low priority for TMDL development) and segment 22, tributaries to the White River, Douglas Creek to the Colorado/Utah boarder, specifically West Evacuation Wash, and Douglas Creek (sediment impairments). No stream segments within the Lower Yampa/Green River Basin are currently listed. Regulation 94 is the State's list of water bodies identified for monitoring and evaluation, to assess water quality and determine if a need for TMDLs exists. The list includes two White River segments that are potentially impaired – 9b (Flag Creek) and 22 (Soldier Creek). The list also includes two Yampa River segments potentially impaired – 2 (entire portion for sediment), and 16 (entire portion for sediment and fecal Coliform). Stream segments 7, 9a, and 10b are not listed.

Ground Water: Local ground water situated within alluvial/colluvial fans would be the most vulnerable ground water sources within the allotment likely to be impacted by livestock grazing. However, adverse impacts to ground water resources on public land are not anticipated.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Under the proposed action, the type of livestock will be permanently changed from sheep to cattle. As discussed in the proposed action, most of the BLM land is comprised of steep brush choked hillsides and the cattle primarily make use of the drainage bottoms. Because cattle will likely continue to utilize the drainage bottoms, potential impacts to water quality on public lands due to livestock grazing within the allotment boundaries should be minimal. Potential impacts will be limited to reductions in effective ground cover on steep hillsides which could leave soils exposed to erosional processes potentially increasing sedimentation and salt loading to downstream reaches of the affected watersheds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No grazing will be permitted. Preferred upland and riparian vegetative communities would have greater potential for recovery/maintenance. The effective ground cover would likely increase/maintain providing enhanced soil stabilization and reduced sediment/salt loading to the affected watersheds.

Mitigation: Compliance monitoring for vegetation improvement would help identify if additional actions were needed to comply with the *Clean Water Act*.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Stream segments 7, 9a, and 10b of the White River Basin currently meet water quality standards set by the state. Implementation of the proposed change in livestock use will not change this status.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no riparian/wetland areas on public land within the Dry Creek allotment. Dry Creek, an ephemeral stream flows past the eastern edge of the allotment; Miller Creek, a perennial stream flows past the western edge of the allotment; and the White River flows past the northern edge of the allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: n/a

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: n/a

Mitigation: none

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Maintaining a healthy plant community within the allotment will minimize potential effects of livestock grazing related erosion or sediment contribution to any of these nearby riparian systems.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: See tables in the Rangeland Management section of this document for a breakdown of soil units and associated ecological sites of BLM and private acres within the Dry Creek allotment. Soils analyzed in this document have been covered in the Rio Blanco County Soil Survey. These soil surveys delineate individual soil unit polygons and associated ecological sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Cattle have a greater tendency than sheep to congregate valley bottoms and gentler slopes. Public lands within the Dry Creek allotment occur primarily on a steep brushy ridge. While cattle will likely graze in this area, under the proposed grazing schedule, use should be at a low intensity, late enough in the growing season that key forage species will have ample opportunity for regeneration of nutrient reserves, growth, and seed production. Plant communities should be maintained at their current state and able to provide adequate soil protection.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Ground cover and density of the existing plant communities would increase slightly with no livestock grazing related pressure. Soil stability would improve with the increase in vegetative matter and accumulated litter. However, current soil conditions are satisfactory and meet landscape health standards. Perceived benefit of increased soil stability would be minor with regard to functionality of the rangelands.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: Vegetation production and species composition on public lands in this allotment provide adequate cover for soil protection and forage production, thus they meet or exceed the Colorado Public Land Health Standards. Overall, as indicated by historic use within the allotment, soil protection provided by existing

ground cover would continue to meet required Public Land Health Standards. Soils would continue to provide for a functioning landscape.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

The following table lists plant communities and the dominant plant species for the ecological sites or woodland types on the allotment as associated with the proposed action. Forb species, though important to the diversity of a community and comprising up to 25 to 30% of the composition of several of the plant communities listed, are not presented in the following table because they generally are not significant contributors to the general appearance of the community.

