

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-140-2009-030 EA

**CASEFILE NUMBER:** 0500092, 0501971

**PROJECT NAME:** Grazing Permit Renewals on the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments

**LOCATION:** T6S R91W - Kamm Mesa (No 08101) and Whitman (No. 08102) Allotments  
Refer to attached allotment maps.

**APPLICANT:** Grazing Permittees (two grazing permits)

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

**Proposed Action:** The Proposed Action is to renew term grazing permits for the above applicants. The number/kind of livestock, period of use, percent public land and Animal Unit Months (AUMS) will remain the same as the previous permits. The permits 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 summarize the scheduled grazing use and grazing preference for the permits.

#### **Scheduled Grazing Use:**

| <b>Operator No.</b> | <b>Allotment Name &amp; No.</b> | <b>Livestock No. &amp; Kind</b> | <b>Period of use</b> | <b>Percent Public Land</b> | <b>AUMs</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| 0500092             | Kamm Mesa No. 08101             | 1230 Cattle                     | 05/10 – 06/09        | 4                          | 50          |
| 0501971             | Whitman Allotment No. 08102     | 60 Cattle                       | 05/01 – 05/31        | 100                        | 61          |

#### **Grazing Preference AUMS:**

| <b>Operator No.</b> | <b>Allotment Name &amp; No.</b> | <b>Active</b> | <b>Suspended</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 0500092             | Kamm Mesa No. 08101             | 50            | 6                | 56           |
| 0501971             | Whitman Allotment No. 08102     | 63            | 119              | 182          |

The following terms and conditions were included on the previous (expiring) permits and will be carried forward on the renewed permits:

- 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 following term and condition would be added to the permit to comply Bureau Policy, IM No. 99-039 dated December 23, 1999:

- If an assessment of rangeland health results in a determination that changes are necessary in order to comply with the Standards for Public Land Health and the Guidelines for Livestock Management in Colorado, this permit will be reissued subject to revised terms and conditions.

**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.

**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 Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments are part of the Divide Creek Landscape which is scheduled for a formal land health assessment in 2009. As such, we are deferring making a determination on conformance with the Standards on this allotment until the Land Health Assessment is completed. If the authorized officer determines that existing livestock grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform to the guidelines, the authorized officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practical (according to 43 CFR 4180.2) to achieve progress toward meeting the standards.

Because a standard exists for the five categories mentioned above, the impact analysis must address whether the proposed action or any alternatives being analyzed would result in impacts that would maintain, improve, or deteriorate land health conditions for that specific parameter. These analyses are located in specific elements listed below:

### **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*            | X              |    |                 | X  |
| 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/<br>WSAs                |                | X  |                 | X  |
| Native American Religious Concerns                         | X              |    | X               |    |                                    |                |    |                 |    |

\* Public Land Health Standard

**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 #1009-8) was completed for the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments on December 18, 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.

| <b>Allotment Number</b> | <b>Acres Inventoried at a Class III level</b> | <b>Acres NOT Inventoried at a Class III Level</b> | <b>Percent (%) Allotment Inventory data Class III level</b> | <b>Number of Cultural Resources known in allotment</b> | <b>High Potential of Historic Properties (yes/no)</b> | <b>Management Recommendations (Additional inventory required and historic properties to be visited)</b> |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|                         |   |   |   |  |   |   |

| 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) |
|------------------|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| Kamm Mesa        | 1415                                   | 1748                                       | 45   | 38  | Yes  | No additional acres need to be inventoried. 31% of the allotment has 30%+ slopes                 |
| Whittman         | 522                                    | 332  | 61   | 31  | Yes  | No additional acres need to be inventoried. 22% of the allotment has 30%+ slopes.                |
| Total            | 1937                                   | 2080                                       | 106  | 69  | Yes  |  |

Nineteen Class III cultural resource inventories (297, 591, 907, 976, 1005, 1135, 1224, 1234, 1006-21, 1104-3, 1108-4, 1108-7, 1109-3, 5400-3, 5404-4, 5407-21, 8295-1, 16108-1, and 16109-1) have been conducted within these allotments mostly for oil and gas development. These surveys cover at least ten percent of the allotments, in many cases the percent inventoried is much higher once the steep slopes (greater than 30%) have been removed from the analysis

Nine historic properties have been identified. Historic properties are cultural resources that are considered eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Undiscovered historic era sites within this allotment could represent a time frame from the late 1800's through the 1950's; Native American sites could represent a time range from 200 to 10,000 years before present. Based on available data, there is a moderate potential for historic properties within the allotment.

