

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Glenwood Springs Field Office  
50629 US Highway 6 & 24  
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**NUMBER:** CO-140-2008-019 EA

**CASEFILE NUMBER:** 0507512

**PROJECT NAME:** James Craig Bair Ranch Company Grazing Permit Renewal

**LOCATION:** T4S R85W, T4S R86W, T4S R87W, T5S R85W, T5S R.86W, T5S R87W, T7S R96W – Lower Coffee Pot No. 08649, Cottonwood Cr. Etc. No. 08506, Blowout AMP No. 08643, and Callahan Mtn. No. 08919 Allotments. Refer to attached allotment maps.

**APPLICANT:** James Craig Bair Ranch Company

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

**Proposed Action:** The Proposed Action is to renew a term grazing permit for the above applicant. James Craig Bair Ranch Company has requested a change in the current configuration of allotment and pasture boundaries, changes in the number of livestock, and period of use. In addition, they have requested an increase of 38 AUMs on public land and a decrease of 38 AUMs on private land<sup>1</sup>. All of the above changes have been requested through James Craig Bair Ranch Company's Application for Grazing Permit Renewal.

A summary of the proposed allotment/pasture changes is as follows: The Burnt Ridge Pasture (Cottonwood Cr. Etc. Allotment) and the Lower Coffee Pot Pasture (Lower Coffee Pot Allotment) would be combined to form one grazing allotment named the Lower Coffee Pot Allotment (all on the north side of I-70). The Cottonwood, Spring Creek, and Ike Creek Pastures (Lower Coffee Pot Allotment) would be combined with the Home and Spruce Ridge Pastures (Cottonwood Cr. Etc. Allotment) to form one grazing allotment named Cottonwood Cr. Etc. Allotment (all on the south side of I-70). All pasture designations would be eliminated.

The permit would be issued for a 10-year period, unless the base property is leased for less, but for purposes of the EA, we are assuming 10 years of grazing by this or another applicant (in case of transfer). The proposed action is in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.2. The tables below

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<sup>1</sup> The increase in active preference AUMs is the result of private lands acquired by the BLM (formerly owned by Bair Ranch). The Decision associated with EA No. CO-140-2004-079 which addressed the acquisition of the private lands stated, "The approximately 512 acre River Parcel fee acquisition will be added to the adjacent the Lower Coffeepot Cottonwood Pasture (08649)." After allotment boundaries are reconfigured, these changes would be applied to the Cottonwood Cr. Etc. Allotment. Since most of this acquired land was formerly private land that was part of the grazing allotment, there would be a corresponding decrease of 38 AUMs for private land.

describe the level of grazing use and grazing preference for the previous permits and any changes proposed.

**Previous Grazing Use:**

Allotment Name & No.	Pasture Name	Livestock No. & Kind	Period of use	Percent Public Land	AUMs
Lower Coffee Pot 08649	Lower Coffee Pot	810 Sheep	05/10 – 05/30	100	112
	Lower Coffee Pot	810 Sheep	09/24 – 11/02	100	213
	Cottonwood	600 Sheep	05/10 – 06/15	80	117
	Cottonwood	600 Sheep	09/24 – 10/05	80	38
	Ike Creek	810 Sheep	05/31 – 06/15	5	4
	Ike Creek	810 Sheep	09/24 – 11/02	5	11
	Spring Creek	1000 Sheep	05/10 – 06/10	25	53
	Spring Creek	1000 Sheep	10/01 – 10/28	25	46
	Cottonwood Cr. Etc. 08506	Burnt Ridge	750 Sheep	05/10 – 06/15	60
Home		1000 Sheep	05/10 – 05/30	60	83
Spruce Ridge		1000 Sheep	11/02 – 11/29	60	110
Callahan Mtn Common 08919	N/A	1000 Sheep	11/20 – 11/30	100	72
Blowout AMP 08643	N/A	1000 Sheep	05/08 – 06/15	100	256
		1000 Sheep	10/20 – 11/30	100	276

**Grazing Preference AUMS:**

Allotment Name & No.	Total	Suspended	Active
Lower Coffee Pot 08649	594	0	594
Cottonwood Cr. Etc. 08506	312	0	312
Callahan Mtn Common 08919	232	162	70
Blowout AMP 08643	535	0	535

**Revised Grazing Use:**

Allotment Name & No.	Pasture Name	Livestock No. & Kind	Period of use	Percent Public Land	AUMs
Lower Coffee Pot 08649	N/A	800 Sheep	05/10 – 06/16	100	200
		1600 Sheep	09/25 – 10/04	100	105
		800 Sheep	10/05 – 10/28	100	126
Cottonwood Cr. Etc.	N/A	2400 Sheep	05/10 – 06/15	40 <sup>2</sup>	234
		2250 Sheep	09/25 – 10/29	40	207
		800 Sheep	10/29 – 11/30	40	69
Callahan Mtn Common	N/A	1000 Sheep	11/20 – 11/30	100	72
Blowout AMP 08643	N/A	815 Sheep	05/10 – 06/15	100	198
		1600 Sheep	10/30 – 11/30	100	337

<sup>2</sup> 40 percent public land based on 510 AUMs public land/1288 AUMs (778 AUMs private land + 510 AUMs public land)

## Grazing Preference AUMS:

Allotment Name & No.	Total	Suspended	Active
Lower Coffee Pot 08649	434	0	434
Cottonwood Cr. Etc. 08506	510	0	510
Callahan Mtn Common 08919	232	162	70
Blowout AMP 08643	535	0	535

The following terms and conditions were included on the previous permits and will be included on the renewed permit:

- Maintenance of range improvements is required and shall be in accordance with all approved cooperative agreements and range improvement permits. Maintenance shall be completed prior to turnout.

The grazing permit would be issued for a 10-year period, unless the base property is leased for less, but for purposes of the EA, we are assuming 10 years of grazing by this or another applicant (in case of transfer). The proposed action is in accordance with 43 CFR 4110.2-4 and 43 CFR 4130.2.

**Additional Background Information:** Sheep are herded and typically do not graze any given area of the allotment for an extended period of time. On the average, sheep are moved to new grazing areas every 7 days.

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

The No Grazing alternative has been eliminated from further consideration. No unresolved conflicts involving alternative use of available resources have been identified. For this reason, discontinuance of grazing use (No Grazing) will not be considered or assessed.

The No Action alternative has also been eliminated from further consideration. The No Action alternative would involve reissuing the permit/lease with current terms and conditions and no additional stipulations would be added to the permit/lease. Reissuing the permit/lease without the new stipulations would be unrealistic due to current Washington Office and Colorado State Office policies.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION:** These permits/leases are subject to renewal or transfer at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior for a period of up to ten years. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has the authority to renew the livestock grazing permits/leases consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and Glenwood Springs Field Office 's Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. This Plan/EIS has been amended by Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado.

The renewal of the grazing permit is needed for the following reasons: (1) to meet the livestock grazing management objective of the Resource Management Plan of providing 56,885 animal unit months of livestock forage commensurate with meeting public land health standards, (2) to continue to allow livestock grazing on the specified allotment, (3) to meet the forage demands

of local livestock operations, (4) to provide stability to these operations and help preserve their rural agricultural lands for open space and wildlife habitat, and (5) to allow use of native rangeland resource for conversion into protein suitable for human consumption.

The adjustment in allotment boundaries is needed so they coincide better with physical barriers which would simplify administration of the grazing permit. Current pasture designations would be eliminated because they do not coincide with effective physical barriers and they are no longer needed<sup>3</sup>. Elimination of pasture designations would also provide more flexibility to properly manage livestock and the range. The proposed changes in grazing use would better suit the current livestock operation (i.e., better matches with actual grazing use on the allotments).

**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: Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan.

Date Approved: Jan. 1984, revised 1988, amended in November 1991 - Oil and Gas Leasing and Development - Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; amended Nov. 1996 - Colorado Standards and Guidelines; amended in August 1997 - Castle Peak Travel Management Plan; amended in March 1999 - Oil and Gas Leasing & Development Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; amended in November 1999 - Red Hill Plan Amendment; and amended in September 2002 – Fire Management Plan for Wildland Fire Management and Prescriptive Vegetation Treatment Guidance.

Decision Number/Page: The action is in conformance with Administrative Actions (pg. 5) and Livestock Grazing Management (pg. 20).

Decision Language: Administrative actions states, “Various types of actions will require special attention beyond the scope of this plan. Administrative actions are the day-to-day transactions required to serve the public and to provide optimal use of the resources. These actions are in conformance with the plan”. The livestock grazing management objective as amended states, “To provide 56,885 animal unit months of livestock forage commensurate with meeting public land health standards.”

#### **STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:**

The Colorado Standards for Public Land Health consist of 5 standards: upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, special status species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. The BLM is in the process of completing land health assessments on a landscape basis.

The Blowout AMP allotment is within the North Eagle Landscape which had a formal assessment completed in 2003 and the Callahan Mountain allotment is part of the Rifle-West

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<sup>3</sup> Current pasture designations were created in 1997 so the permit could be split between James Craig Bair and LeGrande Bair after their father passed away. In 2001 LeGrande Bair transferred all of his grazing use/preference to James Craig Bair so there is no longer a need for the current pasture designations.