PLANT COMMUNITIES AND DOMINANT PLANT SPECIES BY ECOLOGICAL SITES

Ecological Site / Woodland Type	Plant Community Appearance	Predominant Plant Species in the Plant Community
Brushy Loam	Deciduous Shrub/grass Shrubland	Serviceberry, oakbrush, snowberry, mountain brome, slender wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, Letterman and Columbia needle grasses
Deep Loam	Grassland	Bluebunch wheatgrass, muttongrass, needle-and-thread, western wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, big sagebrush, serviceberry, snowberry.
Loamy Slopes	Mix Shrub/grass Shrubland	Mountain mahogany, bitterbrush, serviceberry, mountain big sagebrush, beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, June grass, Indian rice grass
Mountain Loam	Grass / Open Shrub Shrubland	Mountain Brome, slender wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, Letterman and Columbia needle grasses, mountain big sagebrush, bitterbrush, low rabbitbrush, snowberry serviceberry
Stony Foothills	Grass/Open Shrub Shrubland	Beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, June grass, Indian rice grass, fringed sage, Wyoming big sagebrush, black sage, serviceberry, pinyon and juniper
Pinyon/Juniper	Pinyon/Juniper Woodland	Pinyon pine, Utah juniper, mountain mahogany, bitterbrush, serviceberry, Wyoming big sagebrush, beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, June grass, Indian rice grass, mutton grass

The following table shows the seral rating used by the BLM to rate rangeland vegetation communities in comparison to the Potential Natural Plant Community (PNC) for a particular ecological site.

ECOLOGICAL SITE SIMILARITY RATINGS

Seral Rating	% Similarity to the Potential Natural Plant Community (PNC)
Potential Natural community (PNC)	76-100% composition of species in the PNC
Late-Seral	51-75% composition of species in the PNC
Mid-Seral	26-50% composition of species in the PNC
Early-Seral	0-25% composition of species in the PNC

The following tables show an estimate of the public land acreage falling within each of the seral ratings for ecological sites in the Dry Creek allotment. These estimates are based on professional judgment of the Rangeland Management Specialist trained in the use of the rating system. During the 2006 field season the most significant ecological sites on the allotment were visited for a plant community assessment of the Colorado Public Land Health Standards.

Dry Creek Allotment (06829)						
Ecological Site Similarity Rating						
Ecological Site	**Total BLM ACRES**	**PNC**	**Late Seral**	**Mid Seral**	**Early Seral**	**BLM Acres Classified**
Brushy Loam/Mountain Loam	286.200	255	31			**286**
Mountain Loam	20.8	17	4			**21**
Stoney Foothills	27.4	22	3	2		**27**
Total:	**334**	**294**	**38**	**2**	**0**	**334**
% BLM Acres Classified:		**88%**	**11%**	**1%**	**0%**	**100%**

In the Dry Creek allotment 100% of the classifiable ecological sites have plant communities within acceptable, desired thresholds (mid to PNC) as defined in the White River ROD/RMP. Vegetation production and composition of native species on these sites provide adequate cover for soil protection and forage to meet livestock demands. These sites are not presently at risk of degradation and are at moderately low risk of invasion by non-native species. On steep sites inaccessibility results in low impact from livestock or wildlife and accordingly these areas are within an acceptable land health standard status.

Affected Environment: Several ecological sites are present in the Dry Creek allotment though the sites accounting for the largest areas of public land are brushy loam and stoney foothills. Overstory in these ecological sites is primarily Gambel oak, serviceberry, snowberry, pinyon/juniper, and big sagebrush. The understory of these sites includes mountain brome, western wheatgrass, elk sedge, Indian ricegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, smooth brome, and nodding brome. Overall, these ecological sites are currently highly productive and stable with healthy and diverse plant communities.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Under the proposed action, overall impacts to the vegetation community should be negligible with respect to plant diversity, cover amounts, and litter accumulation. A straight conversion factor of five sheep to one cow was not used to establish the animal unit equivalent. Cattle AUMs have been reduced proportionate to the amount of land suitable for cattle distribution. Under the proposal, grazing will occur after the critical growing season, allowing all plant communities to have critical growing season rest every year allowing the plants to meet their physiological needs of replenishing nutrient stores and allowing for seed production. Plants would be grazed at a low intensity, resulting in only some of the plants being subjected to grazing pressure. Each plant will have a higher probability for growth and or regrowth to reach maturity for an increased or maintained level of plant vigor.