Subsequent site field visits, inventory, and periodic monitoring may have to be done to identify if additional historic properties are present 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.

At present, there are two known areas of Native American concern within this allotment. On November 7, 2008 the Glenwood Springs Field Office mailed an informational letter and maps to the Ute Tribe (Northern Ute Tribe), Southern Ute Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribes, identifying the proposed 2009 grazing permit renewals. No response has been received. If 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 locations 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. Indirect impacts include soil erosion, gulying, and

increased potential for unlawful collection and vandalism. Continued grazing may cause substantial ground disturbance and rubbing which could cause cumulative, long term, irreversible adverse effects to historic properties.

Nine historic properties were identified during the inventories for these allotments. A determination of “**Conditional No Adverse Affect**” has been made for this renewal. In order to mitigate the potential affect all ground disturbing activity and the placement of supplemental feed, etc, must be at a minimum 100 m from the areas of concern and historic property. The cultural resource specialist should be involved in discussions for improvements, maintenance, supplemental feeding areas, etc to ensure that the historic properties and areas of concern are avoided.

These allotments may also contain undiscovered 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.

#### Mitigation:

New improvements or maintenance of existing improvements, additional feeding areas, etc may require cultural resource **inventories, monitoring, and/or data recovery**. All ground disturbing activity and the placement of supplemental feed, etc, must be at a minimum 100 m from areas of Native American concern and/or historic properties.

Education/Discovery stipulation: 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: Past weed reports reveal populations of chicory, Russian knapweed, houndstongue, and tamarisk are present on the Kamm Mesa and Whitman grazing allotments. A landscape wide survey for the presence of noxious and invasive plant species has not been completed for the area in and around the above said allotments. Therefore, the above list of weed species present may not be inclusive. Other populations of weed species may occur on the allotments.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: 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. Since the proposed action was designed to sustain and/or improve land health, no significant impacts to non-native, invasive species are expected.

## **Migratory Birds**

### Affected Environment:

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. The primary statutory authority for *Birds of Conservation Concern 2008* (BCC 2008) is the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1980 (FWCA), as amended. Although there are general patterns that can be inferred, there is no single reason why any species was is on the list. 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.

Habitat loss due to alteration or destruction continues to be the major reason for the declines of many species (<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/reports/BCC2008/BCC2008m.pdf>). When considering potential impacts to migratory birds the impact on habitat, including: 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. 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.

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, aspen, pinyon-juniper woodlands, other types of coniferous forests, and riparian and wetland areas support many bird species. The pinyon jay is 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, 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.

#### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Limited bird count or species data exists for the area, however the greater concern is the continued fragmentation of habitat and losses of large blocks of contiguous habitat required by many bird species. No intentional take of native bird species is anticipated under the proposed action. Grazing by cattle could result in the accidental destruction of ground nests through trampling. This impact is expected to be minimal and isolated and would not influence populations of migratory birds on a landscape level. Given current overall existing habitat condition, livestock grazing, as proposed, will not negatively affect the degree of fragmentation/connectivity expected relative to the existing condition of the allotment and the fragmentation/connectivity within and between habitat types (e.g., within nesting habitat or between nesting and feeding habitats would also likely not change. Overall it is unlikely that, livestock grazing in both numbers and duration, as proposed would not reduce the extent or quality of habitat available for migratory bird breeding functions.

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

##### Affected Environment:

##### *Federally Listed, Proposed and Candidate Species*

According to the current species list available online from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (<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: Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*), Parachute beardtongue (*Penstemon debilis*), DeBeque phacelia (*Phacelia submutica*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*), Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*), bonytail chub (*Gila elegans*), and humpback chub (*Gila cypha*). The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was removed from the list of threatened or endangered species in August 2007. The BLM now considers the bald eagle a sensitive species.

The Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments do not provide suitable habitat for any of the species listed above. In addition, no occurrence records of any of the above listed species are known for either allotment.

##### *BLM Sensitive Species*

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*).

There are no known occurrences of any BLM Sensitive plant species within 7 miles of the Kamm Mesa or Whitman Allotments. Based on soil and habitat data, these allotments do not appear to contain any suitable habitat for BLM Sensitive plants, however, no plant surveys have been done within these allotments. Surveys for BLM Sensitive plants will be conducted during the Divide Creek Land Health Assessment in 2009.

The Colorado River and Divide Creek are both known to contain bluehead and flannelmouth suckers and roundtail chubs all BLM sensitive fish species.

#### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

##### *Federally Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Species*

Due to the absence of any occupied or suitable habitat, no listed plant species are found within the Kamm Mesa or Whitman Allotment. The proposed action would have “**No Effect**” on these species.