Landscape which had an assessment completed on it in 2004. The Callahan Mountain allotment was determined to be meeting all the standards at the time of the assessment. The Blowout AMP allotment was not meeting Standard 4 for sage grouse since the area was historically sage grouse habitat but the population has been sharply declining in the past two decades. Factors in the failure to meet the standards included pinyon-juniper encroachment into sagebrush habitat, fragmentation of habitat with roads, private land development, recreation and human use, and fire suppression. Current livestock grazing management was not determined to be a causal factor.

The Deep Creek Landscape which includes the Cottonwood Creek etc and Lower Coffeepot allotments is scheduled for an assessment in 2008. Since the assessment has not been completed on these two allotments, there will be no determination made on achievement of the standards. However, the environmental analysis for this proposed action must address whether the proposed action or alternatives being analyzed would result in impacts that would maintain, improve, or deteriorate land health conditions relative to these five standards.

**COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 302 OF FLPMA RELATIVE TO THE COMB WASH DECISION**

A review of applicable planning documents and a thoughtful consideration of new issues and new demands for the use of the public lands involved in this allotment have been made. This analysis concludes that the current land and resource uses are appropriate.

Reasons for the conclusion are: No new issues or new demands for the use of public lands involved in this grazing allotment have been identified since approval of the land use plan and amendments.

**AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the proposed action and no action alternative. In addition, the section presents comparative analyses of the direct and indirect consequences on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the various actions.

A variety of laws, regulations, and policy directives mandate the evaluation of the effects of a proposed action and alternative(s) on certain critical environmental elements. Not all of the critical elements that require inclusion in this EA are present, or if they are present, may not be affected by the proposed action and alternative (Table 1). Only those mandatory critical elements that are present and affected are described in the following narrative.

In addition to the mandatory critical elements, there are additional resources that would be impacted by the proposed action and alternative. These are presented under **Other Affected Resources.**

**Critical Elements**

<b>Table 1. Critical Elements of the Human Environment</b>					
<i>Critical Element</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Affected</i>	<i>Critical Element</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Affected</i>

	Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No
Air Quality	X			X	Prime or Unique Farmlands		X		X
ACECs	X			X	Special Status Species*				
Cultural Resources	X			X	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		X		X
Environmental Justice	X			X	Water Quality, Surface and Ground*	X		X	
Floodplains		X		X	Wetlands and Riparian Zones*	X		X	
Invasive, Non-native Species	X			X	Wild and Scenic Rivers	X			X
Migratory Birds	X		X		Wilderness/ WSAs		X		X
Native American Religious Concerns	X			X					

\* Public Land Health Standard

### Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Affected Environment: Portions of the Lower Coffee Pot allotment is within the Deep Creek ACEC. The ACEC was designated in 1984 for its scenic and geologic values. The area was prescribed the following management objectives, “Designate as unsuitable for utility and communication facilities, manage under VRM Class I objective, identify as recreation management area, and prohibit vegetation manipulation.”

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Grazing has been an allowed for management activity within the ACEC boundary, however grazing is unlikely to occur within the canyon area of the ACEC due to its steep topography. No impacts to the relevant and important values have been documented from grazing activities and none are expected. However, if impacts from grazing activities are documented within the ACEC boundary to its identified scenic and/or geologic values, the grazing permit must be amended to preclude the area from any future grazing.

### Cultural Resources and Native American Religious Concerns

Affected Environment: Range permit renewals are undertakings under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Additional range improvements (e.g., fences, spring improvements) are subject to compliance requirements under Section 106 and will undergo standard cultural resources inventory and evaluation procedures. During Section 106 review, a cultural resource assessment (GSFO #1008-3) was completed for the Cottonwood Creek, Lower Coffeepot, Callahan, and Blowout Allotments (#08506, 08649, 8919, and 08643) on February 7, 2008 following the procedures and guidance outlined in the 1980 National Programmatic Agreement Regarding the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, IM-WO-99-039, IM-CO-99-007, IM-CO-99-019, CO-2001-026, and CO-2002-029. The results of the assessment are summarized in the table below. A copy of the cultural resource assessment is available at the GSFO office.

Allotment Number	Acres Inventoried at a Class III level	Acres NOT Inventoried at a Class III Level	Percent (%) Allotment Inventory data Class III level	Number of Cultural Resources known in allotment	High Potential of Historic Properties (yes/no)	Management Recommendations (Additional inventory required and historic properties to be visited)
Cottonwood Creek 08506	494	6693	7	8	Yes	No additional acres need to be inventoried. 48% of the allotment is 30%+ slopes.
Lower Coffeepot 08649	1161	14,545	7	10	Yes	No additional acres need to be inventoried. 53% of the allotment is 30%+ slopes.
Callahan 08919	920	920	50	12	No	107 additional acres need to be inventoried. 42% of the allotment is 30%+ slopes.
Blowout 08643	2865	9558	14	115	Yes	No additional acres need to be inventoried. 38% of the allotment is 30%+ slopes.
Total	5440	31,716	78	145		

Numerous Class III cultural resource inventories have been conducted within these allotments. Approximately 14 historic properties eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places have been identified. Additionally, several areas of Native American Concern have been identified. Unidentified historic era sites within these allotments could represent a time frame from the late 1800's through the 1950's; prehistoric sites could represent a time range from 5,000 to 10,000 years before present.

Based on available data, there is a high potential for historic properties and/or areas of Native American concern in all the allotments with the exception of Callahan. Subsequent site field visits, inventory, and periodic monitoring may have to be done to identify adverse grazing within the term of the permit and as funds are made available. If the BLM determines that grazing activities will adversely impact the properties, mitigation will be identified and implemented in consultation with the Colorado SHPO.

Several areas of Native American concern have been identified within these allotments. On November 15, 2007 the Glenwood Springs Field Office mailed a informational letter and maps to the Ute Tribe (Northern Ute Tribe), Southern Ute Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribes, identifying the proposed 2008 grazing permit renewals. No response on the grazing permit renewals has been received. In the past the Tribes have not had any concerns with grazing permit renewals. However, the Utes have requested a ¼ mile buffer radius around all sensitive Native American areas of concern for any additional ground disturbance to maintain the integrity of setting, place, and feeling for these sites. If additional new data is disclosed, new terms and conditions may have to be added to the permit to accommodate their concerns. The BLM will take no action that would adversely affect these areas or location without consultation with the appropriate Native Americans.

Environmental Consequences: 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. No impacts of this type have been identified within these allotments. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gullying, and increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties and areas of Native American concern.

Mitigation: Areas of Native American concern have been identified and the Utes have requested a ¼ mile buffer radius around these areas. No additional ground disturbance will be allowed around these areas. Additionally, periodic monitoring will be necessary to determine if livestock are affecting these sites.

Maintenance of range improvements not previously inventoried or new improvements may require cultural resource inventories.

These allotments may be found to contain historic properties and/or resources protected under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, E.O. 13007, or other statutes and executive orders. The BLM may require modification to development proposals to protect such properties, or disapprove any activity that is likely to result in damage to historic properties or areas of Native American concern.

Education/Discovery stipulation needs to be added to the lease renewal as follows:

The permittee and all persons specifically associated with grazing operations must be informed that any objects or sites of cultural, paleontological, or scientific value such as historic or prehistoric resources, graves or grave markers, human remains, ruins, cabins, rock art, fossils, or artifacts shall not be damaged, destroyed, removed, moved, or disturbed. If in connection with allotment operations under this authorization any of the above resources are encountered, the proponent shall immediately suspend all activities in the immediate vicinity of the discovery that might further disturb such materials and notify the BLM authorized officer of the findings. The discovery must be protected until notified in writing to proceed by the authorized officer (36CFR800.110 & 112, 43CFR 0.4).

### **Invasive, Non-native Species**

Affected Environment: A complete landscape wide survey for the present of noxious weeds and non-native species has not been conducted on the Lower Coffee Pot, Cottonwood Creek, Blowout, and Callahan Mountain Allotments. However, weed infestations were recorded during a land health assessment on the Blowout Allotment in 2003. The Blowout assessment noted that cheatgrass, Russian thistle, and kochia are common throughout the site. Although this assessment represents only a small fraction of the landscape within this allotment and given the widespread nature of noxious weed infestations throughout the resource area, it is assumed

that some level of infestation does exist for the remainder of land not assessed in these allotments.

**Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:** Wind, water, vehicles, animals, and people transport weeds. Weeds generally germinate and become established in areas of surface disturbing activities such as road construction and maintenance, vehicular traffic, big game and livestock grazing. Livestock grazing can contribute to the establishment and expansion of noxious weeds through various mechanisms. Improperly managed grazing, (over-grazing), can cause a decline in desirable native plant species and ground cover which provides a niche for noxious weed invasion. In addition, noxious weed seed can be transported and introduced to new areas by fecal deposition or by seed that clings to the animal's coat. Conversely, properly managed livestock grazing which does not create areas of bare ground and which maintains the vigor and health of native plant species, particularly herbaceous species, is not expected to cause a substantial increase in noxious weeds.

