



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Glenwood Springs Field Office
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Glenwood Springs, Colorado 81601
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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-140-2009-0064 EA

PROJECT NAME: DeBeque Cheatgrass Treatment Pilot Project

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T8S, R97W, SW1/4 Section 11; 6th P.M., Garfield County, CO and N1/2NW1/4 Section 14; 6th P.M., Mesa County, CO (See MAP)

APPLICANT: BLM

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action:

BLM recently approved a new herbicide, Imazapic (Plateau), for use on public lands. This herbicide has shown promise in the control of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). BLM GSFO would like to initiate a pilot project to test the application of Imazapic at different rates of application (4 oz and 8 oz/ac), with and without reseeding, to reclaim cheatgrass infested rangelands.

The project is located within the County Line allotment, approximately 2 miles northeast of DeBeque, CO (see Map 1). The project area is 60 acres heavily infested with cheatgrass. Residual native perennial vegetation consists of scattered Utah juniper trees, black greasewood, big sagebrush, broom snakeweed and a few clumps of sand dropseed, galleta grass and western wheatgrass.

The project area would be divided into “treatment blocks”. The project area will be divided into “treatment blocks” which will consist of a combination of imazapic applied at 4 oz/ac, imazapic applied at 8 oz/ac, broadcast seeding in spring or fall, and no treatment (i.e. control). Herbicide application rates above 8 oz/ac/yr of imazapic will not be used at this time, because application rates of 8 oz and above pose a high risk of injury to cool-season perennial grasses. Herbicide would be applied according to label specifications via an ATV-mounted boom sprayer. Since Plateau is a “pre-emergent” or early post-emergent herbicide, application would be timed for mid-summer (July or early August) prior to the anticipated monsoonal rains that would cause cheatgrass to germinate. The seed mix may involve all native species or a combination of native and non-native species to compare establishment success and ability to outcompete

cheatgrass. Herbicide spraying would be conducted by BLM personnel who are authorized pesticide applicators. An ATV-mounted harrow may be used to lightly cover the seed and improve seed contact with the soil.

Because imazapic is a pre-emergent/early post-emergent herbicide which remains active in the soil for approximately 6 months, the treatment blocks will not be seeded until the spring or fall of the year following treatment.

The project would be monitored for a period of up to 5 years to evaluate the relative success of the various treatments. This information would be used to improve the design of future cheatgrass treatment projects and would assist both BLM and the natural gas industry in their mitigation efforts.

The County Line allotment was chosen for this pilot project because the allotment also supports several occurrences of the federally threatened cactus, Colorado hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*). During the Land Health Assessment, cheatgrass was identified as a factor in the declining habitat conditions for the cactus. The County Line allotment was determined not to be meeting Land Health Standard 3 due to a lack of diversity and abundance of native, perennial grasses and forbs. The allotment has been deferred from livestock grazing for a minimum of three years (2008-2010) to provide growing season rest and allow the vegetation to begin to recover. If monitoring of the project determines that additional grazing rest may be necessary for native perennial grasses and forbs to become fully established and able to sustain grazing use, the grazing deferral may be extended for up to two additional growing seasons (2011-2012).

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, no pilot cheatgrass control project would take place at the proposed location. No data would be gathered concerning effective rates and timing of Plateau treatment to control cheatgrass and appropriate seeding methods to restore native perennial vegetation. With the deferral of livestock grazing, the allotment may make minimal progress towards meeting the Land Health Standards but would not likely make any significant progress towards meeting the Standards without vegetative treatments.

NEED FOR THE ACTION: Cheatgrass or downy brome is identified as a noxious weed on the Colorado Noxious Weed C List. Cheatgrass is a fast-growing, competitive, annual grass which is abundant in the western third of the Field Office and has the potential to spread to other areas currently uninfested or lightly infested. Once cheatgrass becomes dominant on a site, it is difficult for native vegetation to become established, and without management intervention, cheatgrass is likely to continue to dominate the vegetative community. Vegetative species diversity and structural diversity is lost, nutrient cycling is altered, the wildfire potential is increased and wildlife habitat quality is reduced. The County Line allotment does not meet the Standard for healthy plant communities. The proposed action would help move the allotment towards meeting the Standards and would improve habitat for the Colorado hookless cactus.



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; amended in September 2002 – Fire Management Plan for Wildland Fire Management and Prescriptive Vegetation Treatment Guidance; amended in June 2007 - Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision; and March 2008 - Roan Plateau Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Record of Decision, March 2008.

Decision Number/Page: The proposal implements land use plan decision Terrestrial Habitat Management, Chapter 2 – page 19.

Decision Language: “Priority 1. Monitor, maintain, or improve habitat for threatened or endangered species” and “Monitor, maintain or improve winter range for mule deer and elk.”

Standards for Public Land Health: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. The five 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.

The proposed action would occur within the Rifle-West Landscape, which had a land health assessment conducted in 2004 by the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office. The Rifle-West Land Health Assessment determined that the County Line allotment was not meeting the Standard 3 for healthy plant communities. Dominance of the allotment with cheatgrass and a corresponding lack of species diversity were the primary reasons for failing to meet the standard. Furthermore, the evaluation determined that land health conditions for the threatened Colorado hookless cactus were also declining due to the presence of cheatgrass which appears to inhibit establishment of cactus seedlings.

The following impact analysis must address whether the proposed action or any alternative being analyzed would result in impacts that would maintain, improve, or deteriorate land health conditions for each of the five standards. These analyses are located in specific elements listed below:

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT /ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

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 2). 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.**

Table 1 - Critical Elements of the Human Environment									
Critical Element	Present		Affected		Critical Element	Present		Affected	
	Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No
Air Quality	X		X		Prime or Unique Farmlands		X		X
ACECs		X		X	Threatened or Endangered Species	X		X	
Cultural Resources		X		X	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	X		X	
Wilderness		X		X	Water Quality, Drinking 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
Native American Religious Concerns		X		X	Environmental Justice		X		X

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The proposed action area (Garfield County) has been described as an attainment area under CAAQS (Colorado Ambient Air Quality Standards) and NAAQS (National Ambient Air Quality Standards). An attainment area is an area where ambient air pollution amounts are determined to be below NAAQS standards. For more information on existing air quality in the area, refer to the Roan Plateau RMPA and EIS which describes potential effects from oil and gas development (BLM 2006:4-26 to 4-37).