The Colorado pikeminnow, bonytail, humpback chub, and razorback sucker are all found downstream in the Colorado River below the town of Rifle, Colorado. There is no suitable habitat anywhere within or near either grazing allotment and the proposed action should have “**No Effect**” on any of these endangered fishes.

##### *BLM Sensitive Species*

There are no known BLM Sensitive plant species or suitable habitat for these species within these Allotments. Surveys will be conducted for BLM Sensitive plants during the land health assessment in 2009. If any BLM Sensitive plants are located at that time, and if grazing is found to be having an adverse impact on these populations, changes may be made to the permit.

The bluehead and flannelmouth suckers and roundtail chub are all native to the Colorado River basin. These species are adapted to the historic natural conditions related to high sediment loads periodically carried by both Divide Creek and the Colorado River. Continued livestock grazing as proposed should have no negative impacts to any of these fishes.

#### Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Special Status Species:

A formal Land Health Assessment has not yet been completed for this area. The analysis above indicates that livestock grazing is not having a negative impact to special status species. Continuation of livestock grazing, as proposed, would not be likely to prevent Standard 4 from being met.

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

Affected Environment: The Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments are located south of I-70 and the Colorado River between the Towns of New Castle to the east and Silt to the west. These

allotments are within two 6<sup>th</sup> field watersheds that include the 42,317 acre Colorado River above Rifle to the north and the 14,802 acre Lower Divide Creek to the south. The Colorado River above Rifle watershed contains several unnamed ephemeral tributaries to the Colorado River to the north while the Lower Divide Creek watershed contains an unnamed ephemeral tributary to the perennial Divide Creek to the west.

According to the *Stream Classifications and Water Quality Standards* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 37), the drainages mentioned above are within the Lower Colorado River Basin segment 4a that includes all tributaries to the Colorado River from the confluence with the Roaring Fork River to a point immediately below the confluence with Parachute Creek. This segment has been classified aquatic life cold 2, recreation 2, water supply, and agriculture. Aquatic life cold 2 indicates that this water course is not capable of sustaining a wide variety of cold or warm water biota due to habitat, flows, or uncorrectable water quality conditions. Recreation class 2 refers to waters that are not suitable or intended to become suitable for primary contact recreation. This segment is however suitable or intended to become suitable for potable water supplies and agricultural purposes that include irrigation and livestock use. At this time, there are no water quality data for the unnamed ephemeral drainages mentioned above.

The State of Colorado has developed a *303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments Requiring TMDLS* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 93) that identifies stream segments that are not currently meeting water quality standards with technology based controls alone. The unnamed ephemeral drainages mentioned above are within the Lower Colorado River Basin segment COLCLC04a that includes tributaries to the Colorado River from the Roaring Fork River to Parachute Creek. This segment is listed as impaired due to Selenium and has been given medium priority by the State of Colorado. At this time, none of the unnamed ephemeral drainages are listed on the *State Monitoring and Evaluation List* (CDPHE, Water Quality Control Commission, Regulation No. 94).

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. In addition, the number of livestock in the area would increase the amount of feces present in close proximity to nearby drainages. The introduction of livestock feces to water bodies often leads to water quality degradation by increasing fecal coliform bacteria levels. Due to the lack of perennial drainages within the allotments, there is little potential that additional sediment associated with grazing practices as well as fecal coliform bacteria from livestock feces would reach the Colorado River or Divide Creek. Based on existing area conditions and the lack of perennial drainages in the allotments, no mitigation is being proposed at this time.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 5 for Water Quality: The BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office is scheduled to conduct the Divide Creek Land Health Assessment in summer 2009 which will encompass both the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments. Based on past and present conditions within the two allotments, the proposed action would not likely prevent Standard 5 for Water Quality from being met.

## **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                           |

\*Public Land Health Standard

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

**Affected Environment:** According to the *Soil Survey of Rifle Area, Colorado: Parts of Garfield and Mesa Counties* (USDA 1985), the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments contain seven different soil map units that can be identified by the numerical code assigned by the soil survey (e.g. Potts loam=56). These soil map units are scattered throughout the allotments and have been identified as having low to severe erosion hazards. In addition, a few areas within the allotments are mapped as CSU 4 (Controlled Surface Use) for erosive soils on slopes greater than 30% and as NSO 15 (No Surface Occupancy) for slopes greater than 50% regardless of soil type.

Following is a brief description of the seven soil map units found within the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments.