### **Migratory Birds**

**Affected Environment:** The four grazing allotments are comprised of a variety of different habitat types. Vegetation includes sagebrush, pinyon/juniper, mixed mountain shrub, aspen and coniferous forest. Given the mix and diversity of vegetation present, these allotments provide cover, forage and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory bird species. Priority species on the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern List that may nest in the area include: flammulated owl, Williamson's sapsucker, sage sparrow, Brewer's sparrow, Virginia's warbler, pinyon jay and black-throated gray warbler. Golden eagles, red tailed hawks, peregrine falcons and other raptors likely nest and forage on the allotments.

**Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:** Although the proposed grazing schedules for the Lower Coffee Pot, Cottonwood Creek and Blowout allotments coincide with the breeding season, it is unlikely that livestock grazing in these allotments would reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions. It is unlikely that the proposed action would have any long-term negative effects to migratory birds or raptors. Under the proposed action, these three allotments would be grazed for just over a month in the spring (mid-May to mid-June). The Lower Coffee Pot and Blowout allotments would also be grazed for approximately one month in the fall and the Cottonwood Creek allotment would be grazed for approximately two months in the fall. All three allotments receive growing season rest from mid-June until fall grazing begins. The Callahan allotment receives rest throughout the growing season as it is only grazed for 10 days in November. These grazing schedules would allow for ample growing season rest and adequate plant recovery periods. In addition, sheep are typically herded within the allotments and do not graze any given area for extended periods of time. Monitoring data and Land Health Assessments show the allotments to be in good condition, providing healthy and productive habitat for migratory bird species. The continuation of grazing under the Proposed Action would not be expected to degrade migratory bird habitat.

### **Special Status Species (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 4)**

Affected Environment: According to the latest species list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the following Federally listed and candidate species may reside, have habitat, and/or be impacted by actions occurring in Garfield and Eagle Counties: Canada lynx, black-footed ferret, Mexican spotted owl, western yellow-billed cuckoo, razorback sucker, Colorado pikeminnow, bonytail chub, humpback chub, Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly, Uinta Basin hookless cactus, Ute Ladies' Tresses, Parachute beardtongue, and DeBeque phacelia.

The Cottonwood Cr Etc and Lower Coffee Pot allotments provide habitat for the threatened Canada lynx. The Cottonwood Cr Etc Allotment is comprised of 5,274 acres of BLM managed lands. Lynx habitat within the allotment is comprised of 1,209 acres of winter foraging habitat and 869 acres of other habitat. The Lower Coffee Pot Allotment is comprised of 12,703 acres of BLM managed lands. Lynx habitat within the allotment is comprised of 877 acres of winter foraging habitat and 752 acres of other habitat. Lynx habitat within these two allotments is not located in an LAU, but is located in the Glenwood Landscape Linkage. Vegetation in the lynx habitat portion of the allotment consists mainly of aspen, lodgepole pine and fir.

The allotments provide winter range for bald eagles, a recently delisted species. Bald eagles are known to winter along major waterways and their tributaries within the GSFO, using adjacent upland habitat as scavenging areas primarily for winter or vehicle killed mule deer and elk. Mapped winter habitat for this species is located along the Colorado and Eagle Rivers and on uplands adjacent to river. One winter roost is located in the Blowout allotment.

The Blowout allotment provides potential habitat for the greater sage grouse, a BLM sensitive species. Two leks are located in this allotment, however, neither lek has been active in several years.

The Blowout AMP allotment is bordered by the Colorado River to the west and the Eagle River to the South. The Colorado River in this area contains roundtail chub, bluehead sucker, and flannelmouth sucker all of which are BLM sensitive fish species. The proposed Lower Coffeepot allotment is bordered by the Colorado River on the east and south and Deep Creek on the north. The Colorado River supports the same fish assemblage as identified above. The proposed Cottonwood Cr. Etc. allotment is bordered by the Colorado River to the north and is drained by one primary perennial stream, Cottonwood Creek. The Colorado River supports the same fish assemblage as identified above. The Callahan Mountain Common allotment is bordered by Parachute Creek to the north and northeast. Parachute Creek contains roundtail chub, flannelmouth suckers, and bluehead suckers. Aquatic insects are common in all of the perennial waters discussed. The Colorado River is located 0.5 miles south of the allotment and contains the same fish assemblage as identified above.

The Blowout AMP allotment and the existing Lower Coffeepot allotment both contain several known occurrences of the BLM sensitive plant, *Penstemon harringtonii*. This species is found in open sagebrush parks on rocky loam or rocky clay loam soils between 6,200 and 9,200 feet elevation. Potential habitat for *P. harringtonii* is also found on the Cottonwood Creek Etc. allotment.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

*Canada lynx*

Currently, the boundaries of both allotments cross I-70. The boundary for the two allotments would be modified so the Lower Coffee Pot Allotment is located north of I-70 and the Cottonwood Creek Etc Allotment would be located south of I-70. Following the boundary change, the Lower Coffee Pot Allotment would consist of 6,630 BLM managed lands with 45 acres of winter foraging habitat and 452 acres of other habitat. The Cottonwood Creek Etc Allotment would consist of 11,350 acres of BLM managed lands with 2,041 acres of winter foraging habitat and 1,169 acres of other habitat.

The proposed action would not result in direct mortality of individual lynx and any effects to lynx would be the result of changes in ecosystem structure. Direct impacts associated with administration of grazing on lynx are minimal and unlikely. Excessive losses of forage could result in a reduction in hiding and movement cover and directly effect lynx's ability to move through the landscape.

Indirect impacts associated with grazing are mainly associated with competition between livestock and potential lynx prey species for available forage. The Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy identified that "grazing, in conjunction with increasing elk populations, may have resulted in increased competition for forage resources with lynx prey". In summary, livestock compete with lynx prey species (snowshoe hare, jack rabbits, cottontails, blue grouse, voles, squirrels) for available forage. In addition, livestock can remove cover important to the survival of prey species, which could ultimately result in lower prey species productivity.

Habitat assessments specific to Canada lynx and land health standard 4 have been completed for both allotments. In summary, both allotments were in good condition, providing suitable habitat for lynx and their prey species. Utilization range was none to slight and both domestic livestock and wild ungulate sign was noted. Abundant grasses and forbs were present with good diversity and productivity. Conifer stands were healthy with several age-classes and saplings present. Both allotments were meeting Standard 4 and current grazing management is not degrading lynx habitat on the allotments.

The proposed action would also add a total of 38 AUMs to the permit. The new period of use would not differ greatly from the current period of use. The Lower Coffee Pot allotment would be grazed for a little over a month in the early spring and for a month in the fall. The Cottonwood Creek Etc allotment would be grazed for a little over a month in the spring and for two months in the fall. Both allotments would receive sufficient growing season rest, adequate plant recovery periods, and ample opportunities for seed production, dissemination and seedling establishment. Under similar management, both allotments were in good condition and grazing was not degrading lynx habitat. Livestock grazing as proposed would have minimal impacts to Canada lynx and its habitat.

The renewal of the Lower Coffee Pot and Cottonwood Creek Etc. grazing permits "May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect" the Threatened, Canada lynx. Furthermore, the proposed action will not result in the destruction or adverse modification of Fish & Wildlife Service designated critical habitat. Programmatic consultation for Canada lynx was completed on the entire grazing program as administered by the GSFO. A "May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect" determination was made and concurrence was obtained from the FWS (ES/GJ-6-CO-03-

F-013). Consultation specific to these two allotments regarding Canada lynx and livestock grazing has also been completed. A “May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determination was made and concurrence was obtained from the FWS (2/25/08).

### *Bald Eagle*

The Proposed Action would have no conceivable impact to wintering bald eagles. Grazing in the allotments would not coincide with bald eagle use of winter habitat. Grazing upland habitats adjacent to the Colorado and Eagle Rivers would not impact bald eagle’s ability to use these waterways and would not impact prey availability. In addition, livestock grazing would not impact bald eagle’s ability to feed on carrion in upland habitats within the allotment.

### *Greater Sage Grouse*

The Blowout allotment is grazed for a little over a month in the spring and for a month in the fall. This grazing schedule allows for ample growing season rest and adequate plant recovery periods. In addition, sheep are typically herded within the allotment and do not graze any given area for extended periods of time. The most current monitoring data was collected in the summer of 2007. Utilization was light across the allotment. A formal land health assessment was completed for this allotment in 2004. Overall, the allotment met Standard 3 for healthy and productive plant and animal communities. A few isolated problems, such as pinyon juniper encroachment, old age sagebrush stands and an increase in OHV use were noted. Although vegetative communities in the allotment are in relative good health, the allotment did not meet Standard 4 for special status species, primarily greater sage grouse. A combination of habitat condition (encroachment), fragmentation, recreation and human use issues, loss of habitat and fire suppression are negatively affecting sage grouse on a landscape scale. Issues were not determined to be a result of current grazing and it is unlikely that grazing is precluding sage grouse use of the habitat.

### *Penstemon harringtonii*

During the land health assessment on the Blowout AMP allotment, no issues were observed related to livestock grazing impacts on populations of *Penstemon harringtonii*. A formal assessment will be conducted on the Lower Coffeepot and Cottonwood Creek Etc. allotments in summer 2008. Since the allotments are grazed by sheep which are generally herded to new, ungrazed areas every 7 days, no adverse impacts are anticipated.