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Implementation of the proposed action would have very little effect on air quality. Short-term localized vehicle emissions would result during ATV operations. Additionally, there is a potential for some dust generation if these activities occur in dry conditions. Since emissions and dust would be minimal and short lived, no mitigation is recommended for these activities.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences: The no action alternative would have no effect on air quality.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: A very small portion of a Class III inventory (GSFO#5407-10) has been conducted in the proposed project area. A review of the adjacent area indicates that there are numerous prehistoric and historic remains mostly in the form of isolated finds; however there is one prehistoric open camp nearby, and the Dominguez and Escalante expedition passed through the area in 1776.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Weed control is not generally considered an undertaking requiring National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 470f), Section 106 review or intensive cultural resource inventory. The spraying alone should have no affect on cultural resources; however the use of mechanized vehicles (ATV's) and the Dixie harrow could result in impacts to cultural resources. These impacts could result in the displacement of artifacts that are exposed on the surface or in shallowly buried sites. Additionally, cultural features could be altered or destroyed by ATV's or the Dixie harrow running over them.

To mitigate the potential impacts to cultural features, GSFO personnel trained to identify cultural resources should be included in the project particularly during the reseeding process. The Discovery/Education stipulation need to be stressed to everyone involved.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences: This alternative would be neither beneficial nor detrimental for cultural resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Affected Environment: Review of 2005 data from US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate the median annual income per household of Garfield County averages \$50,119 and is neither an impoverished or wealthy county. U.S. Census Bureau data from 2006 shows the minority population of Garfield County comprises less than 0.7 % of the total population of Colorado¹.

Garfield County
Median Household Income (2004)
Estimate
\$50,119

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed action and no action alternative are not expected to create a disproportionately high and adverse human health impact or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations within the area.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Invasive, non-native plant species present at the project site include downy brome or cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), bulbous bluegrass (*Poa bulbosa*), redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), and bur buttercup (*Ceratocephala testiculata*). Downy brome is the dominant plant species at the project site while bulbous bluegrass,

¹ Source U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Nonemployer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Consolidated Federal Funds Report
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redstem filaree, and bur buttercup are sub-dominant species. Very little native vegetation exists. Downy brome is listed on Colorado's Noxious Weed List as a "C" species, meaning, the invasive plant should be controlled. Redstem filaree is listed on the Colorado's Noxious Weed List as a "B" species, meaning current populations should not be allowed to spread. However, redstem filaree occurs throughout the Glenwood Springs Field Office in vast population numbers and current control methods would not likely drastically effect the population as a whole. Bulbous bluegrass and bur buttercup are not on Colorado's noxious weed list, but both plants are considered non-native, invasive species.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Under the proposed action the project area would be broadcast sprayed with Imazapic using a 4 oz and 8 oz rate. The herbicide would be applied in the late summer to fall before downy brome seedlings germinate and become established. The Imazapic label and various studies conclude that the herbicide will control downy brome for up to two growing seasons providing opportunity for desired plant species to become established. If other vegetation species does not become established before two years, then downy brome would likely reestablish itself. Imazapic will also control bur buttercup, however, no information on the control of bulbous bluegrass or redstem filaree is available.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences: Under the no action alternative, Imazapic would not be applied to the project site. The current population levels of downy brome, bur buttercup, redstem filaree, and bulbous bluegrass would continue to dominate the area.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2008-050 provides guidance toward meeting the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Executive Order (EO) 13186. The guidance directs Field Offices to promote the maintenance and improvement of habitat quantity and quality. To avoid, reduce or mitigate adverse impacts on the habitats of migratory bird species of conservation concern to the extent feasible, and in a manner consistent with regional or statewide bird conservation priorities.

The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to "identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973." *Birds of Conservation Concern 2008* (<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/reports/BCC2008/BCC2008m.pdf>) is the most recent effort to carry out this mandate.

The conservation concerns may be the result of population declines, naturally or human-caused small ranges or population sizes, threats to habitat, or other factors. Although

there are general patterns that can be inferred, there is no single reason why any species was is on the list. Habitat loss is believed to be the major reason for the declines of many species. When considering potential impacts to migratory birds, the impacts on habitat should discuss: 1) the degree of fragmentation/connectivity expected from the proposed project relative to before the proposed project; and 2) the fragmentation/connectivity within and between habitat types (e.g., within nesting habitat or between nesting and feeding habitats. (sentence fragment) Continued private land development, surface disturbing actions in key habitats (e.g. riparian areas) and the proliferation of roads, pipelines, powerlines and trails are local factors that reduce habitat quality and quantity for many species.

The Glenwood Springs Field Office is within the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region (BCR). The 2008 list include the following birds: Gunnison Sage Grouse, American Bittern, Bald Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Snowy Plover, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Burrowing Owl, Lewis's Woodpecker, Willow Flycatcher, Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Veery, Bendire's Thrasher, Grace's Warbler, Brewer's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Black Rosy-Finch, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, and Cassin's Finch.

The GSFO planning area provides both foraging and nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds that summer, winter, or migrate through the area. The habitat diversity provided by the broad expanses of sagebrush, mixed mountain shrub, oakbrush, aspen, pinyon-juniper woodlands, other types of coniferous forests and riparian and wetland areas support many bird species. The Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Lewis's Woodpecker and Grace's Warbler are characteristically found in pinyon/juniper woodlands and the Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*) is found within sagebrush habitats. Other Birds of Conservation Concern 2008 may also occur locally. Many species of raptors (red-tailed hawks, golden eagles, northern goshawks, Cooper's hawks, kestrels and owls) not on the Fish & Wildlife Service's Birds of Conservation Concern list also could occur in the area.

Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Bald eagles are known to winter along portions of the Colorado, Eagle and Roaring Fork Rivers and its major tributaries. Wintering bald eagles are generally present from mid-November to mid-April. Large mature cottonwood trees along the rivers and their major tributaries are used as roosting and perching sites, and these waterways provide the main food sources of fish and waterfowl. Upland habitats adjacent to these waterways are used as scavenging areas primarily for winter killed mule deer and elk. Major threats include habitat loss (specifically cottonwood stands), human disturbance and illegal shooting. Bald eagles are increasing in numbers throughout their range and were removed from the federal threatened and endangered species list in 2007 however bald eagles are still protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Generally areas that have been impacted by invasive plants may support fewer native wildlife species than in areas with intact native plant communities. Invasive plants can change habitat conditions and vital ecosystem functions in such a way that some native species are not able to adapt to the altered ecosystem.