- Potts loam (56) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mesas, benches, and the sides of valleys at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 feet and on slopes of 6 to 12 percent. Parent material for this soil includes sandstone, shale, and basalt. Surface runoff for this soil is medium and the erosion hazard is severe. Primary uses for this soil include grazing, wildlife habitat, and dryland farming.
- Potts-Ildefonso complex (58) – This complex is found on mesas, alluvial fans, and the sides of valleys at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 6,500 feet and on slopes of 12 to 25 percent. Parent material for this soil complex consists of sandstone, shale, and basalt.

This soil complex is deep, well drained, and has medium surface runoff and moderate erosion hazard. Uses for this soil complex include limited grazing and wildlife habitat.

- 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.
- Torriorthents-Rock outcrop complex, steep (67) – This complex consists of stony soils and exposed outcrops of Mesa Verde sandstone and Wasatch shale that occur on slopes of 15 to 70 percent. Approximately 60 percent of this complex is Torriorthents and 25 percent is Rock outcrop. The Torriorthents are clayey to loamy and contain gravel, cobbles, and stones; many of which are basaltic in origin. They are found on mountainsides below the Rock outcrop. Erosion hazard for this complex varies from moderate to severe. Primary uses for this complex include limited grazing, wildlife habitat, and recreation.
- Vale silt loam (68) – This deep, well drained soil is found on mesas, terraces, and alluvial fans at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 7,200 feet and on slopes of 3 to 6 percent. This soil is derived from calcareous eolian material. Surface runoff for this soil is medium and the erosion hazard is classified as moderate. Primary uses for this soil include irrigation for crops and hay with small areas being used for grazing.
- Vale silt loam (69) – This deep, well drained, moderately sloping soil is found on mesas, benches, and alluvial fans at elevations ranging from 5,000 to 7,200 feet and on slopes of 6 to 12 percent. This soil is derived from calcareous eolian material. Surface runoff for this soil is medium and the erosion hazard is classified as moderate. Primary uses for this soil include irrigation for crops and hay with some areas being used for grazing.
- Villa Grove-Zoltay loams (71) – These soils occur on mountainsides and alluvial fans at elevations ranging from 7,500 to 7,600 feet and on slopes of 15 to 30 percent. About 50 percent of this soil map unit is the Villa Grove soil and 40 percent the Zoltay soil. The remaining 10 percent of this soil map unit consists of varying amounts of Vale, Potts, and Morval soils. The Villa Grove soil is deep, well drained and has slow surface runoff with slight erosion hazard. The Zoltay soil is deep, well drained and has medium surface runoff with moderate erosion hazard. Primary uses for these soils include grazing, wildlife habitat, and irrigated pasture.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: 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 lack of perennial drainages within the allotments, there is little potential that additional sediment associated with grazing practices would reach the Colorado River or Divide Creek. Based on existing area conditions and the lack of perennial drainages in the allotments, no mitigation is being proposed at this time.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 1 for Upland Soils: The BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office is scheduled to conduct the Divide Creek Land Health Assessment in summer 2009 which will encompass both the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments. Based on past and present conditions within the two allotments, the proposed action would not likely prevent Standard 1 for Upland Soils from being met.

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

Affected Environment: The Kamm Mesa Allotment consists of several large, relatively flat mesas of sagebrush and grasses which are mostly private land, flanked by steep hillsides of pinyon/juniper which are mostly public land. Approximately 40 acres of sagebrush and grass on private land burned in a wildfire in 2005. Another fire in 2006, burned approximately 540 acres of grass, sagebrush and pinyon/juniper on both BLM and private land within the allotment. Following the fire, cheatgrass, which was a component of the understory prior to the fire, increased in density and cover, becoming a dominant component of the vegetation.

The Whitman Allotment consists primarily of pinyon/juniper woodlands on steep-to-rolling terrain with some sagebrush parks on flatter, deeper soils. The level of cheatgrass infestation on the allotment is unknown at this time.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Under the proposed grazing schedule, the Kamm Mesa Allotment would be grazed by 1230 cattle for one month in late spring. Although this is a large number of livestock, the short duration of grazing use should allow for recovery and regrowth periods following grazing. Most of the deeper soils and gently sloping terrain of the allotment is on private land, therefore most of the available forage and grazing use occurs on private land. Given these facts, the public lands should not sustain heavy grazing and should have adequate rest during the growing season to maintain plant health.