**Mitigation:** If livestock grazing impacts on the penstemon are identified during the assessment, modifications to the permit may be required.

### *Roundtail chub, flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker*

No grazing is occurring directly adjacent to the Colorado River or Parachute Creek, and potential issues related to increased sediment are of little concern to these fish as they are well adapted to the high sediment loads traditionally carried by the Colorado River. BLM managed riparian habitats along the Colorado River and Parachute Creek on these allotments are in good condition. Grazing as proposed should have no impact to these native fishes.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Special Status Species: The Lower Coffee Pot and Cottonwood Creek Etc allotments are scheduled for a formal LHA in 2008. However, both allotments have had habitat assessments specific to lynx and were found to be meeting this standard. The Blowout AMP allotment is within the North Eagle Landscape which had a formal assessment completed in 2003. The Blowout AMP allotment was not meeting Standard 4 for sage grouse since the area was historically sage grouse habitat but the population has been sharply declining in the past two decades.

## **Water Quality, Surface and Ground (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 5)**

### Affected Environment:

#### ***Lower Coffee Pot and Cottonwood Creek Allotments***

The Lower Coffee Pot Allotment is located west of the Town of Dotsero and north of I-70 and the Colorado River within the 31,228 acre Colorado River above Dotsero and the 27,313 acre Colorado River in Glenwood Canyon 6<sup>th</sup> field watersheds. Within this allotment are the ephemeral Tie Creek and several unnamed ephemeral drainages which are all tributary to the Colorado River to the south. The Cottonwood Creek Allotment is located south of the Town of Dotsero and south of I-70 and the Colorado River within the 31,228 acre Colorado River above Dotsero, the 10,819 acre Lower Cottonwood Creek, the 2,336 acre Spruce Creek, and the 3,103 acre Ike Creek 6<sup>th</sup> field watersheds. Within this allotment are the perennial Cottonwood Creek, the perennial Spruce Creek, the ephemeral Ike Creek, and several unnamed ephemeral drainages; all of which are tributary to the Colorado River to the north.

According to the *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 33) list, the drainages mentioned above are within the Upper Colorado River Basin segment 4 that includes all tributaries to the Colorado River from the outlet of Lake Granby to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River. This segment has been classified aquatic life cold 1, recreation 1a, water supply, and agriculture. Aquatic life cold 1 indicates that this water course is capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold water biota. Recreation class 1a refers to waters in which primary contact recreation is presumed to be present. In addition, this segment is suitable or intended to become suitable for potable water supplies and agricultural purposes that include irrigation and livestock use.

The ephemeral drainages mentioned above are not currently listed on the State of Colorado's *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 93) or the *Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 94) as waterbodies suspected to have water quality problems. In addition, no water quality data are currently available for the drainages mentioned above.

#### ***Callahan Mountain Allotment***

The Callahan Mountain Allotment is located west of the Town of Parachute and north of I-70 and the Colorado River within a 19,804 acre unnamed 6<sup>th</sup> field watershed. Within the allotment are numerous unnamed ephemeral drainages that are tributary to the perennial Parachute Creek

to the east. At this time, these drainages are not currently listed on the State of Colorado's *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 37) list, the *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 93), or the *Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 94). In addition, no water quality data are currently available for the unnamed ephemeral drainages within the Callahan Mountain Allotment.

### ***Blowout Allotment***

The Blowout Allotment is located north of the Town of Gypsum, I-70 and the Colorado River within the 20,198 acre Eagle River above Gypsum, the 3,034 acre Road Gulch, the 4,219 acre Bizarre Gulch, the 10,347 acre Eagle River above Dotsero, and the 31,228 acre Colorado River above Dotsero 6<sup>th</sup> field watersheds. Within the allotment are numerous ephemeral drainages tributary to the Eagle River.

According to the *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 33) list, the ephemeral tributaries mentioned above are within the Eagle River Basin segment 10 that includes all tributaries to the Eagle River from a point immediately below the confluence with Lake Creek to the confluence with the Colorado River. This segment has been classified aquatic life cold 1, recreation 1a, water supply, and agriculture. Aquatic life cold 1 indicates that this water course is capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold water biota. Recreation class 1a refers to waters in which primary contact recreation is presumed to be present. In addition, this segment is suitable or intended to become suitable for potable water supplies and agricultural purposes that include irrigation and livestock use.

At this time, the ephemeral drainages mentioned above are not currently listed on the State of Colorado's *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 93), or the *Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 94). In addition, no water quality data are currently available for the unnamed ephemeral drainages within the Blowout Allotment.

Environmental Consequences: Grazing activities would result in soil compaction and displacement that increase the likelihood of erosional processes, especially on steep slopes and areas devoid of vegetation. Soil detachment and sediment transport are likely to occur during runoff events associated with spring snowmelt and short-duration high intensity thunderstorms. Due to the close proximity of the proposed activities to area drainages, there is a high potential that additional sediment associated with grazing practices could reach the numerous drainages mentioned above. With the implementation of grazing standards and guidelines, it is expected that the potential negative impacts described above would be short-term and localized. Consequently, no additional site specific mitigation is recommended at this time.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Water Quality: At this time, no land health water quality data are available for the drainages within the four allotments. The proposed action would not likely prevent Standard 5 for Water Quality from being met.

**Wetlands and Riparian Zones (includes an analysis on Standard 2)**

Affected Environment: The table below lists known riparian areas and their Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment for each allotment:

<b>Allotment (boundaries revised as per Proposed Action)</b>	<b>Riparian Area Name</b>	<b>Approximate Miles</b>	<b>Year Assessed</b>	<b>Condition Rating</b>
Cottonwood Cr Etc.	Colorado River	5.5	Not assessed	Not assessed
	Eagle River	0.5	Not assessed	Not assessed
	Spring Creek	0.3	1995	Proper Functioning Condition
	Bob Creek	1.2	1995	Proper Functioning Condition
	Cottonwood Creek	3.5	1995	Proper Functioning Condition
Lower Coffeepot	Deep Creek	2.0	1994	Proper Functioning Condition
Blowout AMP	Colorado River	5.0	2003	Proper Functioning Condition
Callahan Mtn	No known riparian resources			

The Proper Functioning Condition assessments above did not raise or identify any issues with livestock grazing. Current monitoring, inventory or documented field observations is lacking for affected riparian areas other than the proper functioning condition assessments listed above.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The Cottonwood Cr Etc. Allotment would be grazed for a 37 day period in the spring and a 67 day period in the fall. There would be 3.3 months of grazing rest between these two grazing periods. The Lower Coffeepot Allotment would be grazed for a 38 day period in the spring and a 34 day period in the fall. There would be 3.3 months of grazing rest between these two grazing periods. The Blowout Allotment would be grazed for a 37 day period in the spring and a 32 day period in the fall. There would be 4.5 months of grazing rest between these two grazing periods. Sheep are herded on the allotments and typically do not graze any given area of the allotment for an extended period of time; consequently, the duration of grazing use on any given section of a riparian zone would be short (approximately seven days). The period of use and grazing management for the allotments discussed above would allow for ample grazing rest and recovery time for riparian plant species. In consideration of this and the conditions of riparian zones described in the Affected Environment, renewal of the grazing permit (including the proposed changes in grazing use and

allotment boundaries) is not expected to cause adverse impacts to riparian zones. The condition of riparian areas would be maintained or improved. There would be no cumulative impacts.

There are no known riparian resources on the Callahan Mtn. Allotments therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources from the Proposed Action.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: The proposed action would not result in failure to achieve this standard and should maintain and/or improve land health conditions for riparian systems.

## **Wild and Scenic Rivers**

Affected Environment: Portions of the allotments (Lower Coffee Pot and Cottonwood Creek) are adjacent to (3) three stream segments found to be “Eligible” under Wild and Scenic River Studies. Deep Creek was determined to be Eligible under a joint USFS and BLM study in 1995 for its scenic, recreation, geologic, fish, and wildlife Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV).

Two segments were determined to be “Eligible” under WSR study done for the Kremmling and Glenwood Springs Field Offices, March, 2007. The 2 segments of Colorado River were found to be eligible for their recreation, geologic, wildlife and scenic ORV’s and is undergoing a suitability review at the time of this document.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: While the allotment boundary for Lower Coffee Pot occurs within a Deep Creek segment, grazing does not occur within the Canyon itself, nor along the Colorado River due to the topography. No impacts are expected to any of the identified ORVs within Deep Creek or along the Colorado River Segment #5(State Bridge to Dotsero).

Cottonwood Creek Allotment includes lands along the Colorado River segment # 6 (Dotsero to No Name). Grazing is not likely to affect the identified ORV’s above and no impacts are expected. If impacts to any of the identified ORV’s are disclosed in subsequent WSR study or planning, the permit would needed to be amended to provide the needed protection.

## **Wilderness**

Affected Environment: There are no Designated Wilderness areas or Wilderness Study Areas within the proposed action area. However, Deep Creek is within an area citizens have proposed as wilderness.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Grazing is an allowed for use within wilderness areas. The proposed action is would impact any wilderness characteristics nor preclude any legislative actions for wilderness designation.