Application. A major concern when spraying herbicide is that the chemical may drift away from the target area to wildlife habitats nearby. ATV applications will limit the probability of contaminating non-target food and water sources, especially vegetation over areas larger than the treatment area.

Limited bird count or species data exists for the specific allotment. Since the treatment will be performed after the time-sensitive period of nesting (May 15 – July 15) for migratory birds in an area with a low potential of nesting occurrence the odds of affecting (spray or application) individual birds will be minimized.

Herbicide Risks to Terrestrial Wildlife. Herbicides affect wildlife directly when animals are exposed to chemicals, or indirectly when wildlife habitat is altered. Imazapic has a low toxicity to terrestrial wildlife. Levels of Concern (LOCs) are used by the USEPA in screening the potential risk of herbicides. Risk quotients for terrestrial wildlife were all below the most conservative LOC of 0.1, indicating that direct spray of imazapic is not likely to pose a risk to terrestrial animals. Therefore, use of imazapic would primarily affect wildlife through habitat modification. Its use in forested rangeland and other wildlife habitat areas could benefit wildlife by controlling invasive plant species and promoting the establishment and growth of native plant species that provide more suitable wildlife habitat and forage (BLM 2007b).

No Action Alternative:

There would be no impacts to migratory birds from the No Action Alternative.

NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

Affected Environment: The Ute tribes claim this area as part of their ancestral homeland. At present, no Native American concerns are known within the project area and none were identified during the inventory or in the project vicinity. The Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Bands, the primary Native American tribe from this area of the GSFO, have indicated that they do not wish to be consulted for small projects or projects where no Native American areas of concern have been identified. Therefore, formal consultation was not undertaken.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: It is unlikely that areas of Native American concern are present in the project area. The topography and setting are not conducive for these types of sites. The re-introduction of native plants would probably be viewed as

beneficial by the Native Americans. However, the Discovery/Education stipulation still needs to be stressed to personnel involved.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences: This alternative would be neither beneficial nor detrimental for areas of Native American concern.

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

Affected Environment:

Listed, Proposed, and Candidate Species:

According to the latest species list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/CountyLists/COLORADO.htm>), the following Federally listed, proposed, or candidate plant and animal species may occur within or be impacted by actions occurring in Garfield County: Colorado hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*), Ute Ladies' Tresses orchid (*Spiranthes diluvialis*), Parachute beardtongue (*Penstemon debilis*), DeBeque phacelia (*Phacelia submutica*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii stomias*), razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*), Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), bonytail chub (*Gila elegans*), and humpback chub (*Gila cypha*). The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the delisting of the bald eagle in June, 2007 with an effective date of August 8, 2007. The BLM now considers the bald eagle a sensitive species.

Plants:

The nearest known occurrence of the Colorado hookless cactus is 1,800 feet (550 meters) south of the project area. There is a single cactus individual 3,000 feet (914 meters) northeast of the project. The project area may have been suitable Colorado hookless cactus habitat historically, but is no longer considered suitable for establishment of the species due to habitat degradation.

The nearest occurrence of DeBeque phacelia is 950 feet to the west of the project area. The project area does not appear to provide potential habitat for DeBeque phacelia because it is lacking the soil characteristics that this species requires.

Aquatic Wildlife:

The project location is within 0.75 miles of the Colorado River. This section of river and its 100-year floodplain is Designated Critical Habitat for the Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker.

Terrestrial Wildlife:

No suitable habitat exists for any Federally listed, proposed or candidate terrestrial wildlife species in or near the project area.

BLM Sensitive Species:

Plants:

BLM sensitive plant species with habitat and/or occurrence records in Garfield County include adobe thistle (*Cirsium perplexans*), DeBeque milkvetch (*Astragalus debequaeus*), Naturita milkvetch (*Astragalus naturitensis*), Roan Cliffs blazing star (*Mentzelia rhizomata*), Piceance bladderpod (*Lesquerella parviflora*), and Harrington’s penstemon (*Penstemon harringtonii*).

The nearest known occurrence of the adobe thistle is 950 feet (290 meters) to the west of the project area. The nearest known occurrence of Naturita milkvetch is 2,300 feet (700 meters) to the northeast of the project. The project area does not contain potential habitat for either of these BLM sensitive species.

Aquatic Wildlife:

The project location is within 0.75 miles of the Colorado River. This section of river is known to contain flannelmouth suckers, bluehead suckers, and roundtail chubs.

Terrestrial Wildlife:

The following table lists special status terrestrial wildlife species in the Glenwood Springs Field Office.

Special Status Terrestrial Wildlife Species in the Glenwood Springs Field Office			
BIRDS			
Species	Status	Species	Status
Bald Eagle	BLM-S	White-faced Ibis	BLM-S
Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo	BLM-S, C, SC	Northern Goshawk	BLM-S
Gunnison Sage-Grouse	BLM-S, SC	Barrow’s Goldeneye	BLM-S
Greater Sage-grouse	BLM-S, SC	Burrowing Owl	ST
Columbian Sharp-Tailed Grouse	BLM-S, SC	Peregrine Falcon	ST
Ferruginous Hawk	BLM-S, SC	Greater Sandhill Crane	SC
REPTILES			
Midget-faded rattlesnake	BLM-S	Utah milksnake	BLM-S
MAMMALS			
Townsend's big-eared bat	BLM-S, SC	Big free-tailed bat	BLM-S
Fringed myotis	BLM-S	Yuma myotis	BLM-S
Spotted bat	BLM-S	River otter	ST

BLM-S: BLM Sensitive Species
 FE: Federally Endangered Species
 FT: Federally Threatened Species
 C: Federal Candidate for listing as Threatened or Endangered
 SC: State Species of Concern
 SE: State Endangered Species
 ST: State Threatened Species

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Listed, Proposed and Candidate Plants:

Plants:

Although the Land Health Assessment determined that Standard 4 for threatened and endangered plant species was being met at the time of the assessment, habitat conditions for the Colorado hookless cactus were declining. The number of mature cactus appeared stable, but competition with cheatgrass was preventing recruitment of seedling cactus needed to sustain the population. Treatment with imazapic to reduce cheatgrass density may improve habitat for the cactus. The pilot project will provide information to the Glenwood Springs Field Office on the effectiveness of different treatment methods which may prove useful for future habitat improvement projects.