The Whitman Allotment would be grazed by 60 cattle for the month of May. Grazing for one month early in the growing season should allow an adequate period of recovery and regrowth following grazing to provide opportunities for seed dissemination and seedling establishment. Livestock grazing, as proposed, should maintain or improve plant health.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office is scheduled to conduct the Divide Creek Land Health Assessment in summer 2009 which will encompass both the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments. Cheatgrass is common on the Kamm Mesa Allotment and appears to have increased following a 2006 wildfire which burned about 540 acres within the allotment. Cheatgrass may also be present on the Whitman Allotment. A determination on whether these allotments are currently meeting the standards will be made following the field assessment in summer 2009. Livestock grazing, as proposed, is not

expected to result in a failure to meet or move towards meeting Standard 3 for healthy plant communities. However, if the land health team determines that the allotments are not meeting the standards and that grazing is a significant factor in the failure to meet or move towards meeting the standards, changes to the grazing permit may be made at that time.

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

#### Affected Environment:

Neither the Kamm Mesa nor Whitman Allotments contain perennial waters. Both allotments are drained via small ephemeral washes. Divide Creek is located on the western boundary of the Whitman Allotment and contains speckled dace, creek chubs, and bluehead and flannelmouth suckers addressed above in the TES Section. The Colorado River is located just north of both allotments and contains brown and rainbow trout, mottled sculpin, mountain whitefish, white suckers, carp, and bluehead and flannelmouth suckers, and roundtail chubs. The bluehead and flannelmouth suckers and roundtail chub are all BLM sensitive species and are addressed in the TES Section above. Finally, Garfield Creek is located just east of the Kamm Mesa allotment and contains rainbow trout, creek chubs, and speckled dace. All of these perennial streams also contain aquatic insects which are important as food for fish and a variety of terrestrial wildlife species most notably birds and bats.

#### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

The proposed action is to reauthorize grazing for another 10 year period by the operator in question. Continued livestock grazing activities would result in some soil compaction and displacement and increase the likelihood of erosional processes, especially on steep slopes, areas devoid of vegetation, and in concentration areas such as salting sites and stock waters. 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 grazing activities to area drainages, there is potential that additional sediment associated with grazing practices could reach the ephemeral and perennial drainages mentioned above. Excessive sediment can impact trout and sculpin by silting in important spawning substrates or in the event eggs are present, by smothering eggs. In addition, important micro habitats such as pools needed for overwinter and oversummer thermal protection can be silted in which reduces depth and makes these areas less usable. Aquatic insect productivity can also be reduced due to excessive sediment. This can result in reduced food sources for fish and terrestrial bird and bat species. However, historical water quality data has been shown to be good. The Colorado River is large and periodically carries a lot of sediment. The flow volume is such that sediment is generally carried through the area quickly with short-term impacts to resident fish and insects. Continued grazing should not negatively affect downstream fisheries and no mitigation is being proposed at this time.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 3 for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): These allotments have not yet had a formal Land Health Assessment completed. Based on existing data and visual observation, it appears that streams in the action area are likely meeting Standard 3 for aquatic wildlife. Continued livestock grazing as proposed should have little bearing on the areas ability to meet or move toward meeting Standard 3 for aquatic wildlife.

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

#### Affected Environment:

The Kamm Mesa allotment and the Whitman Allotment provide important habitat for a variety of obligate species of birds, and are particularly important as food and cover for wintering big game. Pinyon-juniper woodlands provide important foraging and nesting habitat for some raptor species and many migratory song birds, and provide security, foraging, and thermal cover for a variety of small game, big game, and nongame wildlife. Mixed mountain shrub and oak habitats are important to turkey, black bear, and lion among others.

Terrestrial habitats have been altered by roads (both authorized and unauthorized), powerlines, pipelines, fences, public recreation use, residential and commercial development, vegetative treatments and livestock and wild ungulate grazing. These human uses contribute to degradation of habitat quality, fragmentation of habitat for several species and the expansion of areas supporting noxious and exotic vegetative species.

*Garfield Creek State Wildlife Area.* The wildlife area is just less than 13,200 acres set aside for mule deer, elk and a host of other wildlife species. The wildlife area is comprised of two separate parcels of land. The lower parcel provides winter range for big game animals in sagebrush habitat. A portion of the Kamm Mesa allotment overlaps a portion of the westside of the Garfield State Wildlife Area.

*Species of High Public Interest.* Mule deer and elk usually occupy the area yearround however the sagebrush-dominant ridges and south-facing slopes are important big game winter habitat. Within these allotments BLM lands provide a large portion of the undeveloped winter range available to deer and elk. Both allotments are overlap with severe deer and elk winter range. Severe winter range is considered that part of the overall range where 90% of the individuals are located when the annual snowpack is at its maximum and/or temperatures are at a minimum in the two worst winters out of ten. The allotments also overlap with mule deer winter concentration area mapping by the CDOW. Mule deer winter concentration areas are that part of the winter range where densities are at least 200% greater than the surrounding winter range density during the same period used to define winter range in the average five winters out of ten.