## **Other Affected Resources**

In addition to the critical elements, the resources presented in Table 2 were considered for impact analysis relative to the proposed action and no action alternative. Resources that would be affected by the proposed action and no action alternative are discussed below.

<b>Table 2. Other Resources Considered in the Analysis.</b>			
<i>Resource</i>	<i>NA or Not Present</i>	<i>Present and Not Affected</i>	<i>Present and Affected</i>
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire/Fuels Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Law Enforcement	X		
Paleontology		X	
Noise	X		
Range Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Soils			X
Vegetation			X
Visual Resources		X	
Wildlife, Aquatic			X
Wildlife, Terrestrial			X

**Range Management:**

Affected Environment: Refer to the Proposed Action section for the description of the Affected Environment.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The adjustment in allotment boundaries and elimination of pasture designations would result in more logical grazing units, simplify administration of the grazing permit, would provide more flexibility in livestock management and the range, and would serve to maintain/enhance range condition.

The current boundary configuration shows both the Cottonwood Creek Etc. and Lower Coffeepot Allotments as occurring on both sides of Interstate 70 (I-70). I-70 provides an effective barrier which bisects both allotments. In addition, there is no physical barrier between the Cottonwood Creek Etc. and Lower Coffeepot Allotments on the north side on I-70 so it would be logical to combine these two units. The same scenario exists south of I-70 where there are no physical barriers to separate the Cottonwood Creek Etc. and Lower Coffeepot Allotments. Combining these two units makes better sense as well.

Current pasture designations were created in 1997 so the permit could be split between James Craig Bair and LeGrande Bair after their father passed away. In 2001 LeGrande Bair transferred all of his grazing use/preference to James Craig Bair so there is no longer a need for the current pasture designations. In addition, there are no effective physical barriers to separate the pastures. Since sheep are herded, any rotational grazing that pasture designations would provide is irrelevant. Elimination of pasture designation would also provide more flexibility in livestock management by allowing the permittee to move sheep as forage and proper range management dictates.

## **Soils (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 1)**

### Affected Environment:

#### ***Lower Coffee Pot, Cottonwood Creek, and Blowout Allotments***

According to the *Soil Survey of Aspen-Gypsum Area, Colorado: Parts of Eagle, Garfield, and Pitkin Counties* (USDA 1992), the Lower Coffee Pot, Cottonwood Creek, and Blowout Allotments contain several different soil map units that can be identified by the numerical code assigned by the soil survey. These soil map units are scattered throughout the three allotments and many of them have been identified as having severe erosion hazards. In addition, large portions of the three allotments are mapped as CSU 4 (Controlled Surface Use) for erosive soils on slopes greater than 30% and NSO 15 (No Surface Occupancy) for slopes greater than 50% regardless of soil type. Following is a brief description of the soil map units found within the Lower Coffee Pot, Cottonwood Creek, and Blowout allotments.

- Anvik-Skylick-Sligting association (11) – This soil map unit is found on fans and mountainsides at elevations ranging from 7,500 to 9,500 feet and slopes of 25 to 50 percent. Approximately 30 percent of the unit is Anvik soil, 30 percent Skylick soil, and 30 percent Sligting soil. The Anvik soil is deep, well drained and is derived from alluvium and colluvium of mixed mineralogy. The surface runoff for this soil is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. The Skylick soil is deep, well drained and is derived from sandstone colluvium. The surface runoff for this soil is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. The Sligting soil is deep, well drained and is derived from sandstone and basalt colluvium. The surface runoff for this soil is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. Primary uses for this soil map unit include woodland, wildlife habitat, and rangeland.
- Cochetopa-Antrobus association (19) – This soil map unit is found on mountainsides at elevations from 8,500 to 10,500 feet and on slopes of 25 to 50 percent. Approximately 45 percent of this unit is Cochetopa loam and 40 percent of this unit is Antrobus very stony loam. The other 15 percent of this unit is composed of other soil types. The Cochetopa soil is deep, well drained and derived from basaltic alluvium and colluvium. The surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. The Antrobus soil is deep, well drained and derived from basaltic alluvium and colluvium. The surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil map unit include rangeland and homesite development.
- Coulterg loam (20) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mountainsides and fans at elevations ranging from 7,500 to 9,500 feet and on slopes of 12 to 50 percent. This soil is derived from alluvium and colluvium composed of siltstone, shale, and limestone rock. Surface runoff for this soil is medium to rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. Primary uses for this soil include woodland and wildlife habitat.
- Cushool-Rentsac complex (25) – This soil map unit is found on mountains and mesa side slopes at elevations ranging from 6,200 to 7,600 feet and on slopes of 15 to 65 percent. Approximately 45 percent of this soil map unit is Cushool soil and 40 percent Rentsac soil. The Cushool soil is moderately deep, well drained, derived from sandstone and shale, and is found on slopes of 15 to 50 percent. Surface runoff for this soil is rapid and the erosion

hazard is classified as severe. The Rentsac soil is shallow, well drained, derived from sandstone, and is found on slopes of 25 to 65 percent. Surface runoff for this soil is rapid and the erosion hazard is classified as severe. Primary uses for this soil map unit include rangeland, wildlife habitat, Christmas trees, firewood, and fence posts.

- Dotsero gravelly sandy loam (31) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mountains, terraces, side slopes, and benches at elevations ranging from 7,200 to 7,800 feet and on slopes of 5 to 25 percent. Parent material for this soil includes pumice, tuff, and basalt. Surface runoff for this soil is slow and the water erosion hazard is classified as moderate. Primary uses for this soil include livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.
- Earsman-Rock outcrop complex (33) – This soil map unit is found on mountainsides and ridges at elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,500 feet and on slopes of 12 to 65 percent. Approximately 45 percent of this unit is Earsman very stony sandy loam and 35 percent Rock outcrop. The Earsman soil is shallow, excessively drained, and derived from calcareous redbed sandstone. Surface runoff for this soil map unit is rapid and the water erosion hazard is classified as slight to severe depending on slope. Primary uses for this soil map unit include rangeland, wildlife habitat, fence posts, and firewood.
- Evanston loam (39, 40) – This deep, well drained soil formed in mixed alluvium and is found on alluvial fans, terraces, and valley sides at elevations ranging from 6,500 to 8,000 feet and on slopes of 6 to 45 percent. Surface runoff for this soil is medium to rapid and the erosion hazard is classified as moderate to severe. Primary uses for this soil include rangeland, wildlife habitat, and homesites.
- Forelle-Brownsto complex (43, 44) – This soil map unit is found on mountains and benches at elevations ranging from 6,500 to 7,500 feet and on slopes of 6 to 25 percent. Approximately 55 percent of this unit is Forelle soil, 30 percent Brownsto soil, and the other 15 percent a mixture of several soil types. The Forelle soil is deep, well drained and is derived from sedimentary rock alluvium. Surface runoff is medium to rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. The Brownsto soil is deep, well drained and is derived from calcareous sandstone and basalt alluvium. Surface runoff is medium to rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil map unit include rangeland and wildlife habitat.
- Forsey cobbly loam (46) – This deep, well drained soil is found on alluvial fans, mountainsides, and ridges at elevations ranging from 7,500 to 9,500 feet and on slopes of 12 to 65 percent. This soil is derived from alluvium and colluvium of mixed mineralogy. Surface runoff for this soil is medium and the water erosion hazard is moderate. This soil is used primarily for rangeland and wildlife habitat.
- Fughes stony loam (48) – This deep, well drained soil is found at elevations ranging from 6,500 to 8,500 and on slopes of 3 to 12 percent. It is derived from alluvium and colluvium consisting of noncalcareous shale. The surface runoff for this soil is medium and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil include hayland and rangeland.
- Goslin fine sandy loam (49) – This deep, well drained soil is found on toe slopes, fans, and terraces at elevations ranging from 6,200 to 7,500 feet and on slopes of 3 to 6 percent. Parent material for this soil includes redbed sandstone and shale. Surface runoff for this soil is slow

and the water erosion hazard is classified as slight to moderate. Primary uses for this soil include livestock grazing, hay production, and pastures.