Environmental Consequences of No Grazing Alternative: Ground cover and density of the existing plant communities would increase slightly without grazing pressure from livestock. Soil stability would increase with the additional vegetative matter. However, current conditions of existing plant communities and soil are in a satisfactory state and meeting the standards for rangeland health. Perceived benefits of increased ground cover and density of the existing vegetation, along with increased soil stability, would likely be minor within the functionality of these rangelands.

Mitigation: none

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* Vegetation production and species composition on these sites provide adequate opportunity for regrowth and maintenance of existing plant community conditions to meet a multitude of demands.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There is no aquatic wildlife habitat within the BLM parcel on this grazing allotment. Dry Creek is an ephemeral stream and flows along the eastern edge of the BLM parcel, approximately ¼ mile away from the BLM boundary. Miller Creek is a perennial stream and flows along the western edge of the BLM parcel, approximately ¼ mile away from the BLM boundary. The White River flows approximately ½ to ¾ mile from the north edge of the BLM parcel within this allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: N/A

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: N/A

Mitigation: N/A

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities: Maintaining healthy plant communities within the allotment will minimize potential effects of livestock grazing related to erosion or sediment contribution to any of these nearby aquatic habitats.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The Thornburgh allotment includes range for mule deer and elk. The entire allotment, including the BLM parcel, is categorized by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as summer range for both elk and mule deer, occupied from May through September. The entire allotment is categorized as elk winter range with a large portion, including both private and BLM land, categorized as elk severe winter range, typically occupied December through April. The entire allotment is categorized as mule deer winter range with a small portion, including both private and BLM land, categorized as a mule deer winter concentration area, typically occupied December through April. During an allotment inspection in May 2006, the BLM biologist observed no obvious instances of prolonged animal concentration or forage conditions that indicated excessive levels of seasonal use.

Small mammal populations are poorly documented. The several species that are likely to occur within the allotment area display broad ecological tolerance and are widely distributed throughout the Southern Rocky Mountain Region. No narrowly distributed or highly specialized species or subspecific populations are known to occupy habitat within this allotment.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Recent use by livestock within the BLM parcels on this allotment was not apparent during a field visit in May 2006. Both elk and mule deer sign was noted on the slopes and ridge top of the BLM parcel. The public lands within this allotment are confined to moderate slopes and a dry ridge that are less susceptible to livestock grazing. Cattle tend to use the lower pasture area and gentler slopes located on private lands within the allotment. Light or incidental cattle use of the ridge or slopes located on public land may occur later in the season (August or September).

The stocking level proposed (50 cattle from 7/1 – 9/30) is light and past the critical growing season for this area (5/1 – 6/30). Forage plants used by both cattle and by big game will have a high probability for growth and seed productions. Plant communities should maintain a high level of vigor for continued diversity and overall health.

Livestock use on public lands within the allotment has no substantive effect on vegetation expression or ecological processes. All acres included within this assessment were 'achieving or moving towards achieving' the Public Land Health Standard for the ecological types represented (see section on Standards for Public Land Health). In addition, the proposed action would have little influence on the extent or availability of big game forage or cover resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: The removal of livestock grazing on the public lands within the allotment could result in a slight increase in the herbaceous understory of the shrub vegetation community. This slight increase would be negligible but could result in a slight increase in forage available for big game species.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities: The BLM lands within this allotment currently meet the Public Land Health Standards for terrestrial animal communities. As discussed in the environmental consequences sections above, the proposed action and no action alternatives would have no influence on the continued meeting of the Public Land Health Standards for terrestrial animal communities.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals		X	
Hydrology/Water Rights		X	

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise	X		
Paleontology	X		
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources		X	
Wild Horses	X		

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The Dry Creek allotment has one pasture will be used in conjunction with other private lands. The table below shows the acreages broken down by land status, and AUMs as outlined under the proposed action.