Public surveys, land management agency input, and HPP committee participation all indicate a general agreement that the elk herd is at or near desirable and sustainable levels.. The current population size of approximately 11,500 animals is just above the objective of 10,500 animals for DAU E-14 (game management units 41, 42, 52, 411, 421, 521) (<http://wildlife.state.co.us/NR/rdonlyres/3B3FB96B-A5DA-4835-BD8D-C71723E66379/0/E14DAUPlanFinal.pdf>). Public surveys, land management agency input, and HPP committee participation all indicate a general agreement that the deer herd is at or near desirable and sustainable levels. The current population size of approximately 30,500 animals is just above the DAU D-12 objective (GMUs: 41, 42, 421). of 29,500 animals that was set through the DAU planning process (<http://wildlife.state.co.us/NR/rdonlyres/057CB0C3-C4E9-46E2-8570-996BF0D5FCE7/0/D12DAUPlanFinal.pdf>).

### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

It is unlikely that the proposed action would have any long-term negative impacts to terrestrial wildlife or their habitat. Under the proposed action, both allotments would be grazed intensively in the spring for short durations and direct competition with wildlife for forage would occur. Livestock would be moved through pastures so no area would receive season long grazing. The proposed action would not be expected to degrade wildlife habitat and would still provide for the forage and cover needs of resident wildlife.

*Garfield Creek State Wildlife Area.* At this time there are no conflicts between the Garfield Creek State Wildlife Area and livestock grazing (per conversation with Perry Will CDOW Glenwood Springs Area Manager).

*Species of High Public Interest.* The magnitude of competitive interactions between big game and livestock is poorly understood. Livestock and wild ungulate carrying capacities should be evaluated holistically and be used to guide stocking rate decisions and wild ungulate population objectives. Since these allotments are part of big game winter ranges, the lack of late-season grazing provides residual vegetation that is necessary for wintering big game. Regrowth areas previously used by cattle in the spring may even be favored because of the resultant increase in forage palatability.

Qualitatively viewing the big game population trends and objectives in relationship to the consistent level of livestock AUMs, it can be assumed that the current stocking rates will continue to be compatible with CDOW big game objectives.

Analysis on the Public Land Health Standard 3 for Plant and Animal Communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office has not yet completed a Land Health Assessment for this area and is therefore deferring a determination on conformance with the Standards on this allotment until the Land Health Assessment. A determination on whether these allotments are currently meeting the standards will be made following the field assessment in summer 2009.

### **SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

No cumulative impacts have been identified.

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

Grazing permittees associated with the permit renewals  
Southern Ute Tribe, Chairman  
Northern Ute Tribe, Chairman  
Ute Mtn. Ute Tribe, Chairman

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. News releases were issued... 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