- Grotte gravelly loam (54) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mountainsides at elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 feet and on slopes of 25 to 65 percent. It is derived from alluvium and colluvium composed of sandstone. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. Primary uses for this soil include rangeland and wildlife habitat.
- Gypsum land-Gypsiorthids complex (55) – This soil map unit is found on mountainsides, hills, and in drainageways on slopes of 12 to 65 percent. Approximately 65 percent of the unit is Gypsum land and 20 percent Gypsiorthids. The remaining 15 percent of the unit is composed of a mix of map units. The Gypsum land is primarily exposed gypsum material while the Gypsiorthids are moderately deep, well drained and derived from colluvium with high gypsum content. Surface runoff for this unit is very rapid and the water erosion hazard is slight to severe. This unit is used primarily for wildlife habitat.
- Irrawaddy very stony loam (58) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mountainsides at elevations ranging from 8,200 to 8,600 feet and on slopes of 25 to 65 percent. It is derived from limestone colluvium. Surface runoff is medium and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil include grazing and wildlife habitat.
- Jerry-Millerlake loams (65, 66, 67) – This soil map unit is found on alluvial fans and valley sides at elevations ranging from 7,500 to 9,500 feet and on slopes of 1 to 45 percent. Approximately 50 percent of this unit is Jerry soil and 40 percent Millerlake soil, with the other 10 percent being a mix of soil types. The Jerry soil is deep, well drained and is derived from sandstone and shale alluvium. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. The Millerlake soil is deep, well drained and is derived from sedimentary rock alluvium. Surface runoff is medium to rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate to severe. Primary uses for this soil map unit include rangeland, pasture, and wildlife habitat.
- Millerlake loam (75) – This deep, well drained soil is found on alluvial fans and valley sides at elevations ranging from 8,500 to 10,500 feet and on slopes of 15 to 30 percent. It is derived from sandstone alluvium. Surface runoff is medium and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil include rangeland and wildlife habitat.
- Mussel loam (89) – This deep, well drained soil is found on terraces and slopes at elevations ranging from 6,500 to 7,500 feet and on slopes of 1 to 6 percent. This alluvium derived soil has slow runoff and slight water erosion hazard. Primary uses for this soil include hayland and homesite development.
- Southface cobbly sandy loam (99) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mountainsides, valley sides, and alluvial fans at elevations ranging from 6,000 to 7,000 feet and on slopes of 25 to 65 percent. It is derived from redbed sandstone and shale colluvium and alluvium. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil include wildlife habitat and rangeland.
- Torriorthents-Camborthids-Rock outcrop complex (104, 105) – This soil map unit occurs on south-facing mountainsides, hills, and ridges with slopes ranging from 6 to 95 percent.

Approximately 45 percent of this unit is Torriorthents, 20 percent Camborthids, and 15 percent Rock outcrop. The Torriorthents are shallow to moderately deep, well drained, and are derived from sedimentary rock. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is severe. The Camborthids are shallow to deep, well drained, and are derived from sandstone, shale, and basalt. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is severe. The Rock outcrop component of this unit consists of exposed sandstone, shale, and basalt. This soil map unit is used primarily for wildlife habitat.

- Tridell-Brownsto stony sandy loams (106) – This soil map unit is found on terraces and mountainsides at elevations ranging from 6,400 to 7,700 feet and on slopes of 12 to 50 percent. Approximately 45 percent of this unit is Tridell soil and 35 percent Brownsto soil with the other 20 percent being a mixture of several soil types. The Tridell soil is deep, well drained and is derived from sandstone and basalt alluvium and colluvium. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate. The Brownsto soil is deep, well drained and is derived from calcareous sandstone and basalt alluvium. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil map unit include livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.
- Zillman very flaggy loam (119) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mountainsides at elevations ranging from 6,400 to 7,800 feet and on slopes of 25 to 65 percent. It is derived from sandstone colluvium. Surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is moderate. Primary uses for this soil include rangeland and wildlife habitat.

### ***Callahan Mountain Allotment***

According to the *Soil Survey of Rifle Area, Colorado: Parts of Garfield and Mesa Counties* (USDA 1985), the Callahan Mountain Allotment contains two soil map units that can be identified by the numerical code assigned by the soil survey. These soil map units have been identified as having moderate to severe erosion hazards. In addition, large portions of the allotment are mapped as CSU 4 (Controlled Surface Use) for erosive soils on slopes greater than 30% and NSO 15 (No Surface Occupancy) for slopes greater than 50% regardless of soil type. Following is a brief description of the two soil map units found within the Callahan Mountain Allotment.

- Rock outcrop-Torriorthents complex (62) – This soil map unit consists of bedrock and soils of variable depth occurring on slopes of 50 to 80 percent. The majority of the complex is rock outcrop which consists primarily of Green River shale. The remainder of the complex is Torriorthents which are shallow to moderately deep, clayey to loamy soils containing gravel, cobbles, and stones. Surface runoff is rapid to very rapid and erosion hazard is moderate to severe. This complex is used primarily for limited grazing.

Torriorthents-Camborthids-Rock outcrop complex, steep (66) – This soil map unit consists of sandstone and shale bedrock and soils of variable depth occurring on slopes of 15 to 70 percent. About 45 percent of this complex is Torriorthents, 20 percent is Camborthids, and 15 percent is Rock outcrop. The Camborthids occur on the lower toe slopes on foothills and mountainsides while the Torriorthents are found on the foothills and mountainsides below the Rock outcrop. The Torriorthents are shallow to moderately deep, and clayey to loamy with gravel, cobbles, and stones. The Camborthids are shallow to deep and clayey to loamy. Rock outcrop primarily consists of Mesa Verde sandstones and Wasatch shales with occasional basaltic boulders and

stones. This complex is characterized by moderate to severe erosion hazard. Primary uses for this complex include grazing, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: As mentioned above, all four allotments occur on soils with severe erosion hazards and on slopes greater than 30% (17°). Grazing activities within the four allotments would result in soil compaction and displacement, especially in areas where livestock would be concentrated such as watering areas and stock trails. Soil compaction and displacement would increase the likelihood of erosional processes such as soil detachment and sediment transport on steep slopes and areas devoid of vegetation. Soil detachment and sediment transport are likely to occur during runoff events associated with spring snowmelt and short-duration high intensity thunderstorms. These processes could result in rilling, rutting, and sediment deposition.

Due to the close proximity of the proposed activities to area drainages, there is a high potential that additional sediment associated with grazing practices could reach the numerous drainages mentioned above. With the implementation of grazing standards and guidelines, it is expected that the potential negative impacts described above would be short-term and localized. Consequently, no additional site specific mitigation is recommended at this time.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Upland Soils: In 2004, the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office completed the Eagle River North watershed Land Health Assessment that encompassed the Blowout Allotment. At that time, it was determined that 20,010 acres of the allotment were achieving or moving towards achieving standards. Currently there are no land health data for the other three allotments being analyzed. The proposed activities would not likely prevent Standard 1 for Upland Soils from being met.

### **Vegetation (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 3)**

#### Affected Environment:

Blowout AMP allotment: This allotment supports a fairly even mix of mature pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush shrublands. The woodlands have a sparse to moderate understory of grasses and forbs. The sagebrush shrublands are also mature to old-age class. Most stands have a diverse and abundant cover of grasses and forbs, a few have a sparse understory and lots of bare ground. Approximately 15% of the allotment has burned in various different fires over the past 10 years, resulting in an earlier seral stage comprised of mostly grasses and forbs. Cheatgrass was present along some roads and in some disturbed areas.

Callahan Mtn Common allotment: This allotment is a mixture of pinyon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush shrublands, salt desert scrub, badlands, and a small amount of mixed mountain shrublands.

Cottonwood Cr. Etc and the Lower Coffeepot allotments support oakbrush/mixed mountain shrublands on north and east-facing slopes, pinyon-juniper woodlands on south-facing slopes and shallower soils, and aspen and Douglas-fir forests at the higher elevations.

#### Environmental Consequences:

The Blowout AMP allotment would be used for 37 days in the spring and 32 days in the fall. There would be a 4.5 month rest period between the two grazing periods which should allow adequate rest during critical growth periods and time for vegetative regrowth and recovery. The land health assessment found the allotment as a whole was meeting the standards. The shrubs at most sagebrush sites were in good condition and understory species were diverse and productive.

The Callahan Mtn Common allotment is only grazed for 10 days in November. The allotment receives rest throughout the growing season and the continuation of livestock grazing as proposed should have minimal impact on vegetative conditions on the allotment.

The Cottonwood Creek Etc. and Lower Coffeepot allotments would both be grazed for 37 days in the spring. Cottonwood Creek Etc would be grazed for 67 days and Lower Coffeepot for 34 days in the fall. There would be 3.3 months of grazing rest between these two grazing periods which should allow for ample grazing rest and adequate recovery time for vegetative health. In addition, sheep are herded on the allotments and generally do not graze any given area of the allotment for an extended period of time. Livestock grazing as proposed under this permit would not be expected to result in a decline in vegetative conditions.

However, both the Cottonwood Cr. Etc and Lower Coffeepot allotments have a history of problems with the condition of the browse community, i.e. heavy hedging and with poor understory cover. Portions of the allotments are mule deer and elk winter range or severe winter range and often show evidence of heavy use by wintering game. There is no recent browse utilization or monitoring data in the files to indicate if there is a conflict between sheep and big game browse use on these allotments.

If the land health assessment determines that standards are not being met or browse condition on these allotments is poor, utilization and trend monitoring studies should be established to determine if livestock grazing is contributing to the poor browse condition.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial) A formal land health assessment has been completed on the Blowout AMP allotment and the Callahan Mountain allotments. Both allotments were meeting Standard 3 for healthy plant communities at the time of the assessment. A formal assessment is scheduled for the Cottonwood Creek etc and Lower Coffee Pot allotments in 2008. Livestock grazing as proposed would not be expected to result in a failure to meet or maintain the land health standard for healthy plant communities.

**Mitigation:** If the land health assessment determines that standards are not being met and current livestock grazing is a factor in failing to meet the standards, the terms of the permit may be modified to make progress towards meeting the standards.