There are no listed, proposed or candidate plant species within the project area, therefore, no direct effects to these species will occur as a result of the project. According to the Conservation Measures for Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Threatened or Endangered Species (BLM, 2007c), in order to avoid impacts to listed, proposed or candidate plant species, imazapic should not be applied by ground-based methods within 25 feet of these species. In areas where wind erosion is likely, imazapic should not be applied within 0.5 miles of listed, proposed or candidate species.

Given that the distance to the nearest population of the Colorado hookless cactus is 1,800 feet south of the project area and the DeBeque phacelia is 950 feet west of the project area and that the prevailing winds are generally from the southwest, there is very little risk of impact to listed species from offsite wind drift of herbicide during application or from wind erosion transporting herbicide-infused soil following application. The nearest Colorado hookless cactus population east-northeast of the project site (i.e. downwind), is 3,000 feet away which exceeds the buffer distance in the Conservation Measures. Herbicide will be applied according to label specifications and herbicide spraying will cease if wind speeds exceed the allowable limit.

If the project is successful in reducing cheatgrass abundance and restoring native perennial grasses to the site, the risk of catastrophic fire would be reduced. This would reduce the risk of destroying listed plants in the area due to fire. The proposed action would have **“No Effect”** on listed, proposed or candidate plant species.

Aquatic Wildlife:

The proposed action calls for the spraying of up to 60 acres of cheatgrass with the approved chemical Imazapik (Plateau). This chemical poses no risk to fish or aquatic insects and would not be applied to live water as no live water is located within the project area. Terrain is flat and the potential for offsite wind drift of sprayed chemical is minimal.

The treatment of cheatgrass would help to improve upland habitats as this annual weed is replaced with perennial grasses with better root masses and soil stabilizing properties. This would help to increase soil stability and reduce erosion and sedimentation concerns over the long term. In addition, the risk of catastrophic wildfire would be reduced as cheatgrass is removed and replaced with native grasses and forbs. This would reduce the risk of largescale erosion and sedimentation concerns across the area.

There is the potential that short term erosion and sedimentation could result until such time as reestablishment of native grasses and forbs of sufficient quantity are produced to stabilize soils. Sediment could reach the Colorado River in habitats occupied by these native fishes. However, these fish are all well adapted to the high sediment loads traditionally carried by the Colorado River. Periodic influxes of sediment are important in the creation and maintenance of important micro-habitats such as backwaters and the proposed action would have “**No Effect**” to the Colorado pikeminnow or razorback sucker or their habitats.

Terrestrial Wildlife:

Due to the absence of any occupied or suitable habitat within or immediately adjacent to the project area, the proposed action would have “**No Effect**” to any of the listed, proposed or candidate terrestrial wildlife species.

BLM Sensitive Species:

Plants:

There are no BLM sensitive plant species within the project area; therefore, no direct effects to these species will occur as a result of the project. Given that the distance to the nearest population of the adobe thistle is 950 feet west of the project area and the Naturita milkvetch is 2,300 feet (701 meters) northeast of the project area and that the prevailing winds are generally from the southwest, there is very little risk of impact to these species from offsite wind drift of herbicide during application. Herbicide will be applied according to label specifications and herbicide spraying will cease if wind speeds exceed the allowable limit.

If the project is successful in reducing cheatgrass abundance and restoring native perennial grasses to the site, the risk of catastrophic fire would be reduced. This would reduce the risk of destroying BLM sensitive plants in the area due to fire. The proposed action would likely have no negative impacts to BLM sensitive plant species.

Aquatic Wildlife:

The proposed action calls for the spraying of up to 60 acres of cheatgrass with the approved chemical Imazapic (Plateau). This chemical poses no risk to fish or aquatic insects and would not be applied to live water as no live water is located within the project area. Terrain is flat and the potential for offsite wind drift of sprayed chemical is minimal.

The treatment of cheatgrass would help to improve upland habitats as this annual weed is replaced with perennial grasses with better root masses and soil stabilizing properties. This would help to increase soil stability and reduce erosion and sedimentation concerns over the long term. In addition, the risk of catastrophic wildfire would be reduced as cheatgrass is removed and replaced with native grasses and forbs. This would reduce the risk of largescale erosion and sedimentation concerns across the area.

There is the potential that short term erosion and sedimentation could result until such time as reestablishment of native grasses and forbs of sufficient quantity are produced to stabilize soils. Sediment could reach the Colorado River in habitats occupied by these native fishes. However, these fish are all well adapted to the high sediment loads traditionally carried by the Colorado River. Periodic influxes of sediment are important in the creation and maintenance of important micro-habitats such as backwaters and the proposed action should have no negative impacts to these fish or their habitats.

Terrestrial Wildlife:

Generally terrestrial habitats that have been impacted by invasive plants may support fewer native wildlife species than in areas with intact native plant communities. Invasive plants can change habitat conditions and vital ecosystem functions in such a way that some native special status species are not able to adapt to the altered ecosystem.

Bald Eagles are addressed in the Migratory Birds section. Other BLM sensitive terrestrial wildlife species could be present at times in the project area so application and herbicide risks are discussed below.

Application. A major concern when spraying herbicide is that the chemical may drift away from the target area to wildlife habitats nearby. ATV applications will limit the probability of contaminating non-target food and water sources, especially vegetation over areas larger than the treatment area.

Herbicide Risks to Terrestrial Wildlife. Herbicides affect wildlife directly when animals are exposed to chemicals, or indirectly when wildlife habitat is altered. Imazapic has a low toxicity to terrestrial wildlife. Levels of Concern (LOCs) are used by the USEPA in screening the potential risk of herbicides. Risk quotients for terrestrial wildlife were all below the most conservative LOC of 0.1, indicating that direct spray of imazapic is not likely to pose a risk to terrestrial animals. Therefore, use of imazapic would primarily affect wildlife through habitat modification. Its use in forested rangeland and other wildlife habitat areas could benefit wildlife by controlling invasive plant species and promoting the establishment and growth of native plant species that provide more suitable wildlife habitat and forage (BLM 2007b).