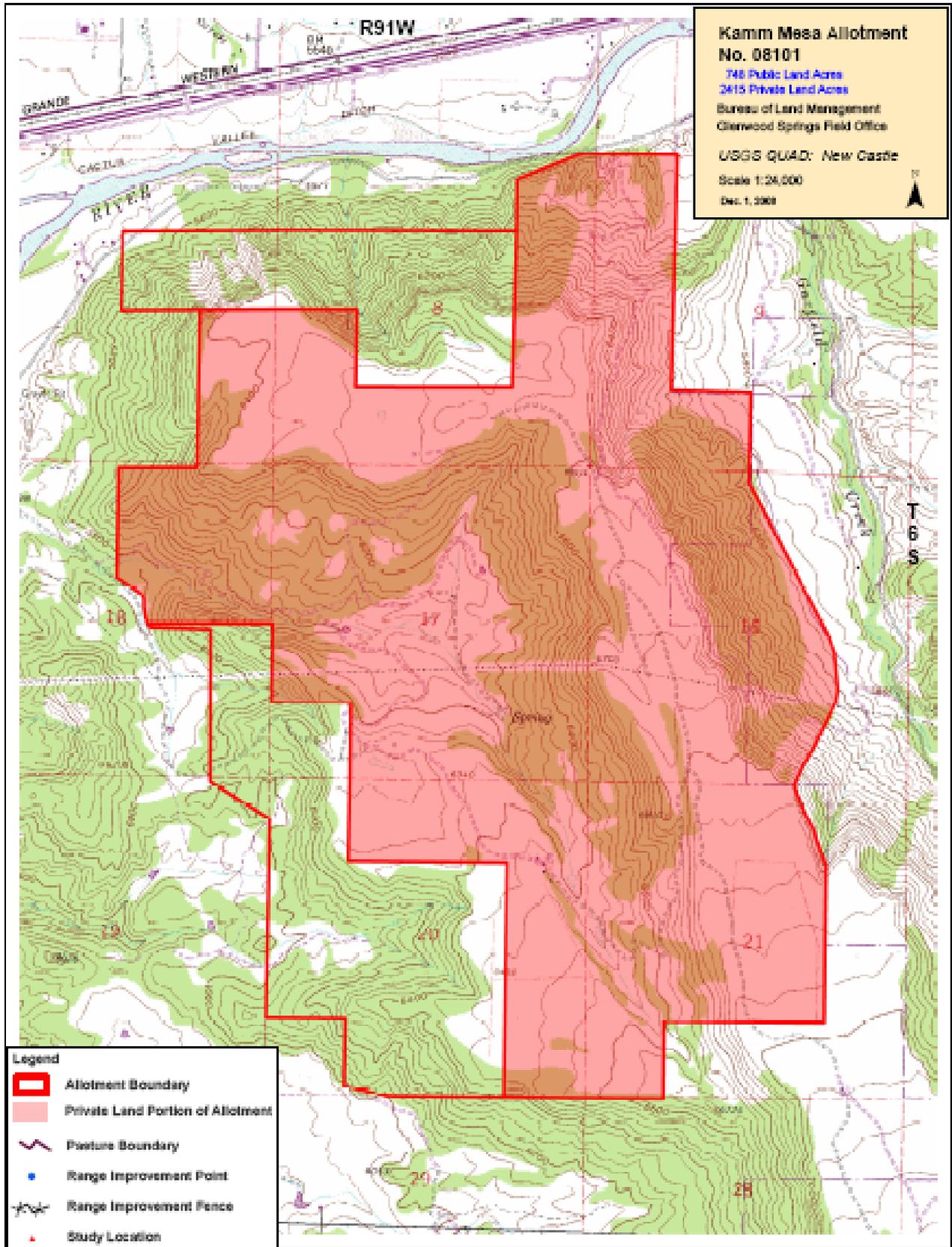
permit renewal NEPA documents that have been initiated. They are generally posted approximately one month prior to the estimated completion date.

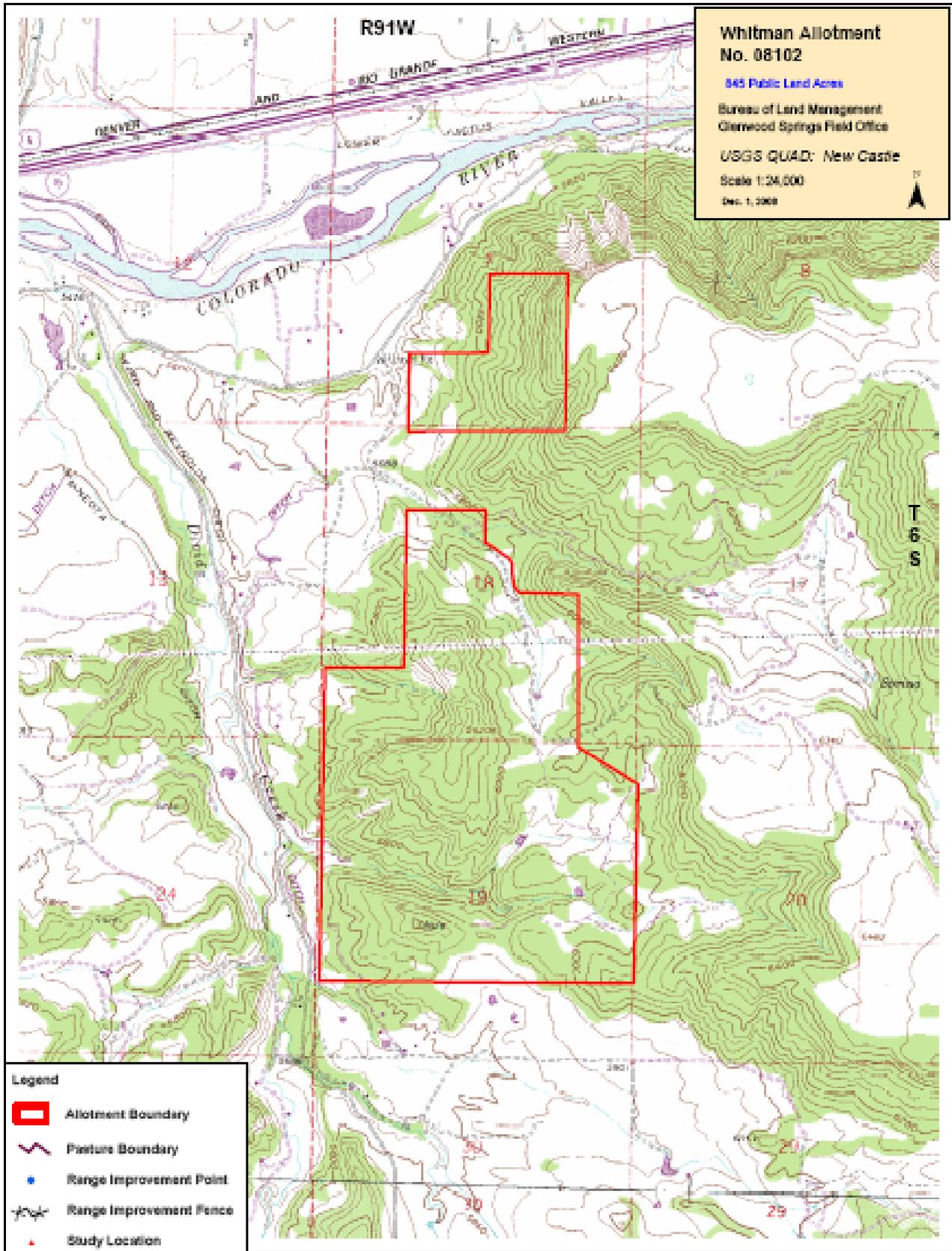
**INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:**