### **Wildlife, Aquatic (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 3):**

#### Affected Environment:

The Blowout AMP allotment is bordered by the Colorado River to the west and the Eagle River to the South. The allotment is drained via numerous small ephemeral washes that feed these two larger rivers. The Colorado River in this area contains brown and rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, roundtail chub, bluehead sucker, flannelmouth sucker, speckled dace, carp, and other suckers likely white and longnose. The Eagle River contains, brown, brook, and rainbow trout, mottled sculpin, speckled dace, and suckers. The proposed Lower Coffeepot allotment is bordered by the Colorado River on the east and south and Deep Creek on the north. The allotment is drained via numerous small ephemeral washes that feed these two waters. The Colorado River supports the same fish assemblage as identified above. Deep Creek contains, brook, brown, rainbow, and cutthroat trout. The proposed Cottonwood Cr. Etc. allotment is bordered by the Colorado River to the north and is drained by one primary perennial stream, Cottonwood Creek. Other perennial streams on the allotment include Bob Creek, Spring Creek, and Spruce Creek. The Colorado River supports the same fish assemblage as identified above. Cottonwood Creek contains brook trout. Bob, Spring, and Spruce Creeks are not known to support fish. The Callahan Mountain Common allotment is bordered by Parachute Creek to the north and northeast. The Colorado River is located 0.5 miles south of the allotment and contains the same fish assemblage as identified above. The allotment is drained via several small ephemeral washes. Parachute Creek contains brown and cutthroat trout, roundtail chub, speckled dace, and suckers. Aquatic insects are common in all of the perennial waters discussed.

#### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Growing season rest is incorporated into each allotments schedule. Much of the use is during the winter outside of the growing season. Use of any one area is limited as sheep are herded to fresh feed every 7 days. Use along streams should be minimal and riparian habitat should not be impacted. Livestock grazing as proposed should have minimal impact to aquatic resources.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 3 for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): A formal Land Health Assessment was completed for the Blowout AMP allotment in 2003. The Callahan Mountain Common allotment was assessed in 2004. The remaining allotments have not yet had a formal Land Health Assessment completed on them. No issues with regard to fisheries resources have been identified on these allotments. Livestock grazing as proposed should have little bearing on the ability of these areas to meet, or move toward meeting the Standard.

#### **Wildlife, Terrestrial (includes an analysis of Public Land Health Standard 3)**

Affected Environment: The four grazing allotments are comprised of a variety of different habitat types. Vegetation includes sagebrush, pinyon/juniper, mixed mountain shrub, aspen and coniferous forest. These communities typically provide habitat for big game species as well as small mammals, reptiles and birds. Portions of the allotments are mapped as important big game winter habitat (CDOW 2006). The Lower Coffee Pot and Cottonwood Creek Etc allotments also provide habitat for big horn sheep.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: It is unlikely that the proposed action would have any long-term negative impacts to terrestrial wildlife habitat. Under the proposed action, the Lower Coffee Pot, Cottonwood Creek and Blowout allotments would be grazed for just over a month in

the spring (mid-May to mid-June). The Lower Coffee Pot and Blowout allotments would also be grazed for approximately one month in the fall and the Cottonwood Creek allotment would be grazed for approximately two months in the fall. All three allotments receive growing season rest from mid June until fall grazing begins. The Callahan allotment receives rest throughout the growing season as it is only grazed for 10 days in November. These grazing schedules would allow for ample growing season rest and adequate plant recovery periods. In addition, sheep are typically herded within the allotments and do not graze any given area for extended periods of time. The most recent monitoring data for the Lower Coffee Allotment showed moderate utilization on the allotment and the most recent monitoring data from the Cottonwood Creek Etc allotment showed light utilization on the allotment. Both of these allotments have had a history of heavy winter use by big game species, however, for the most part, these allotments are in good condition. Data indicates that the Blowout and Callahan allotments are both in good condition, and provide healthy and productive habitat for wildlife species. The continuation of grazing under the Proposed Action would not be expected to degrade wildlife habitat.

The Lower Coffee Pot and Cottonwood Creek Etc allotments provide habitat for big horn sheep. Renewing the permit for domestic sheep grazing may have some impacts to big horn sheep in the area, including the transmission of some diseases.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The Blowout AMP allotment is within the North Eagle Landscape which had a formal assessment completed in 2003 and the Callahan Mountain allotment is part of the Rifle-West Landscape which had an assessment completed on it in 2004. Both allotments were found to be meeting the standard for healthy and productive wildlife habitat. Land Health Assessments have not been completed for the Lower Coffee Pot and Cottonwood Creek allotments. Livestock grazing, as described in the proposed action would not preclude this standard from being met for the two allotments.

### **SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties and areas of Native American concern. No other cumulative impacts were identified.

### **PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONSULTED:**

James Craig Bair Ranch Company, grazing permittee  
Southern Ute Tribe  
Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Bands  
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

Notices of public scoping were issued through the Colorado BLM's Internet web page providing the public an opportunity to obtain information or offer concerns on grazing permits or allotments scheduled for renewal. There have been no responses received specific to the permit renewal or allotments addressed in this NEPA document. The Glenwood Springs Field Office Internet NEPA Register also lists grazing permit renewal NEPA documents that have

been initiated. They are generally posted approximately one month prior to the estimated completion date.

Programmatic consultation for Canada lynx was completed on the entire grazing program as administered by the GSFO. A “May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determination was made and concurrence was obtained from the FWS (ES/GJ-6-CO-03-F-013). Consultation specific to these two allotments regarding Canada lynx and livestock grazing has also been completed. A “May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determination was made and concurrence was obtained from the FWS (2/25/08).

**INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Michael Kinser	Rangeland Management Specialist	NEPA Lead, Wetlands and Riparian Zones, Range Management
Jeff O’Connell	Hydrologist/Geologist	Soil, Air, Water, Geology
Kay Hopkins	Outdoor Recreation Planner	ACEC, WSR, Wilderness, VRM
Cheryl Harrison	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns
Desa Ausmus	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, T&E, Terrestrial Wildlife
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	Vegetation, T/E/S Plants, Land Heath Stds
Tom Fresques	Fisheries Biologist	T&E Aquatic Species, Aquatic Wildlife

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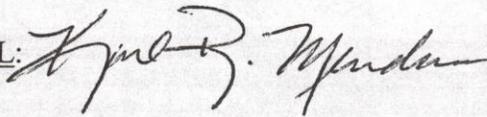
CO-140-2008-019 EA

The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. The proposed action with mitigation measures 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.

Rationale: The analysis of the proposed action with mitigation measures did not identify any impacts that would be significant in nature either in context or intensity. The grazing authorization proposed allows for adequate plant growth recovery and promotes healthy rangelands as it relates to rangeland standards. In addition, there is nothing to indicate the action is highly controversial or that it is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant actions.