Due to the absence of any occupied or suitable habitat within or adjacent to the project area, the proposed action would likely have negligible impact on any BLM sensitive species that might move through the project area.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences:

Plants:

Under the No Action alternative, no chemical treatment of cheatgrass would occur. The project area would continue to be dominated by cheatgrass which increases the risk of catastrophic fire in the area. Wildfire may consume above-ground portions of special status plants and if the fire intensity is high enough, it may also destroy root systems and seeds necessary for regeneration of these plants.

Aquatic Wildlife:

Under the No Action alternative, no chemical treatment of cheatgrass would occur. The project area would continue to harbor this noxious weed and would be prone to large erosion and wildfire potential. The potential for long term erosion and sedimentation would be increased but would still have no negative effects to Special Status aquatic wildlife.

Terrestrial Wildlife:

There would be negligible impacts to terrestrial wildlife from the No Action Alternative.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard 3 for Plant and Animal Communities:

A formal Land Health Assessment was completed for this area in 2004. At that time the upland portions of the project area were not meeting the standard primarily due to lack of native perennial grasses and forbs. The 60 acre pilot project itself will have a negligible effect on moving the area towards meeting the Standard. However the results of this small project may help determine the best methods to improve upland habitats infested by cheatgrass over the long-term.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: Fuel and lubricants would be used during ATV operations associated with the treatment of cheatgrass and seeding operations. The herbicide Imazapic (Plateau) would be used for treatment of cheatgrass and has documented negative health and ecological impacts.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Fuels, lubricants and herbicides would be stored in appropriate containers and refilling and refueling would occur in designated areas. As mentioned above the herbicide Imazapic has known health effects that include eye irritation, muscle degeneration, liver damage, anemia, increased blood levels of cholesterol, and a birth defect called rudimentary ribs. Other negative effects include persistence in shallow soil horizons and water contamination. During application, personnel should wear appropriate PPE and follow herbicide application directions accurately. Hydrologic features, denuded slopes, and steep slopes should be avoided to prevent potential transport to neighboring waterbodies. Based on the existing slope of the treatment area, the distance from perennial drainages, and the distance from human residences; it is anticipated that the negative impacts associated with herbicide application would be minimal.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Under the no action alternative there would be no fuel, lubricants, or use of the herbicide Imazapic (Plateau).

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes an analysis on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed action would occur northeast of the Town of DeBeque and north of Interstate 70 and the Colorado River within a 13,872 acre

unnamed 6th field watershed. The project area is bordered on both the east and the west by unnamed ephemeral drainages that are directly tributary to the Colorado River approximately one mile to the south.

The State of Colorado has developed *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 37) that identify beneficial uses of water and numeric standards used to determine allowable concentrations of water quality parameters. The ephemeral drainages mentioned above are within the Lower Colorado River Basin segment 13a that includes all tributaries to the Colorado River from a point immediately below the confluence of Roan Creek to the Colorado/Utah border. This segment has been designated as a use-protected stream segment. The use-protected designation refers to waters that the State of Colorado has determined do not warrant the level of protection provided by the outstanding waters designation or the antidegradation rule (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 31).

Waters within segment 13a are classified aquatic life warm 2, recreation P, and agriculture. Aquatic life warm class 2 refers to waters not capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold or warm water biota due to habitat, flows, or uncorrectable water quality conditions. Recreation class P refers to stream segments where there is a potential for primary contact recreation. The agriculture class refers to waters that are suitable for irrigation or livestock use. Numeric standards include a comprehensive list of physical, biological, inorganic, and metal standards that have been established to protect the designated uses above. At this time there are no water quality data for the two unnamed ephemeral drainages. In addition, these drainages are not currently listed on 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) that identifies water bodies suspected to have water quality problems.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Proposed activities would involve application of the herbicide Imazapic in close proximity to two unnamed ephemeral tributaries to the Colorado River. This herbicide is known to persist in shallow soil horizons for a relatively long time. According to the USGS, little is known about the impacts of this herbicide on water quality but it is likely that contamination is possible for the following reasons. The chemical properties of this herbicide make it susceptible to leaching and transport during runoff events and related chemicals have been found in many Midwestern streams and reservoirs. Applications would avoid steep slopes as well as denuded slopes limiting transport potential. Given the timing and amount of herbicide applied and existing slope angles in the project area, it is unlikely that measureable amounts of the herbicide would reach the ephemeral drainages and be transported to the Colorado River.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences: The no action alternative could have potential negative impacts to water quality. Cheatgrass is highly susceptible to burning which could result in the development of a hydrophobic soil layer in the event of a burn. The loss of groundcover along with the development of a hydrophobic layer in the soil horizon could result in severe erosion and soil transport during post fire runoff events prior to vegetation establishment.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 5 for Water Quality: In 2004, the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office conducted the Rifle West Watershed Land Health Assessment in which water quality parameters were measured on area drainages. During that time, staff determined that drainages in the assessment area were meeting standard 5 for water quality. It is anticipated that the proposed activities would not likely prevent standard 5 from being met. However, potential future repercussions associated with the no action alternative could prevent standard 5 from being met.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

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

SOILS (includes a analysis on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: According to the *Soil Survey of Douglas-Plateau Area, Colorado: Parts of Garfield and Mesa Counties* (USDA 2003), the proposed action would be located on the soil map units Bunkwater very fine sandy loam and Travessilla-Rock outcrop complex. These soil map units have been identified as having moderate to severe water erosion hazard and can be appropriately identified by the numerical value assigned by the soil survey. Following is a brief description of the two soil map units encountered in the project area.