Allotment	Ownership	Acres	Livestock AUMs	Acres/AUM (Livestock)
Dry Creek	Total BLM	334	53	6
	Total Private	1193	181	6
	Total BLM & Private	**1527**	**234**	**6**

Several ecological sites are present in the Dry Creek allotment though the site accounting for the largest area of public land is brushy loam. The most productive and accessible rangelands in the allotment are located on private lands. Public lands are primarily steeper slopes. Overstory on this ecological site is primarily Gambel oak, serviceberry snowberry, pinyon/juniper, and big sagebrush. The understory includes mountain brome, western wheatgrass, elk sedge, Indian ricegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, nodding brome and basin wildrye. Overall, ecological sites in this allotment are currently highly productive with healthy and diverse plant communities. Dry Creek Ranch currently does not own cattle however under livestock control agreements they have been grazing livestock belonging to other operators on their other private pastures and to a minor extent on Dry Creek Allotment. Under the proposed grazing schedule there could be up to 85 cattle in the Thornburgh allotment from July 1 through August 31 (or sooner if utilization levels are reached).

Information from the Forage Production table below shows estimated carrying capacity (AUMs) of livestock for the allotment. The tables are broken down by soil type by acres, acres per AUM and the number of AUMs produced on that ecological site. The tables were used in part to determine the available forage contribution produced on public land (%PL). Also, based in part on these tables, the grazing lessee and BLM worked together to develop the proposed grazing schedule, which likely has resulted in a grazing schedule that is both workable for the livestock operator and will allow the rangelands to continue to meet landscape health standards into the future. In developing the grazing schedule cattle distribution factors including distance between

water sources and foraging areas, topography, and herding practices make the actual available AUMs lower than the estimated AUMs. For these reasons the AUMs in the grazing application are lower than the estimated grazing capacity (AUMs). Current rangeland conditions including public land health standards were taken into consideration when developing the grazing schedule based on cattle use.

Forage Production analysis on all lands within the Dry Creek Allotment

Soil Unit	Ecological Site	BLM Acres	Acres /AUM	BLM AUMs
Tampico-Miracle complex,8-50%slopes	Brushy Loam/Mountain Loam	286	6	48
Miracle fine sandy loam,3-25%slopes	Mountain Loam	21	6	3
Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop, complex,15-90%slopes	Stoney Foothills	27	14	2
		334		**53**

Soil Unit	Ecological Site	Pvt Acres	Acres /AUM	Pvt AUMs
Tampico-Miracle complex,8-50%slopes	Brushy Loam/Mountain Loam	744	6	124
Shawa loam,3-8%slopes	Deep Loam	25	6	4
Sinkson gravelly sandy loam,1-8%slopes	Loamy Slopes	125	9	14
Miracle fine sandy loam,3-25%slopes	Mountain Loam	189	6	31
Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop, complex,15-90%slopes	Stoney Foothills	111	14	8
		1193		**181**

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Refer to the Vegetation section of this document for analysis of rangeland vegetation impacts. Under the proposed action the grazing lease for the Dry Creek allotment would be issued for cattle grazing. Livestock grazing would likely continue at a similar level to what it has been for the last two grazing seasons, which is light use. Other than noxious weed infestations on private lands, which are being treated, rangelands within the allotment are in good condition. Areas likely to be utilized by cattle are highly productive with a wide variety of desirable forage species. The proposed grazing schedule will provide documentation of actual livestock use in this allotment and allow for improved monitoring based on known use in the allotment. As indicated by the current year's utilization and overall range condition, the proposed action would result in rangelands continuing to meet public land health standards including healthy, diverse plant communities contributing to stable soils.