NAME OF PREPARER: Michael R. Kinser

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

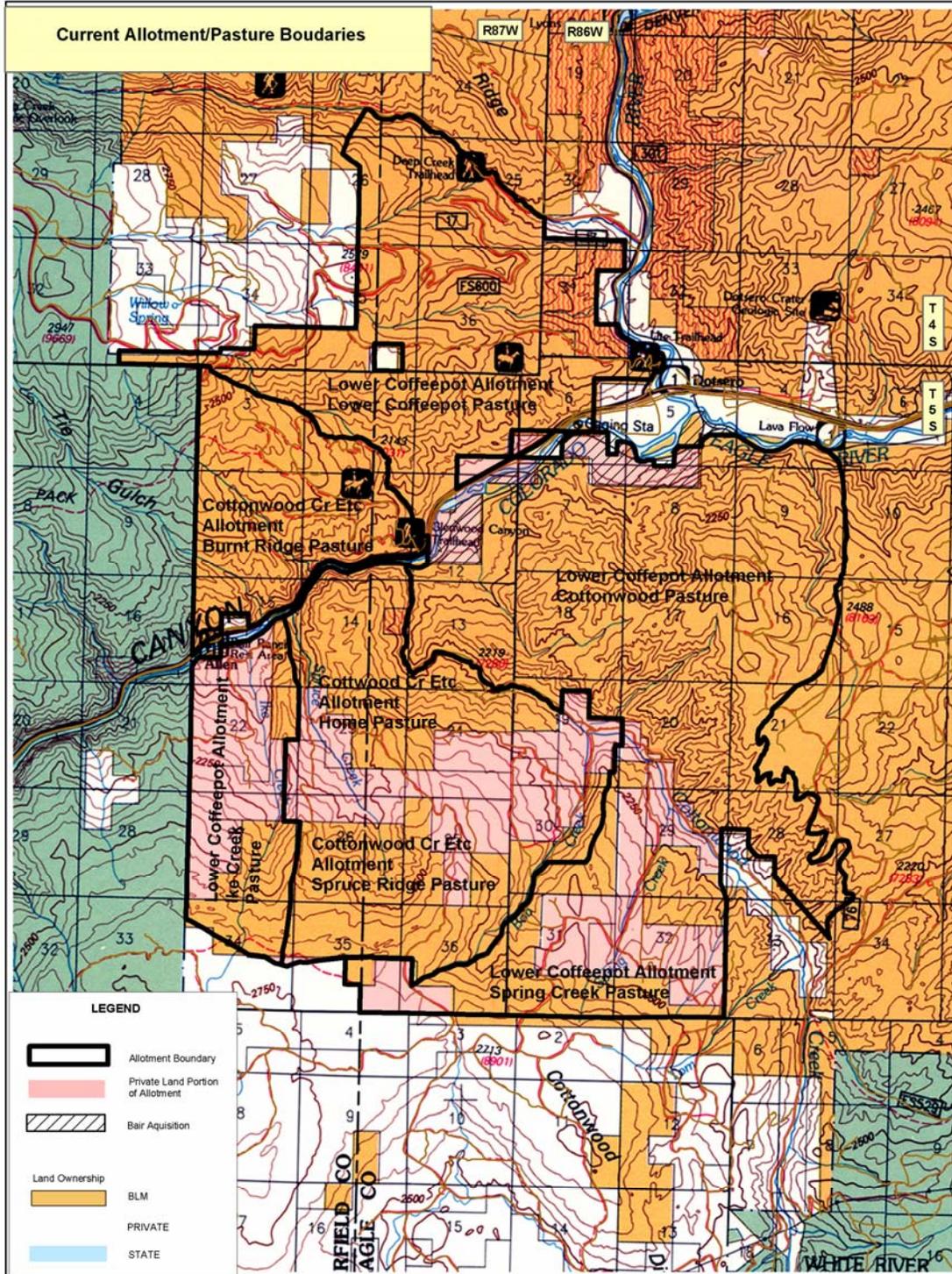


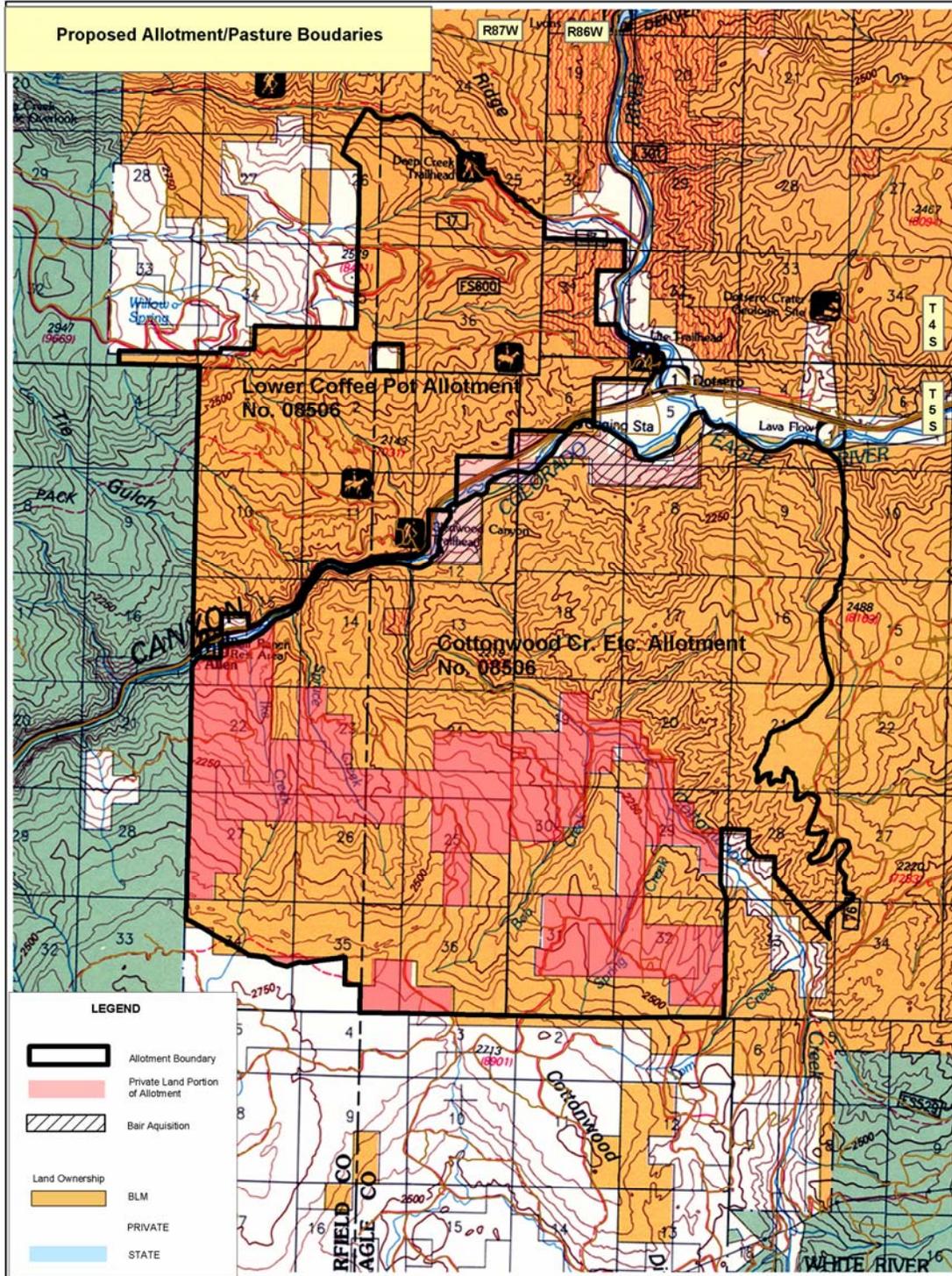
DATE SIGNED:

3/4/2008

APPENDICES: None

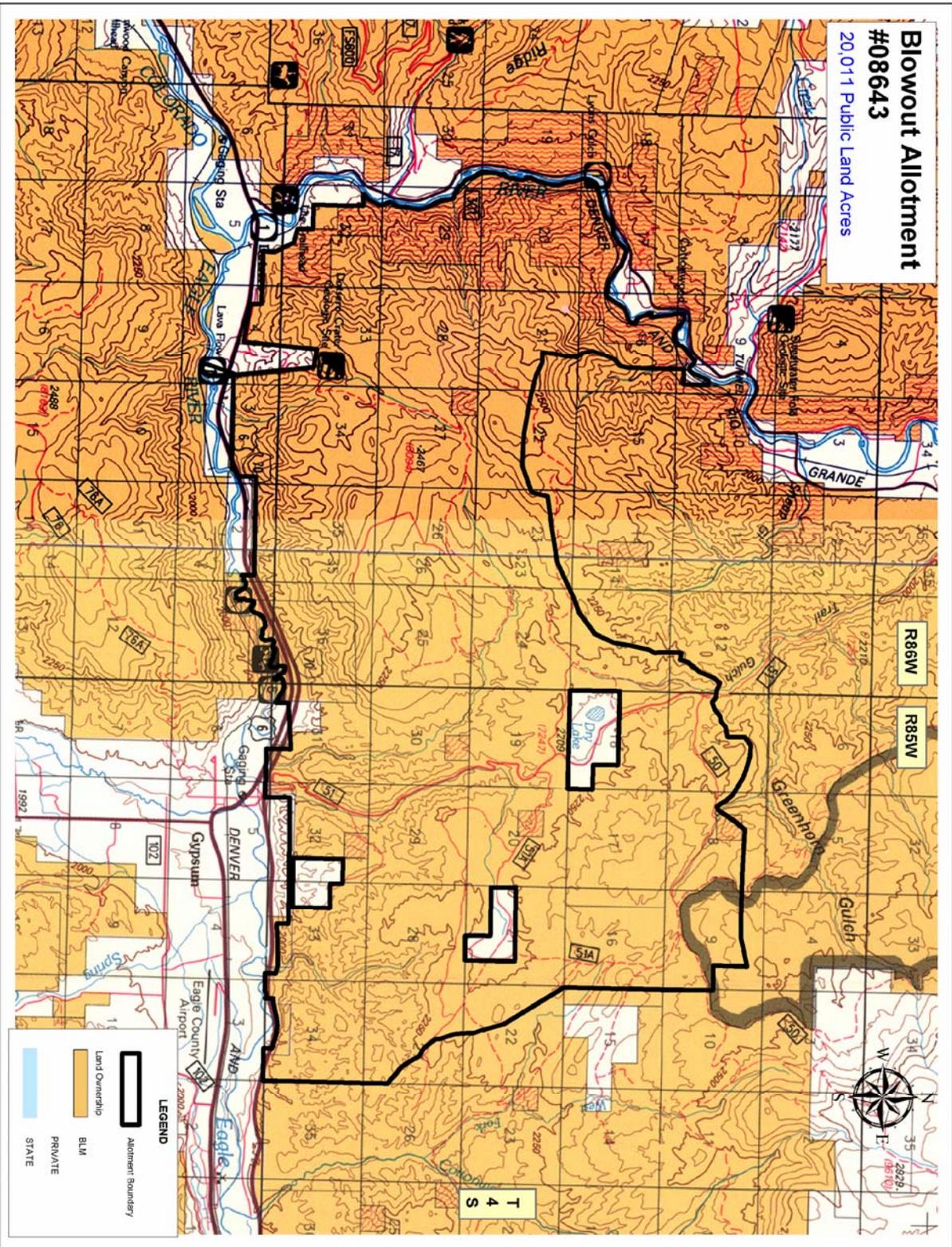
ATTACHMENTS: Allotment Maps





# Blowout Allotment #08643

20,011 Public Land Acres



# Callahan Mtn Allotment

## #08919

1845 Public Land Acres