- Bunkwater very fine sandy loam (12) – This deep, well drained soil is found on structural benches at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 6,000 feet and on slopes of 1 to 8 percent. This soil is derived from a variety of materials and was formed in eolian conditions. Surface runoff for this soil is slow and the erosion hazard is classified as severe. Primary uses for this soil include livestock grazing and wildlife habitat.
- Travessilla-Rock outcrop complex (69) – This soil map unit is found on dissected mesas at elevations ranging from 5,400 to 6,800 feet and on slopes of 10 to 35 percent. Approximately 45 percent of this unit is Travessilla fine sandy loam and 40 percent Rock outcrop. The remaining 15 percent of this unit consists of soils similar to Travessilla, Barx loam, and Bunkwater very fine sandy loam. The Travessilla soil is shallow, well drained and is derived from sandstone. The surface runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is very severe. The Rock outcrop component of this unit consists of rounded sandstone knolls and ledges. Primary uses for this soil map unit include livestock grazing, wood production, and wildlife habitat.

Proposed Action:

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed activities would result in some soil compaction and soil displacement during ATV operations associated with spraying and seeding. According to the NRCS and studies conducted by accredited universities, the herbicide Imazapic is known to persist in shallow soil horizons for a relatively long time. These activities would occur in close proximity to two unnamed ephemeral tributaries to the Colorado River but would be limited to areas with low slope angles, thus the potential for sediment transport would be minimal. Overall, anticipated soil loss and degradation associated with ATV operations and herbicide treatment is minimal.

No Action Alternative:

Environmental Consequences: The no action alternative could have potential negative impacts to soil resources. Cheatgrass is highly susceptible to burning which could result in the development of a hydrophobic soil layer in the event of a burn. The loss of groundcover along with the development of a hydrophobic layer in the soil horizon could result in severe erosion and soil loss during post fire runoff events prior to vegetation establishment.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Upland Soils: In 2004 the BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office completed the Rifle West Watershed Land Health Assessment in which 4,570 acres of the County Line Allotment were rated as achieving or moving towards achieving Standard 1 for Upland Soils. The proposed action would result in minimal impacts to soil resources and would not likely prevent Standard 1 from being met. The no action alternative however could exacerbate the current situation resulting in elevated fire danger that could result in intense burning, the development hydrophobic soil layers, and sediment loss and transport during post fire runoff events.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment:

Vegetation in the project area is largely dominated by cheatgrass. Bur buttercup and bulbous bluegrass are also common in the area. Residual native perennial vegetation consists of scattered Utah juniper trees, black greasewood, big sagebrush, broom snakeweed, mariposa lily, and a few clumps of sand dropseed, galleta grass and western wheatgrass. Although several stringers of mature Utah juniper occur within the project boundary, these areas will not be targeted for treatment.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Imazapic applied at 4 to 8 oz/ac is expected to result in 60-90% mortality of seeds and seedlings of cheatgrass for a period of 1-3 years. At that point, if adequate competing vegetation has not become established, cheatgrass begins to regain dominance of the site. The project area will be seeded with desirable perennial species within 6-18 months following herbicide treatment. Seeding will not occur before 6 months after herbicide application because imazapic remains active in the soil for approximately 6 months and would kill seeds and seedlings of desirable species.

Herbicides could come into contact with and impact non-target plants through drift, runoff, wind transport, or accidental spills and direct spraying. Potential impacts could include one or more of the following: mortality, loss of photosynthetic foliage, reduced vigor, abnormal growth, or reduced reproductive output. Plants could be crushed by ATVs during ground applications, and injury or mortality to plants could occur.

Risks to non-target plants from spray drift are greater with smaller buffer zones between target and non-target vegetation. Application rate is a major factor in determining risk, with higher application rates associated with greater risk to plants. In the proposed action, the highest application rate of imazapic would be 8 oz/ac/yr. Application rates above this level may cause injury to non-target vegetation, particularly perennial grasses. Due to the limited amount of perennial grasses in the project area, the potential loss or damage to perennial grasses would be minimal. Most of the treatment blocks would be seeded with perennial grasses to help restore the abundance and diversity of native perennial grasses expected in this ecological site. Proper establishment of desirable perennial species is critical for deterring the return of cheatgrass dominance of the site.

Mitigation:

The project area would be evaluated for the germination and establishment of desirable perennial grasses and forbs. The project area would be deferred from grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons following seeding or until the seeded species have become firmly established and can sustain grazing.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences:

Under the No Action alternative, no chemical treatment of cheatgrass would occur. The project area would continue to be dominated by cheatgrass. Cheatgrass is highly susceptible to burning, and when it dominates a site it creates a continuous fuel for carrying a wildfire. As a result, the area is at an increased risk for a wildfire as well an increased risk that a wildfire would be more extensive than would naturally occur in a Wyoming sagebrush-salt desert shrub ecological site. Wildfire may consume above-ground portions of desirable plant species and if the fire intensity is high enough, it may also destroy root systems and seeds necessary for regeneration of these plants. Cheatgrass would continue to dominate the site and may increase in dominance in areas where desirable vegetation is consumed.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): A formal Land Health Assessment was completed for this area in 2004. At that time, the project area was not meeting the standard for plant communities primarily due to the abundance of cheatgrass in the area and the lack of native perennial grasses, forbs and shrubs. The 60 acre pilot project by itself will have a negligible effect on moving the area towards meeting the Standard. However, if the project is successful, it could reduce the potential for wildfire to impact the area.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment:

The proposed treatment area contains no perennial waters and is drained via small ephemeral washes that feed directly into the Colorado River located approximately 1.0 mile to the south. In addition to the Special Status Fishes addressed above in the THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE SPECIES Section above, this portion of the Colorado River is known to contain speckled dace, white suckers, longnose suckers, carp, and occasional brown trout.

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

The proposed action calls for the spraying of up to 60 acres of cheatgrass with the approved chemical Imazapik (Plateau). This chemical poses no risk to fish or aquatic insects and would not be applied to live water as no live water is located within the project area. Terrain is flat and the potential for offsite wind drift of sprayed chemical is minimal.

The treatment of cheatgrass would help to improve upland habitats as this annual weed is replaced with perennial grasses with better root masses and soil stabilizing properties. This would help to increase soil stability and reduce erosion and sedimentation concerns over the long term. In addition, the risk of catastrophic wildfire would be reduced as cheatgrass is removed and replaced with native grasses and forbs. This would reduce the risk of largescale erosion and sedimentation concerns across the area.