| <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      | WSR, Wilderness, VRM                                     |
| Cheryl Harrison | Archaeologist                   | Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns          |
| Brian Hopkins   | Wildlife Biologist              | Migratory Birds, T/E/S Wildlife, Terrestrial Wildlife    |
| Carla DeYoung   | Ecologist                       | ACEC, Vegetation, T/E/S Plants, Land Health Stds         |
| Tom Fresques    | Fisheries Biologist             | T/E/S Aquatic Species, Aquatic Wildlife                  |

APPENDDICES: None

ATTACHMENTS: Allotment Maps





UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
GLENWOOD SPRINGS FIELD OFFICE  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Grazing Permit Renewal on the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments**

**DOI-BLM-CO140-2009-0030-EA**

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action documented in the EA for the grazing permit renewal on the Kamm Mesa and Whitman Allotments. The effects of the proposed action are disclosed in the Alternatives and Environmental Impacts sections of the EA. Implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1508.27) provide criteria for determining the significance of the effects. Significant, as used in NEPA, requires consideration of both *context* and *intensity* as follows:

**(a) Context. This requirement means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27):**

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The planning area is limited in size and activities limited in potential. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

**(b) Intensity. This requirement refers to the severity of the impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following are considered in evaluating intensity (40 CFR 1508.27).**

*1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and/or adverse.*

Impacts associated with the livestock grazing permit renewal are identified and discussed in the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences section of the EA. The proposed action will not have any significant beneficial or adverse impacts on the resources identified and described in the EA.

*2. The degree to which the proposed action affects health or safety.*

The proposed activities will not significantly affect public health or safety. The purpose of the proposed action is to allow for multiple uses while maintaining or improving resource conditions to meet standards for rangeland health in the allotment. Similar actions have not significantly affected public health or safety.

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

Unique characteristics for the allotments have been identified and addressed in the EA. These include cultural resources. Application of mitigation measures for cultural resources results in a determination of “Conditional No Adverse Affect” for historic properties that occur in the allotments. No other unique characteristics are known to occur in the allotments.

*4. The degree to which the effects are likely to be highly controversial.*

The analysis did not identify any effects that are highly controversial.

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

The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain nor do they involve unique or uncertain risks. The technical analyses conducted for the determination of the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, and professional judgment. Therefore, I conclude that there are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks.

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

This EA is specific to the Kamm Mesa and Brush Creek Allotments. It is not expected to set precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future management consideration in or outside of this allotment.

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

The analysis in the EA did not identify any related actions with cumulative significant effects.

*8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant, cultural, or historical resources.*

The proposed action is not considered to adversely affect districts, sites, highways or structures. A determination of “Conditional No Adverse Affect” has been made for historic properties that occur in the allotments.

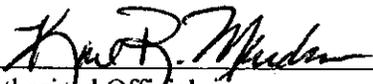
*9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

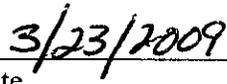
There is no designated critical habitat for any listed Threatened or Endangered species within the project area. The EA discloses that the proposed action would have no adverse impacts to any species listed as threatened or endangered.

*10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action does not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, I have determined that the actions analyzed in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary for this proposal.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Official  
Glenwood Springs Field Office

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date