Environmental Consequences of the No Grazing Alternative: Under this alternative Dry Creek Ranch LLC would not have the ability to authorize the existing grazing lease and livestock grazing use would not be permitted on public lands. Plant communities would likely experience a slight increase in percent ground cover and an increase in density of native species. Forage produced on public lands in the allotment account for a minority (23%) relative to that produced on private lands (77%). Grazing would likely continue on private lands within the boundaries of the allotment, which would require fencing off of all BLM lands. This amount of fencing would be costly in terms of construction and maintenance, and would negatively impact wildlife movement and open landscape aesthetics.

Mitigation: none

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: The public lands involved in the action lie entirely within private lands held by the proposed lessee. While established trails and two-tracks exist within the public lands, none are subject to rights-of-way and there are no other linear rights-of-way. The private land owner has proposed the purchase or exchange of the public lands, but current policy at the White River field Office has not allowed pursuit of these proposals.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There would be no change in the current situation and the options for sale or exchange would remain unchanged.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no change in the current situation and the options for sale or exchange would remain unchanged.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Cumulative impacts from the proposed action would not exceed those discussed in the White River Resource Area RMP and/or White River Resource Area Grazing Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

REFERENCES CITED:

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Air Pollution Control Division (APCD), 2005. "Colorado Air Quality Data Report – 2004," September 2005.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC), 2004a. Regulation No. 37 Classifications and Numeric Standards for Lower Colorado River Basin. Adopted 1983 and Effective January 20, 2004.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006b. "Status of Water Quality in Colorado – 2006, The Update to the 2002 and 2004 305(b) Report," April 2006.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006c. "Regulation No. 93, 2006 Section 303(d) List Water-Quality-Limited Segments Requiring TMDLs," effective April 30.

CDPHE-WQCC, 2006d. "Regulation No. 94, Colorado's Monitoring and Evaluation List," effective April 30.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: A Public Notice of the NEPA action is posted on the White River Field Office Internet website at http://www.co.blm.gov/nepa/wrfonepa.htm asking for public input on Grazing Permit renewals and the assessment of public land health standards within the White River Field Office area. Local notification is published in the Rio Blanco Herald Times newspaper located here in Meeker, Colorado on a monthly basis. The Grazing Advisory Board was notified of impending Grazing Permit renewals. Also, individual letters are sent to the lessees/permittees informing them that their grazing permit is up for renewal and request any information they want included in or taken into consideration during the renewal process.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Gabrielle Elliott	Archeologist	Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources
Mary Taylor	Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Rangeland Management, Vegetation, Soils, Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Mary Cunningham	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Melissa J. Kindall	Hazmat Collateral; Range Technician	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid; Wild Horses
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Access and Transportation, Recreation, Visual Resources
Mary Cunningham	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Linda Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2006-039-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to renew the grazing lease of the Dry Creek allotment for a period of 10 years as described in the proposed action with the addition of the mitigation listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

- Appropriate mitigation measures may be identified in consultation with Colorado SHPO within the ten-year period of this lease.
- If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered by the lessee, the lessee shall immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the BLM.
- The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any wastes generated by the proposed action.
- Noxious weed infestations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. From the White River Resource Area Record of Decision (ROD)/Resource Management Plan (RMP), Appendix B, #179, a Pesticide Use Proposal will be prepared and approved prior to spraying. All spraying would be under the control of a certified applicator. Herbicides must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Compliance monitoring for vegetation improvement would help identify if additional actions were needed to comply with the *Clean Water Act*.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Refer to the Monitoring and Evaluation section within the proposed action of this document.