There is the potential the short term erosion and sedimentation could result until such time as reestablishment of native grasses and forbs of sufficient quantity is produced to stabilize soils. Sediment could reach the Colorado River in habitats occupied by these native fishes. The majority of these fish are sediment tolerant and would not be negatively impacted by the proposed action. The only species that is sensitive to increased sediment is the brown trout. This species is rare in this river segment as water temperatures and sediment loads are high and potential slight increases in sediment levels would be largely undetectable.

No Action Alternative

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Under the No Action alternative, no chemical treatment of cheatgrass would occur. The project area would continue to harbor this noxious weed and would be prone to large erosion and wildfire potential. The potential for long term erosion and sedimentation would be increased but would still have have minimal additional impact to brown trout the species most sensitive to increased sediment loading.

Finding 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 this area back in 2004. At that time the upland portions of the project area were not meeting the standard primarily due to lack of native perennial grasses and forbs. No perennial waters are found on the allotment so the Standard was not assessed with regard to aquatic wildlife at the specific

project locale. The proposed action should help to improve upland habitats and decrease the potential for wildfire and erosion potential. The action would help to move the area towards meeting the Standard.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment:

Public lands sustain an abundance and diversity of wildlife populations and wildlife habitat. Wildlife populations are found in areas where their basic needs—food, shelter, water, reproduction, and movement—are met. The area in which the needs of a particular population are met is its habitat. Many animals have special behaviors and physical traits that allow them to successfully compete with other animals in only one or a few habitats; many threatened and endangered species fall into this category. Other animals, such as mule deer, coyote, and American robin are less specialized and can use a wider range of habitats.

Due to the cheatgrass infestation this area has a reduced ability to provide habitat for the wide variety of obligate species of birds, raptors, small mammals, reptiles that could be present. Terrestrial habitats have also been physically altered by roads, fences, buildings, public recreation use, vegetative treatments and livestock developments.

Species of High Public Interest. Data analysis Unit (DAU) E-10 (Yellow Creek) includes game management units (GMUs) 21, 22, 30, 31, 32. The Yellow Creek E-10 DAU is located in west-central Colorado and includes the Bookcliffs, Piceance Basin, and the Roan Plateau areas. The elk population in DAU E-10 was relatively low in the 1950's and has shown steady growth in recent years. The population peaked in 2001 at 10,725 elk, and is now approximately 8,700 elk. The population objective for the Yellow Creek DAU of 3,000 elk has never been formalized. The objective was based on early models that underestimated the population and is unrealistically low. More advanced and sophisticated models estimate a current population size of 8,700. The population objective was established prior to the development of DAU plans and process of development of population objectives. Thus, there has not been extensive public review or review by the BLM of the population objective of 3,000 elk. A more realistic population objective is probably 8,000- 10,000 elk. This objective was first introduced during the DAU planning process begun in 1999 and was selected as the preferred alternative, prior to the postponement of plan approvals due to CWD concerns. This population objective is the basis of current DAU planning. The key conflict issues this large DAU involve habitat quality on winter range, wild horse competition between wildlife, and oil and natural gas development. (CDOW 2009).

Proposed Action

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: An important activity of the BLM is to manage vegetation to improve wildlife habitat. Plants, which are an important component of habitat, provide food and cover. Food is a source of nutrients and energy, while cover reduces the loss of energy by providing shelter from extremes in wind and temperature, and also affords protection from predators (BLM 2007b).

Generally areas that have been impacted by invasive plants may support fewer native wildlife species in areas with intact native plant communities. Invasive plants can change habitat conditions and vital ecosystem functions in such a way that some native species are not able to adapt to the altered ecosystem.

Application. A major concern when spraying herbicide is that the chemical may drift away from the target area to wildlife habitats nearby. ATV applications will limit the probability of contaminating non-target food and water sources, especially vegetation over areas larger than the treatment area.

Herbicide Risks to Terrestrial Wildlife. Herbicides affect wildlife directly when animals are exposed to chemicals, or indirectly when wildlife habitat is altered. Imazapic has a low toxicity to terrestrial wildlife. Levels of Concern (LOCs) are used by the USEPA in screening the potential risk of herbicides. Risk quotients for terrestrial wildlife were all below the most conservative LOC of 0.1, indicating that direct spray of imazapic is not likely to pose a risk to terrestrial animals. Therefore, use of imazapic would primarily affect wildlife through habitat modification. Its use in forested rangeland and other wildlife habitat areas could benefit wildlife by controlling invasive plant species and promoting the establishment and growth of native plant species that provide more suitable wildlife habitat and forage (BLM 2007b).

No Action Alternative:

There would be no impacts to terrestrial wildlife from the No Action Alternative.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard 3 for Plant and Animal Communities:
A formal Land Health Assessment was completed for this area in 2004. At that time the upland portions of the project area were not meeting the standard primarily due to lack of native perennial grasses and forbs. The 60 acre pilot project itself will have a negligible effect on moving the area towards meeting the Standard. However the results of this small project may help over the longterm.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Table 2. Other Resources Considered in the Analysis.			
<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	
Visual Resources		X	
Water Rights	X		

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action would take place within the County Line allotment. This allotment is currently under a grazing deferral designed to allow desirable perennial vegetation to recover. The grazing deferral was initially set up for a period of 3years, 2008-2010.

Proposed Action:

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Following spraying of cheatgrass with imazapic in summer/fall of 2009, seeding will take place the following year (spring and/or fall of 2010). Seeding will not take place the same year that herbicide is applied because the herbicide may remain active in the soil for a period of 120 days or longer (depending on moisture and sunlight) and would likely result in mortality of the seedling grasses. Under the proposed action, the grazing deferral may be extended for a period of up to two growing seasons (2011-2012) to allow seeded species and recruitment of perennial grasses from the existing seedbank to become established and be able to sustain grazing. According to Jacob Martin, the Grand Junction Field Office Rangeland Management Specialist who manages the County Line grazing allotment, the permittees are aware that the grazing deferral may be extended indefinitely until natural vegetative recovery throughout the allotment and recovery of seeded species following the proposed action are deemed adequate to sustain grazing.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:

No cumulative impacts have been identified.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

Collin Ewing, US Fish and Wildlife Service

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	ACEC, T/E/S Plants, Vegetation, Land NEPA Lead
Dereck Wilson	Rangeland Management Specialist	Noxious and Invasive Species
Jacob Martin	Rangeland Management Specialist	Grazing Management
Michael Kinser	Rangeland Management Specialist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Jeff O'Connell	Hydrologist/Geologist	Soils, Air, Water, Geology

Kay Hopkins	Outdoor Recreation Planner	WSR, Wilderness, VRM, Recreation, Transportation
Cheryl Harrison	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns
Brian Hopkins	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, T/E/S Wildlife, Terrestrial Wildlife
Tom Fresques	Fisheries Biologist	T/E/S Aquatic Species, Aquatic Wildlife

REFERENCES:

American Cyanamid Company. 2000. Plateau herbicide, for weed control, native grass establishment and turf growth suppression on roadsides and other noncrop areas., PE-47015. Parsippany, NJ.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

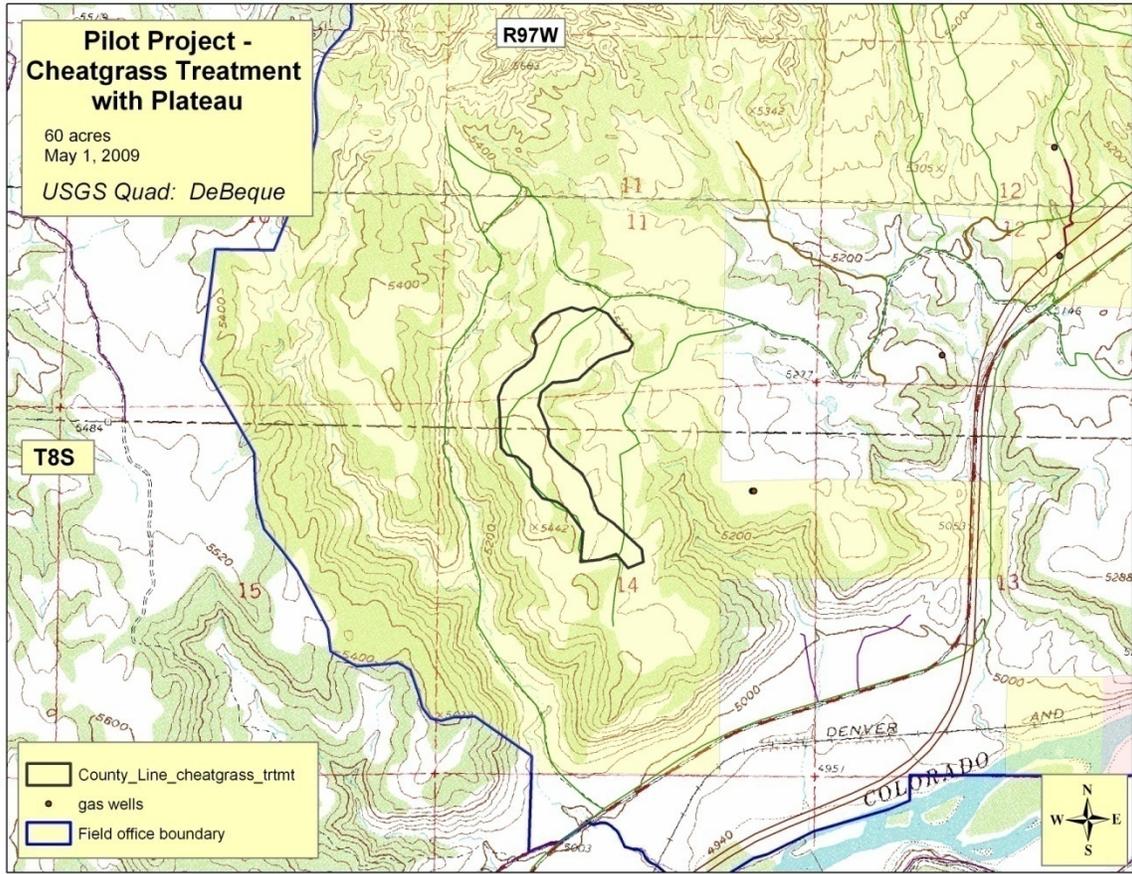
2005. Land Health Assessment Report – Rifle-West Watershed. USDOJ, BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office.

2007b. Final Vegetation Treatments on BLM Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Report (PER). Reno, Nevada.

2007c. Final Programmatic Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). Reno, Nevada.

CDOW. 2009. Website: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/NR/rdonlyres/186E3F3D-8777-4B51-9914-A2F1BC4B6DE9/0/E10DAUPlanFinal.pdf>. Accessed 6-12-2009.

MAP 1. Project Area



FONSI CO-140-2008-067

The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The proposed action with any approved 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.

DECISION RECORD

DECISION: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with disclosed mitigation.

RATIONALE:

1. Approval of the proposed action will allow herbicide treatment of approximately 50 acres of cheatgrass infestation on the County Line allotment which will result in some progress towards achieving Land Health Standards on this allotment.
2. The environmental impacts have been mitigated with measures included below.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

Cultural/Native American Concerns:

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that if newly discovered cultural resources are identified during project implementation, work in that area must stop and the agency Authorized Officer notified immediately (36 CFR 800.13). The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), requires that if inadvertent discovery of Native American Remains or Objects occurs, activity must cease in the area of discovery, a reasonable effort made to protect the item(s) discovered, and immediate notice made to the BLM Authorized Officer, as well as the appropriate Native American group(s) (IV.C.2). Notice may be followed by a 30-day delay (NAGPRA Section 3(d)). Further actions also require compliance under the provisions of NHPA and the Archaeological Resource Protection Act.

Vegetation:

The project area would be evaluated for the germination and establishment of desirable perennial grasses and forbs. The project area would be deferred from grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons following seeding or until the seeded species have become firmly established and can sustain grazing.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING:

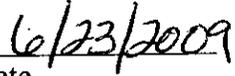
In April 2008, the BLM established 12 frequency transects and photo plots within the project area to obtain baseline vegetative data prior to implementing the proposed action. The BLM will conduct the spraying and seeding of the project area and will also conduct follow-up vegetation transects at the same locations to monitoring vegetative response to

the treatment. Monitoring will continue for a period of up to 5 years and results will be summarized in a monitoring report to be included in the project file.

NAME OF PREPARER: Carla DeYoung, BLM Ecologist, can be contacted at 970-947-2815 or via e-mail at: carla_deyoung@blm.gov.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:




Date