NAME OF PREPARER: Mary Taylor

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kent E. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 09/20/06

ATTACHMENTS: Figure 1: Map of the Dry Creek Allotment
Location Map of the Dry Creek Allotment

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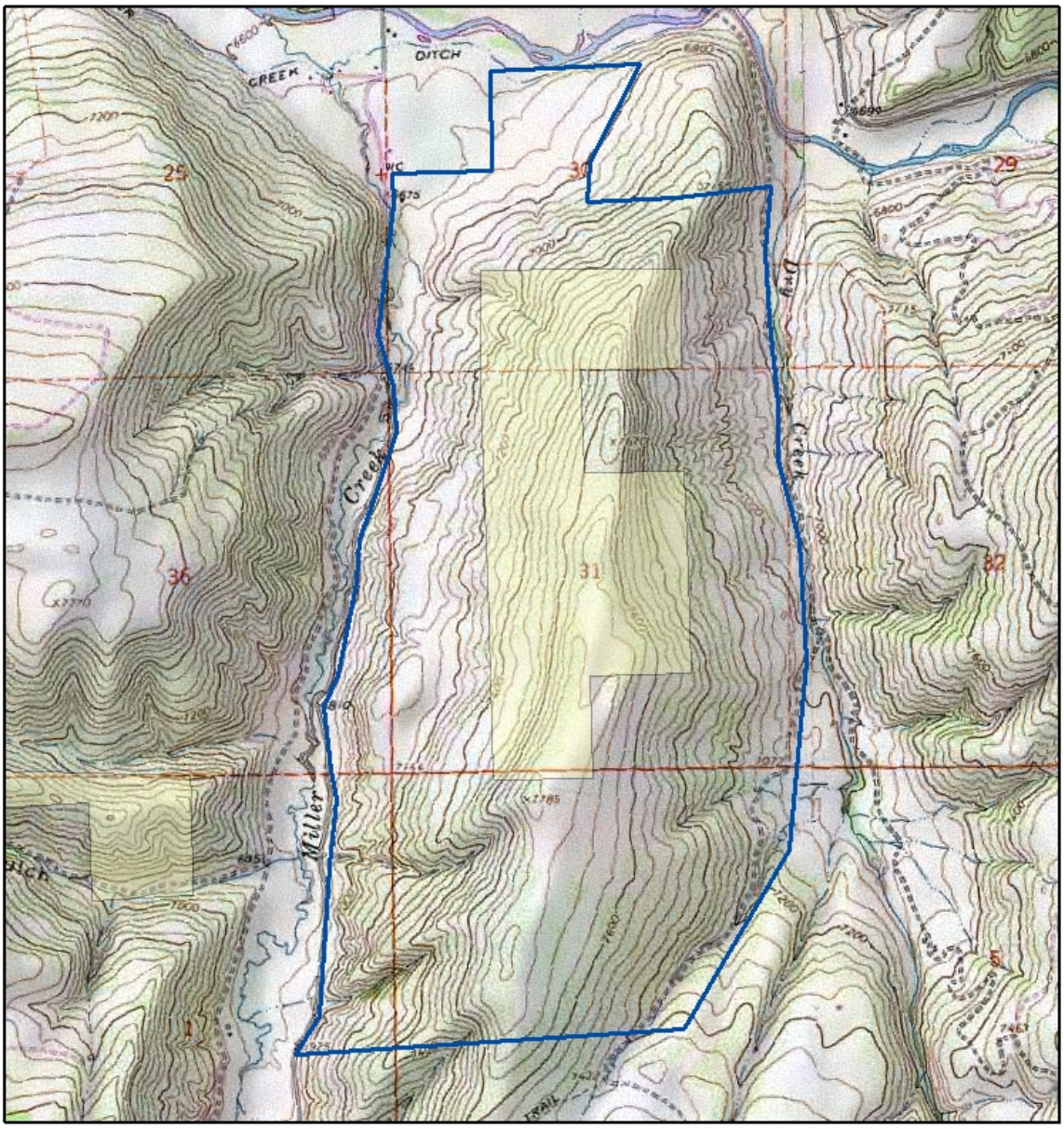
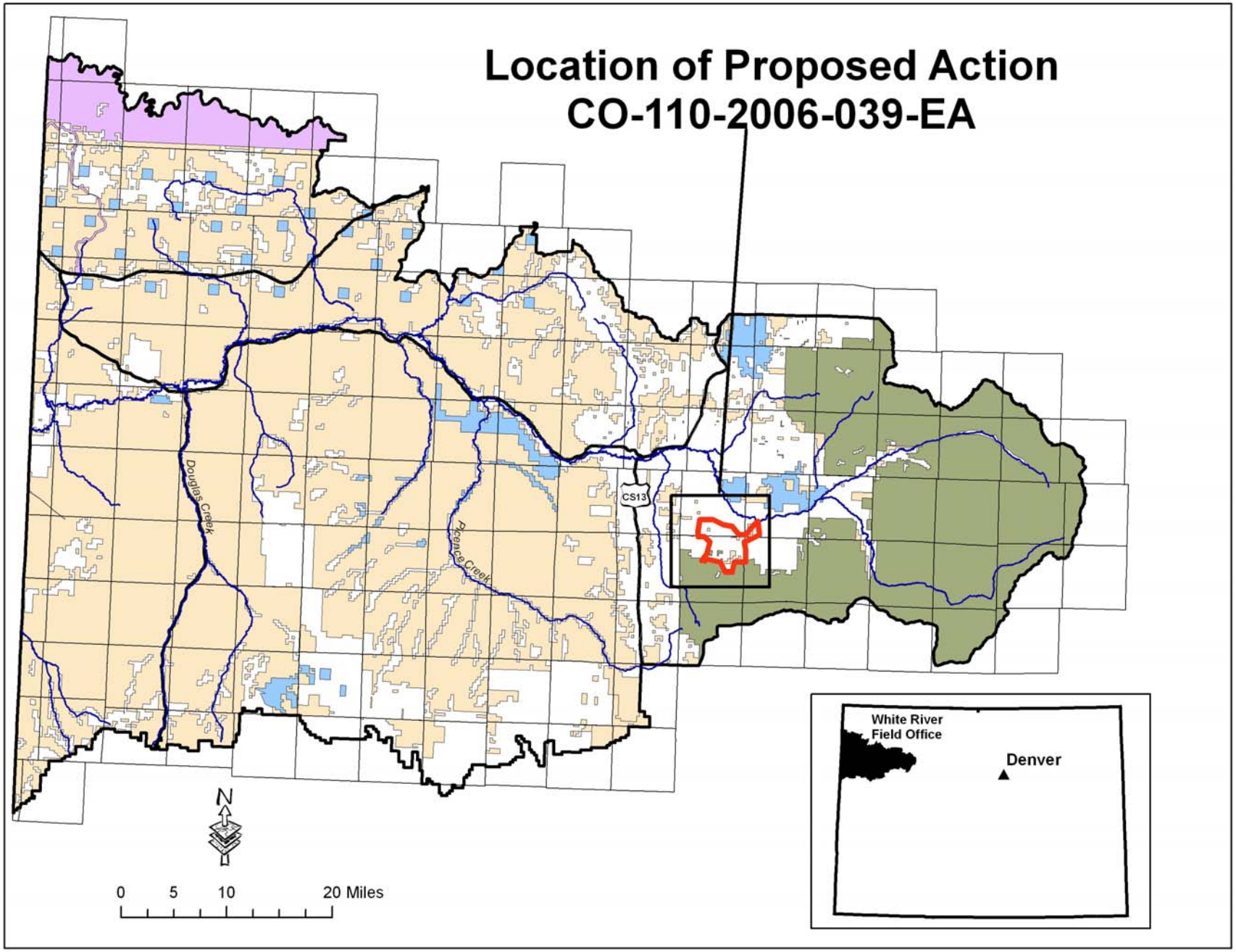
Dry Creek Allotment #06829



Dry Creek Allotment Boundary
BLM
PRI


Location of Proposed Action
CO-110-2006-039-EA
Douglas Creek
Piceance Creek
CS13
N
0
5
10
20 Miles
White River
Field Office
Denver